

## December 2023 Board President Report

Jill Hurst-Wahl

Dec. 5, 2023

**Updating the Library Director V Position Description** – I have emailed Ann Debejian, Director of Civil Service Administration, for an update.

**Stepping Down as Board President** – When I stepped into the role of Board President in January 2020, I had no idea what lie ahead: the COVID-19 pandemic, holding Board meetings on Zoom, changes to Open Meeting Law, developing a new Memorandum of Understanding between the Onondaga County Public Library System and its Member Libraries, the rise of people who do not believe as deeply about the freedom to read (and freedom of information) as libraries do, and much more. Every month I learned something new!

I want to thank everyone who has served on the Board since January 2020, including Ginny Biesiada, Tim Dodge, Rich Engel, Matilyn Tucci, and Bob Manning (RIP) whose terms ended since I became president. I especially want to thank Babette Morgan-Baker, who stayed on the Board for all of 2023 to keep her “seat warm” while we wait for her replacement to be named.

I want to thank the ENTIRE OCPL staff! If I were to list names, I know I would miss people and not put them in the order expected...so...just thanks to you ALL! Thanks for your reports, explanations, opinions, patience, and love of all things related to libraries. What you do is important and valuable to our community.

Thanks to Dawn Marmor for stepping into the Executive Director position this year, ready to guide OCPL into the future. There is much to be done and I know you have a team excited about the challenges ahead.

Thanks also to every suburban library director and their staff. Thank you for your efforts, opinions, guidance, and patience. We are a system because of you!

Finally, thanks to folks in County government, again too many to name. Being Board President has shown me how OCPL interacts with “the County”, and I appreciate all that you do.

The role of public libraries continues to evolve as they make an effort to support their ever-changing communities. While the focus on literacy remains, libraries are now focusing on other things like financial literacy, robotics, expanded Library of Things (loanable objects other than books), services to the unhoused and those who speak English as a second language, and so much more. With the rate of change in our society, libraries cannot focus on what they have done in the past, but rather need to focus on the different services they will do in the future. Let us remember that “change is the essential process of all existence” (Mr. Spoke, TOS). To that end, I’m pleased that OCPL will begin its strategic planning process in 2024.

Because public libraries believe in the freedom to read and the freedom of information, they are now under pressure from those who want to control access to information. While OCPL:City and System have not yet been pressured to decrease access to information, this is something that the Board and staff should be on-guard for. Public libraries are meant to serve everyone, no matter their ethnicity, culture, gender, gender expression, sexuality, or abilities. As Mr. Spoke (1982) would say, “The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few.” The many need all that we can offer them. Libraries should be wary of limiting access in response to the demands of the few.

As I step down, this piece of advice from Rajeev Suri seems appropriate, “Don’t hold on to the past; it won’t help in moving forward. Dare to dream big.”