

From the President

I'd like to begin 2006 by wishing all library directors, staff, trustees and patrons a very Happy New Year!!! May 2006 bring health and happiness to each and every one of you.

This issue of Louisiana Libraries contains the LLA Intellectual Freedom Manual. My thanks go to Charlene Cain and her committee for all of their hard work on revising the 2000 edition. We begin a new year with information needed to protect our intellectual freedom.

I'd like to reflect on my ideas of some of our "freedoms". Freedom is something that needs to be appreciated, cherished not taken for granted and believed to be a privilege. Any misuse can cause any freedom to be taken away. Libraries provide many items that are "free". The service to our patrons: school children, teachers, college students and professors, doctors, lawyers, professionals of all kinds and public library users, is "free". Most of these people have the freedom of choice – to choose what they want to read. This freedom doesn't pertain to just books and magazines but extends to videos and DVDs that can be checked out for educational as well as recreational use, to books on cassettes and cds, music cds, and many other types of materials that are found in our state's libraries.

Outside of the library buildings and environment, we have many additional freedoms. We have the freedom to choose what we want to do with our lives; the freedom to watch what we choose on television; and the freedom to listen to the radio station of our choice. Each of these freedoms is limited due to financial situations, service providers choices and geographical locations. Everyone has the right to travel either by physically going to a location or by visiting via a book from your local library.

We are also free to listen to older members of our family or community talk about the "old times" and are free to pass this information on via the oral tradition.

Are we not free to enjoy the sun, the rain, the snow? Are we not free to enjoy the birds that sing, animals that love us, insects that peak our imagination, and plants and animals that sustain our lives? We are also free to study the moon, the sun and the stars, the planets and worlds beyond.

One of our basic freedoms is the freedom to vote. This privilege should never be taken lightly. Many of our life changing freedoms depend on our vote on certain items!

The libraries throughout this great state of ours provide a means of securing each of these freedoms. We can use videos, DVDs, cassettes, and cds to enjoy sights and sounds not native to our own communities. We can use books and other materials to visit places we've never seen, to learn about the celestial bodies, and to learn what animals and plants supply for our survival.

Every freedom comes with limitations: financial, geographical, physical, and mental, just as the intellectual freedom for our patrons also has some limitations. Our patrons can search the internet for needed information and can check out library materials to supplement an assignment or project without asking permission. As with all things, abuse leads to restricted freedoms.

As you look over the Intellectual Freedom Manual, think of the freedoms we enjoy as a nation of readers. Let this manual be your support and guidance for anything dealing with these matters.

Jackie Choate