



Editor's Note

Owl or Ostrich?

By Sharon Verbeten

Full ostrich. That's a phrase I heard while recently listening to a podcast. They were discussing the political climate shortly after the presidential inauguration.

Sometimes it does, indeed, feel like we want to go "full ostrich," burying our heads in the sand in the wake of confusion, distress, and uncertainty. It certainly has been a challenging time period for librarians and educators. We as members of the American Library Association remain staunch defenders of intellectual freedom and "to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all." And, as we know all too well, that's isn't always easy. Or convenient. Or, sadly, sometimes even safe. But I think we all agree that we wouldn't have entered this profession had we not believed in those values so strongly.

I earned my master's in library science in 1991, and the world—as I'd like to recall—was in a different place then. Some of my biggest concerns as a budding librarian (at my first youth services job at Milwaukee Public Library) were which chapter books to book talk, which teen magazines to purchase, and how best to promote programs—in a pre-internet world.

Today, we face book challenges, in-your-face angry patrons, and challenges posed by unhoused and/or mentally ill patrons. Youth librarians no longer just conduct storytimes and visit schools. Sometimes we clean toilets. We try to calm distressed patrons. We posit how librarianship could have changed so much over so little time.

So, yeah, we may want to (or actually do) retreat to our offices and go "full ostrich," if only for a few minutes. But I would argue that it's really time for us to go "full owl"—with eyes wide open, curious amid the darkness we increasingly face.

We are stronger together. We have shattered all stereotypes. We were made for this profession—so let's give it all we've got.

Last issue, I wrote in my editor's note about caring for our mental health; that's still important. But let's remain vigilant and mighty and strong—even in the midst of such change. I'm proud to call myself—and all of you—librarians! &

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