

From the Chair

Lynda Kellam



The following were the Chair's remarks at the GODORT General Membership Meeting on January 14:

Welcome GODORT members, guests, and hopefully some future members. My name is Lynda Kellam. I am the Chair

of GODORT and in my daily life the Senior Data Librarian at the Cornell Institute for Social and Economic Research. I begin this meeting by acknowledging that Cornell and Ithaca, NY are located on the indigenous lands of the Cayuga Nation and we recognize the indigenous peoples who have and continue to live here. I have a few prepared remarks and I know this might be unprecedented in GODORT, but I hope you will have patience with me as I believe this is necessary.

Members of the Social Responsibilities Round Table founded the Government Documents Round Table in 1972 as an organization devoted to the problems related to government publications. At the first meeting, they created the slogan "Documents to the People" to signify that the mission of this organization is to ensure public access to government information. While some of us do not formally work with government documents, we are part of GODORT because we believe in the importance of access to and preservation of government information in all its forms. The spirit of those pioneers continues in the work we do today.

We come together as GODORT during a difficult time for our country and for ourselves as individuals. As government information librarians I think it's fair to say that we are more engaged with the workings of government than most. And this past week, this past year has been challenging.

Last week a violent insurrection and an act of domestic terrorism led by white supremacists and our President desecrated one of the symbols of our nation, led to the death of six people including Liebengood's suicide, and threatened the lives of our leaders. Moreover, we watch the news in anticipation over what is to come this weekend and beyond. And I am saddened to see that a week that should be celebratory, with both our inauguration and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's birthday, has become one filled with fear.

The past eleven months we have faced a pandemic that has touched the lives of everyone. We have watched our loved ones

fall ill, or ourselves have been afflicted. All through this we have tried to maintain some normalcy while being called on to do the impossible (although wearing a mask is NOT one of those impossible things). I hope that in our work lives we have (I have learned) to be more patient with each other, to make expectations more realistic, and to remember that we are all humans facing overwhelming challenges.

I realize that you all are quite familiar with our nation's issues and I don't want to set a somber mood. But it seems disingenuous not to acknowledge our realities. My goal this year has been to maintain a sense of community despite our distance, and I have been heartened this week and this year by the community we are building together in GODORT.

Through our Friday chats, started by past-Chair Susanne Caro, we have come together for both formal discussions on government information as well as chats about cats. Our committees have accomplished quite a bit despite the difficulty of the past year. And we have engaged both our members and the wider librarian community on important topics like voter engagement and disenfranchisement.

This week you've given each other advice on ways to cope with challenges at work, you've developed innovative ideas, and you've celebrated each other along the way. Through job changes, retirements, illnesses, caretaking, social distancing, zoom schooling, and new lives being brought into the world, we have supported each other. This is what GODORT has meant to me over this past year and I hope that you have experienced some of that community too. I know that there is more that we could be doing, more that we can do. And we will. But we should also celebrate what we have built together. We have a difficult road ahead as a country, but I am comforted by your community. I look forward to working with you all in 2021.

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