

# OLAQ

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## Volume 23 Issue 1 Introduction

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# From the Guest Editor



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I feel honored and fortunate to have been asked to introduce this issue of the *OLA Quarterly*, and, having lived in Oregon for less than two years, not a little daunted in light of my relative newness to the state. Neither a longtime Oregonian nor even yet a fully credentialed librarian, I am hardly the fittest person imaginable to introduce a journal issue focused on Oregon librarians' response to broad and dramatic changes. And yet, in the same way that one can benefit greatly from the distanced perspective of a different set of eyes looking over a draft of writing in which one has become deeply immersed, perhaps my outsider's view can offer useful observations even at its degree of remove. I am very grateful to Charles Wood and all of the journal's editors and contributors for the opportunity and for their parts in shaping the issue.

This issue's contributors and topics span academic and public institutions, rural and metropolitan libraries, political activism and personal narrative, and programming as well as abstraction. I undertook the task of introducing it with humility, but also with genuine hope that my experiences living in some of the most conservative and some of the most liberal parts of the United States, working in academic and public libraries, and teaching classes founded in feminism and critical race theory would enable me to offer something productive to this conversation, as I have learned abundantly from its constituents.

Considering instances of political action and librarianship, Oregon Library Association President Elsa Loftis begins this issue by profiling the organization. She cites its Legislative Agenda and its advocacy body, the Library Development and Legislation Committee, offering resources and steps toward political action that align with such guiding principles as Intellectual Freedom, Equitable Access, and Stewardship of Public Resources. Donna L. Cohen details a series of civic education workshops she has offered in recent months as part of an effort to combat the dissolution of social institutions and relationships that she views as playing a crucial role in forging and maintaining democracy—now losing out to the individualist and fragmentative drives of neoliberalism. Carolina Hernandez also writes about her endeavors to create and provide resources in the wake of the 2016 election, which have entailed improving upon existing fake news research guides by using pressing topical issues to draw connections to the broader importance of information literacy.

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Elucidating the importance of progress through failure as well as through success, Barratt Miller and Jane Scheppke offer a vivid account of programming gone awry: an event called *Guns in America* in Prineville that devolved quickly into a racially-charged shouting match among attendees. Verbal melee notwithstanding, the event left both with a greater sense of how to anticipate and address both implicit and overt bias among patrons, marketing strategies for controversial topics, security precautions, and other contingencies, which they present here in a thoughtful and edifying conversation. Pondering activist tactics on a more abstract level, I contemplate the role of librarians amid political upheaval as well as some of the risks that inhere in democracy and the tenet of access to all, emphasizing the need to historicize contemporary issues and reflect on the shortcomings and successes of Oregon librarians since the state's segregationist inception. Finally, this issue closes with an elegant, poignant narrative from Victoria Cross that relates her immersion into American culture through the work carpool she joined and all that it taught her: a Russian immigrant's tale in microcosm.

As diverse as they are in form, authorship, and subject matter, these articles share a common thread that I believe is fundamental to the very fabric of librarianship. They all draw on theoretical, historical, and lived experience to identify and address their own blind spots, with questions ranging from "What is a travel mug?" to "How can we ensure safe discourse on hot-button topics?" to "Do I truly understand this metaphor?" to "How can libraries employ specific topical issues as a bridge to universal information literacy skills?" all contributing equally to the ongoing process of illumination. Reading these contributions has left me feeling galvanized and hopeful at a time when much of what I read has the opposite effect, and I hope that they do the same for you.

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