2013 was a very exciting and productive year for the Ontario Library Association. The year was about considering the “universe of possibilities” for OLA, its divisions, and its members. It was about considering our enduring value to the people, institutions, and communities we serve. It was about ensuring that OLA continues to be an exceptional association.

In 2013, we developed the OLA 2014–2017 Strategic Plan. The plan was developed by consulting with OLA members, the broader library community, and the OLA Board and divisional councils. Many thanks to Dysart & Jones who led us through the consultation process and creation of the new plan. Always innovative, Dysart & Jones provided us with some new planning elements that will ensure that OLA’s results are relevant and timely for its members.

The process validated OLA’s existing Vision, Mission, Values, Strategies, and outcomes:

- Growing career paths and potential
- Collaborating to extend libraries’ strategic voice
- Strengthening the organization
- Transforming ideas into solutions

The top themes that emerged from the research and consultation were: the ongoing importance of advocacy – critical in terms of demonstrating value and for securing funding; the desire for learning opportunities and events to support members in development of competencies and skills; OLA’s role in supporting networking through events, such as the Super Conference and via partnerships with other library associations and organizations; and the ongoing need to ensure that OLA’s organizational model supports the association’s mandate and objectives.

As part of the planning process, we also considered the future of the Super Conference to ensure that it remains vital, relevant, and innovative. There was much lively discussion and debate at a “think tank” session designed to reflect on ideas and information, engage in some brainstorming, and explore possibilities for change moving forward. The 2014 Super Conference was an overwhelming success and much credit goes to the Co-Chairs Lita Barrie and Richard Reid, along with the SC Planning Committee, OLA Staff and Volunteers. We celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Super Conference – the first time that all OLA Divisions came together to offer one “SUPER” conference. At the same time, the speakers, presenters, and participants looked to our professional future considering “A Universe of Possibilities” and where that might take us. Building on this, the 2015 SC theme “Think It. Do It!” is a call to action.

Each year, OLA and its divisions recognize those who have made an impact. The award winners this year epitomize excellence. The President’s Award for Exceptional Achievement, which acknowledges an outstanding action or contribution that has in a major or unique way enhanced or furthered librarianship in Ontario, was awarded to Liz Kerr. Liz Kerr has made an outstanding contribution to the Ontario Library Association and its members through her more than 20
In 2013, I completed my first year as OLA Treasurer. It has been a privilege for me to work with OLA in this capacity. We’ve faced some challenges in 2013; I want to thank the staff and Board for their ongoing dedication and commitment to serving the OLA membership and the Ontario library community. We ended 2013 with a deficit of $294,000, but our accumulated surplus continues to be very strong at $790,000.

This year’s deficit is significant, though only a small portion of $20,000 is an operating deficit. A significant portion of the deficit is due to pre-planned investments, including the third and final year of a multi-year investment in our new integrated system, iMIS. $117,000 of the deficit is due to a one-time write-off of accounts receivable during 2008-2011. This amount reflects a mix of duplication errors and receivables that could not be properly tracked with the old association management system. The challenges as a result of the old system further emphasize the much-needed investment in OLA’s iMIS system.

An added pressure to our 2013 revenues continued to be the impact of the shifts in digital publishing on the OLA Store. OLA staff have developed a comprehensive marketing strategy to reposition the OLA Store during 2014.

OLA’s record of service, innovation, and membership growth aligned with our mission have all contributed to OLA’s success. The OLA Board has committed to the ongoing development of revenue streams to support innovation and member initiatives. In 2014, we have created a new Board Committee that will be looking at OLA’s revenue and fund development strategies to align the organization to maximize future opportunities. Moving forward, I encourage the Board to explore new initiatives that will help ensure OLA remains on a sustainable path for the future. I encourage all OLA members to find ways to get more involved in our association, not only is a tremendous personal opportunity, it is also critical to the future success of our organization and our profession.