

Happy Trails My Friends

It's time close this chapter in the Ohio Library Council's history and conclude my tenure as the OLC's Executive Director after 17 years. In all honesty, I'm struggling to figure out where all that time went.

It's actually been 35 years since I first got involved in the professional association business. In June 1984, I was hired to work on the communications staff of the Ohio Medical Association, and went on to spend 18 years there in a variety of staff positions and in senior management. If it weren't for that experience, I wouldn't have had the opportunity or been prepared to move into the OLC Executive Director position.

My thanks to the Executive Director search committee and the OLC Board members who, in 2002, took a chance on a guy who apparently convinced them that he had enough experience – or at least had the wherewithal to learn – to lead their professional organization. I hope, in retrospect, that they believe that the chance that they took has paid off for the OLC. I can assure you that it has been an absolutely wonderful experience for me.

It would be impossible and far too time consuming to recap the past 17 years, but what I will share just a few things that I have been fortunate to experience over those years that I believe have contributed to a really great career.

Since June 2002, I have had the opportunity to work for an organization that represents an absolutely wonderful group of professionals. You have an unmatched dedication, not just to the people and the communities you serve, but to the organization that represents your interests. Each and every day, I have been absolutely amazed at the level of member engagement in the OLC. Literally hundreds of members each year willingly volunteer to help move this organization forward and contribute to its success.

In particular, those volunteers have included the unbelievably dedicated members of the OLC Board of Directors. To put 17 years into some sort of context, I've had the pleasure of working with 18 OLC presidents or Board chairs; 69 different OLC Board members; and the May 2019 meeting was my 101st OLC Board meeting. The library directors, staff members, and library trustees who have served on the OLC Board over the years have made a huge investment in their professional organization and the library community as whole. They have willingly served as many as six consecutive years on the Board – because they want to. I hope that I've had some part in making their experience on the OLC Board an enjoyable one.

As every association executive and, I hope, every library director will tell you, you cannot have a successful career unless you surround yourself with people who are really smart and very capable of doing their jobs. This has never been more true than at the OLC. I was fortunate 17 years ago to inherit a great staff and, while some of those folks have moved on or retired, we have had others join the staff who are just as smart and just as capable. Over the years, I think we have done some great work together – usually because I've stayed out of their way and just let them do their jobs. While I get a lot of credit for the OLC's successes, it's the members of the OLC staff who deserve the accolades. I will truly miss working with each and every one of them.

Finally, throughout my career I have had a great support system outside of work that has helped keep things in balance. Family members and wonderful friends have joined me in celebrating the

victories and they've have been there to pick me up when things maybe haven't always gone quite as well as I would have liked. My parents instilled in me a sense of integrity and humility, taught me the value of hard work, and that the investments that we make to improve ourselves will pay huge dividends down the road. And, with my two older brothers and their families, we'll always have a bond of unconditional love and support.

I am also a strong believer that having a partner along side makes this life so much better. I've been so incredibly fortunate to have had my best friend, my biggest cheerleader, sometimes my therapist -- my wife, Tammy -- by my side now for more than 34 years. She has made my life's journey so incredible and I am so looking forward to seeing where that road takes us in the years ahead.

As I conclude my career at the OLC, suffice it to say I will take away from this job more than I ever brought to it. I have learned more than I ever could have imagined from all of the library professionals throughout this state that I've had the pleasure of working for and with. I've witnessed your passion, your enthusiasm, your *obsession* to create great libraries, to serve your patrons and your communities, and I have seen you put every ounce of energy into advocating for your libraries.

And, your passion is contagious. Over the years, when I have talked about my job, the OLC, and its great members, people have often commented on my own sense of passion and excitement -- not only for this organization but for what Ohio's public libraries are doing in each and every community in this state. That's when I usually catch myself and realize that, at some point, this opportunity evolved from being just a job into something much bigger, much more meaningful.

But now it's time to close this chapter and let Michelle Francis write the next bit of the OLC's history. I want to congratulate her on being named the OLC's new Executive Director, and I want to thank her for her outstanding work over the past five years as she has led the OLC's advocacy efforts and provided legal assistant to our members. While I can't predict the future but if the past five years are any indication, the years ahead under Michelle's direction show a lot of promise.

As I look back over the past 17 years at the OLC, I think we've had some great successes. We've had our challenges and we've weathered some storms, but in the end I think the organization has become even stronger. I'm proud of what this organization has accomplished while I've been the Executive Director. Could you have done it without me? Maybe; probably. But I sure am glad that I was along for the journey.

I've lost count of the number of times over the years that Tammy and I have sat on our back porch, usually it's on a Friday evening and typically with an adult beverage in hand, and we've recounted the events of the past week. We talk about work, we talk about our families, we talk about our past, and we've planned for our future. It's in those discussions, in those intimate conversations, whether we're celebrating good times or lamenting the bad, we almost always reach at some point in the conversation the same realization -- of how truly blessed we really are. Blessed to have had the opportunities we've enjoyed, blessed to have had great jobs and careers, blessed to have amazing friends and wonderful families, and blessed to have each other for more than 34 years.

So that's my hope...my prayer...for each and every one of you. That your good times always outweigh the bad; that your challenges result in opportunities; and at the end of each and every day, you too can say...you are truly blessed.

Happy trails my friends.