

FLORIDA LIBRARIES

SUMMER 2026: CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS



Florida Libraries

AN FLA PUBLICATION

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FROM THE EDITOR

MARY DANIELS



Annual Conference was a blast this year, as always. The presenters all did a fantastic job, and it's always a genuine pleasure to speak with vendors, peers, and new acquaintances.

Some of you have probably heard of the glass ball analogy. Allegedly, this originates from a Q&A with author Nora Roberts, but the gist is that everyone is juggling a lot of balls, all the time (*I know you all are familiar with this concept*). Some of those balls are rubber, others are glass. The rubber balls can be dropped, and they bounce—they might hit the ground but they're undamaged. They bounce back. The glass balls, however, shatter into pieces when dropped, ruining them forever and causing danger to the people in the room (as a klutz, I have broken more than a few glass things and am very good at sweeping and vacuuming up little invisible glass shards afterwards!).

Last fall, I was promoted to a management position in my library, a responsibility I don't take lightly. The duties of my job are in a glass ball. In the interest of best doing my job and serving the community I've been a part of for thirteen years, it's time for me to step back from editing *Florida Libraries*.

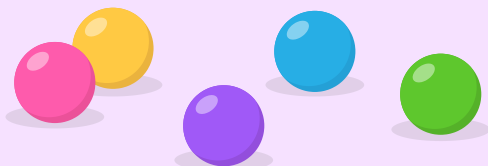
It has been my utmost pleasure getting to work with our wonderful colleagues and helping them publish articles. Getting insight into what everyone else is doing at libraries across the state—their creative programming, their meticulous research and studies, their literature reviews—has been invaluable to me.

Working alongside the Editorial Board has been incredible. I have learned so much in the past three years, and I am so grateful to Jenny A., Shane R., Jorge P., Allison G., and the FLA Board for their guidance and support.

It's been an honor serving and working alongside you. Thank you so much for the opportunity. I will still be involved, and look forward to tossing this big, exciting rubber ball to the next Editor of *Florida Libraries*, and hope they have as much fun with it as I did.

All the best,

MARY DANIELS, MLIS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JENNIFER K. ABDELNOUR, CAE



#FLACON26, “Tell Your Story,” was a success! Thank you to all attendees, exhibitors and sponsors. We appreciate your support of our annual conference.

A big thank you to the Florida Library Association’s (FLA’s) Conference Planner Jeanice Caskey and Patti Heseltine and the Conference Planning Committee members for their remarkable accomplishments this and every year. And thank you to the Conference attendees and exhibitors for your survey responses. The Conference Planning Committee takes your feedback seriously to improve your conference experience.

I am looking forward to FLA 2026-2027 President Marina Morgan’s theme: “AI in Libraries: Friend, Foe, or Future?” being explored in the next year. If you haven’t had a chance to read Marina’s latest President’s Message, look for it in this issue.

Planning for #FLACON27 begins this month. Please make plans now to attend our Conference May 11-14, 2027, at the Hilton Doubletree Orlando Theme Park Resort.

Now onto the most significant threat to Florida libraries in years: property tax reform.

This May, the Florida Legislature approved a property tax reform measure for the November ballot that would increase the homestead exemption to \$250,000 over the next two years. FLA is collecting information from Florida public libraries to learn the total effect of this measure should it be approved by the voters. Responses will be shared with the FLA Board of Directors and the Advocacy Committee to help inform advocacy, coalition-building, and communication efforts.

President Marina Morgan, VP/President-Elect Belle Reynoso, and I have been participating in coalition calls and meetings to gather information, share resources, and explore what other stakeholders are expecting to face should the measure pass.

There is much reason for hope. As of this writing, current polling is showing the measure falling just short of the 60% required to pass and be added to the Florida Constitution; Additionally, no “YES” campaign or coalition is yet apparent.

Based on everything I am hearing from coalition partners, we can defeat this harmful and short-sighted measure! Stay tuned for FLA’s next steps.



From the Executive Director



It's ba-ack. As summer heats up, FLA has again launched our "Christmas in July" fundraising appeal. It's the perfect time to embrace the joy of giving. We invite you to join us in spreading joy and supporting FLA. "Christmas in July" offers a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the warmth and generosity of the holiday season, even in the midst of summer.

Summer is the slowest period of time for new or renewing memberships and donations to FLA, and FLA still faces pressing financial challenges.

In order to sustain and grow our organization, we urgently need new revenue streams.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

This "Christmas in July," you can be our Santa and bring the gift of support to FLA in two wonderful ways:

Donate: A suggested minimum donation of \$20 can make a significant difference. [Please donate what you can.](#) Imagine the warmth and joy your contribution will bring to our library community!

Join or Renew: Joining or renewing your [Personal \(formerly called 'Individual'\) Membership](#) now through September 30 is half off the regular dues, making it easier than ever to become a part of our community. Pro-rated memberships expire on December 31. If you are not already a member of FLA, this is the perfect gift for yourself, friends, family, colleagues, and FLA! [Join or renew here.](#)

Share: [Share this flyer](#) with your library director so they can post it on a physical or electronic billboard, share with library allies, etc.

Your support will help us continue to provide valuable resources and opportunities for learning and connection within the library community.

Thank you for considering our request. Together, we can ensure the Florida Library Association remains a vibrant and vital part of our professional community.

Wishing you a joyful "Christmas in July" and a wonderful rest of your summer.

Warm regards,

JENNIFER K. ABDELNOUR, CAE
FLA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MARINA MORGAN



As I sat down to write my first newsletter message following our Annual Conference, I expected to reflect on this year's theme, AI in Libraries: Friend, Foe, or Future? The conversations we had in Orlando reminded us that libraries are uniquely positioned to help our communities navigate change, evaluate information, and engage thoughtfully with emerging technologies.

Instead, much of the summer has been focused on another issue that strikes at the heart of library service: advocacy.

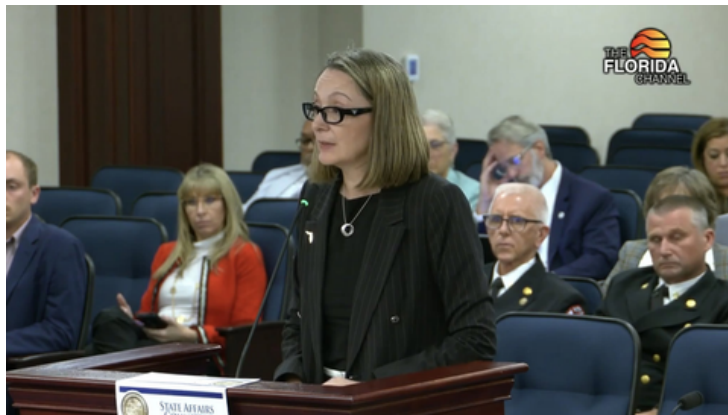
Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to testify before the House State Affairs Committee, while FLA Executive Director Jennifer Abdelnour testified before the Senate Appropriations Committee regarding legislation that has now advanced to the November ballot and could significantly affect how public libraries and other local services are funded in Florida. Together, we spoke about the essential role libraries play in supporting literacy, workforce development, technology access, lifelong learning, disaster response, and community resilience.

As we move through the summer months, I encourage each of you to stay engaged and informed. The months ahead will require thoughtful conversations about the role libraries play in our communities and the services they provide. As library professionals and advocates, we have an opportunity to help Floridians better understand how libraries are funded, what libraries contribute to their communities, and why these services matter. Our responsibility is not only to provide access to information but also to help our communities understand issues that affect them, making public awareness and education more important than ever.

If you have ideas, concerns, or suggestions about how FLA and its leadership can better support and represent you, please do not hesitate to reach out. The strength of our Association comes from you, the engagement and expertise of its members, and your input helps guide the work we do on behalf of libraries across Florida.

Thank you for all you do for your libraries, your communities, and our profession.

Marina Morgan
Florida Library Association President, 2026-2027



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

2026 Organizational Members

Florida Libraries, Consortia, Cooperative, Network and Library School/Degree Programs

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[Clearwater Public Library System](#)

[Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Hunt Library](#)

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[Florida Atlantic University Library](#)

[Florida National University](#)

[Florida Southern College](#)

[Florida State University, Strozier Library](#)

[Florida Virtual Campus \(FLVC\) Library Services](#)

[Franklin County Public Library](#)

[Full Sail University](#)

[Gadsden County Public Library](#)

[Homestead Cybrarium](#)

[Largo Public Library](#)

[Lee County Library System](#)

[LeRoy Collins Leon County Public Library](#)

[Lighthouse Point Library](#)

[LIRN](#)

[Maitland Public Library](#)

[Mandel Public Library of West Palm Beach](#)

[Miami-Dade Public Library System](#)

[North Miami Beach Public Library](#)

[Orange County Library System](#)

[Osceola Library System - Hart Memorial Library](#)

[Palm Beach County Library System](#)

[Palm Harbor Library](#)

[Pinellas Public Library Cooperative](#)

[Sanibel Public Library District](#)

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[Seminole County Public Library](#)

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[Tallahassee State College](#)

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[The Society of the Four Arts](#)

[University St. Augustine for Health Sciences](#)

[Valencia College](#)

[Volusia County Public Library](#)

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EXHIBIT HALL

Congratulations to the winner of the Best Booth contest, Urban Librarians Unite!



OPENING SESSION



KEYNOTE SPEAKER
ANGELA HURSH

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKERS

WATCH NOW!

**SAM HELMICK, 2025-2026 PRESIDENT,
AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

**BROOKS RAINWATER, PRESIDENT & CEO,
URBAN LIBRARIES COUNCIL**



LIGHTNING ROUNDS

SESSION NAME	PRESENTER
Sensory Story Time	Sarah Morse Broward County Library
Box Engineers, a Family STEM Program	Jewels Leggett Orange County Library System
Why We Should Care: Cultivating Engagement Through Storytelling	Niall Williams Florida State University
Student Success Librarianship and the Story of Library Value	CJ Ivory University of West Georgia
They See Me Rollin': Steering a One-Person Outreach and Bookmobile Program	Morgan Strickland Walton County Public Library System
Whose Story Does Search Tell? Authority, AI, and Information Literacy in LLM-Enhanced Databases	Christopher Jimenez and Ramces Marsilli Florida International University
Quick Pitch Vendors	<u>Bibliotele</u> and <u>Patricia Stiehr</u>



PERSPECTIVES FROM A FIRST TIME CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

FLA CONFERENCE 2026

NATALIE CASTILLO
ADULT SERVICES SPECIALIST
HOMESTEAD CYBRARIUM

For a couple of years now I've debated going for my MLIS and getting into library work. Like every English major in college, library work seemed like a great [and hilariously predictable] choice; but my circumstances made me hesitant to invest in higher education right away. I worked odd jobs for a while to help me pay for college and did some clerical work at a law firm. I never stopped looking for opportunities to work at a library in some way. As luck and persistence would have it, I landed a job in my local library in Homestead working in Adult Services, and I thought it would be good to learn and experience library work before committing to the degree. When I was given the privilege of attending the FLA Conference, I jumped for the chance to further explore this career option and learn from my more experienced peers in the industry.

Admittedly, I went into day one a little hot. I was slightly overwhelmed by how many things were going on seemingly all at once. I had the foresight to create a rough schedule for myself, highlighting sessions I wanted to go to or presentations that seemed interesting to me.

Not all of them applied to me or my career, but I wanted to go into this experience curious and open-minded to the variety of work my peers were doing. I listened, took notes, and wrote down contact information from the presenters. FLA this year had many career building breakouts, presentations and booths, full of professionals who were ready to help and give advice to people starting out. The Career 411 breakout session was one of the most helpful to me in honing my professional focus.

One of the presenters in particular, Mr. Jerdaine Sterling, advised us to join mailing lists, and online communities for the purpose of keeping up with issues and news within our industry. He spoke about being informed; being able to speak to these issues and empowering ourselves to know about the library world. I thought it was brilliant, and overall, I thought the breakout was great and included specific advice that I had not heard anywhere or from anyone else.

One of my favorite presentations came from the Osceola Library System, and their work incorporating history and heritage into their programming, connecting younger generations wanting to learn with older generations that had experienced the history in the making.

Perspectives from a first time conference attendee

I left the presentation inspired, wanting to find ways to bridge those gaps in my own community through creative programming like theirs. I left feeling strangely excited to come back to work!

As expected from a conference full of librarians, information is given as freely as water; there's no such thing as a wrong answer or a bad question. I chatted with people beside me during breakouts and took an interest in their work. At first, I worried about networking. Am I doing this right or am I just making friends here instead? I'm no expert, but in the moment, it felt like the same thing. My peers were warm, and open. They were curious about me too, and we shared stories and compared our experiences in our respective libraries. There is great comfort in knowing many of our struggles are the same, but plenty of differences too depending on the area of Florida they were in, and the needs of their community. These conversations with other librarians made me realize my lack of knowledge in the matter of community essentials. What do patrons in my library need or want? At the end of the day, we are here to help people and provide access to information, and I've learned that the truly educated and professional librarian is the person who is adaptable, dependable, and takes a genuine interest in their communities' needs and wants. I learned a lot from the amazing people this week and I'm truly grateful to have had the chance to participate and show up for my library in such a cool way. The road ahead is long and challenging, but I'm hopeful and excited. Now on to step one: starting library school!



Author on far left

POSTER SESSIONS

POSTER SESSION I

- Library Programs to Support Autism Acceptance Month - Amelia Anderson, University of South Florida
- Leading Teen Voices in Libraries - Nancy Matos & Cynthia Saavedra, Miami-Dad Public Library System
- The Case of the Missing Documents - Niall Williams, Florida State University
- The Library as a Success Partner: Advocating for Integrated Research Support - Kaitlyn Hodge, Pasco-Hernando State College
- Library Collaboration for Community Narratives - John Abresch, University of South Florida Libraries

POSTER SESSION II

- They See Me Rollin': Navigating Library Outreach as a Team of One - Morgan Strickland, Walton County Public Library System
- StoryBridge: Empowering At-Risk Teens Through Transformative Storytelling - Annie Mena-Omeir & Cynthia Saavedra, Miami-Dade Public Library System
- Tabletop Roleplaying Games for Teens and Adults - Shannon Dann & Savannah Whitby, Volusia County Public Library
- Read, Reflect, Respond: Building a Faculty Learning Community - Mary Beth Isaacson & Kayla Kuni, Pasco-Hernando State College
- Next Chapter Book Club: Building Inclusive Communities, One Story at a Time - JB Bishop, Maitland Public Library

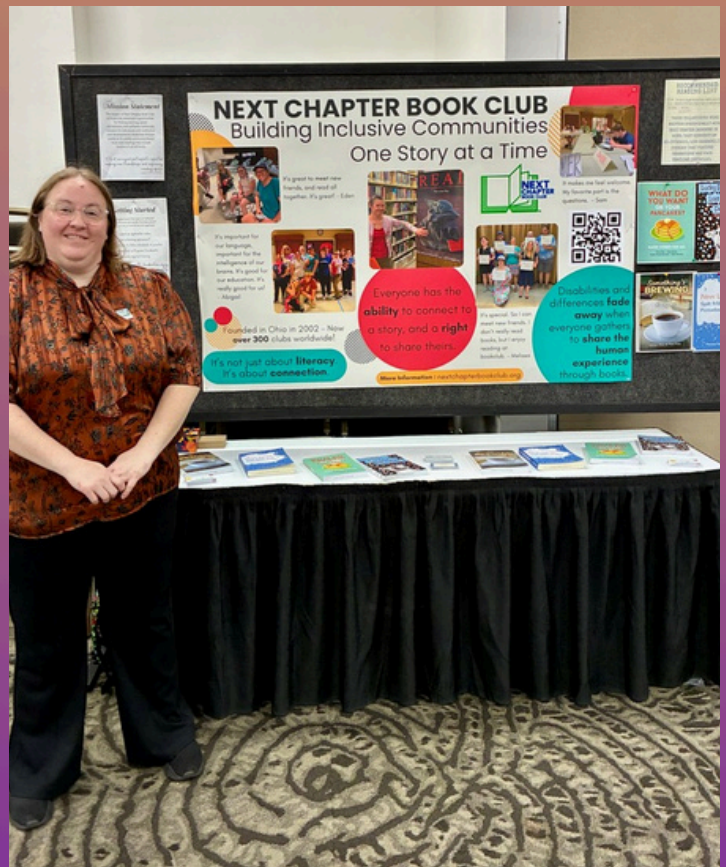
POSTER SESSION III

- Planting your future: Notes from a Staff-to-Librarian Success Story - Hillary Arieux, Florida Southern College
- Listening to Autistic Patrons to Develop More Inclusive Libraries - Amelia Anderson, University of South Florida
- More Than Manga: Fandom Events in Library Spaces - Rachel Morrison, Osceola Library System - Buenaventura Lakes Library
- America 250 Booklists: The Methods, Merits, and Many Voices - Ashton Maggard & Mariah Moorman, Orange County Library System
- Poetry Programming as a Platform for Voice and Expression - Elida Velado Salazar, University of Miami Libraries

POSTER SESSION VI

- Telling Stories, Sharing Stories: Enhancing Access Through Inclusive Metadata - Amirah Flynn, Pasco-Hernando State College
- Quantifying Librarianship: Visualizing the Work of an Academic Librarian - Mary Rubin, University of Central Florida
- Including Students in the Archives: Telling the University's Story One Item at a Time - Clarissa West-White, Bethune-Cookman University
- Beyond Numbers: The UWF Story Project - Kellie Sparks, University of West Florida Libraries

POSTER SESSIONS



- Patricia Stiehr
- Simone Knego
- Jamie Marco
- Robert Carr
- Robert Bellini
- Yolonda Deon Tyler
- Marilyn Turk
- Lana McAra



PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION

This year's President's Reception was casino-themed and featured a "flappers and gangsters" costume contest. Music, dancing, faux-gambling, and the annual Wine Toss to raise money for scholarships rounded out the evening to ensure the house *always* wins.



PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION



PERFORMER'S SHOWCASE



Orisirisi African Folklore • Benjammin
JWQ Art Experiences • Archeological and Historical Conservancy
Bits N Pieces Puppet Theatre

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Click the title of each presentation to learn more!

[Library Facility Management 101](#)

[Community Leadership Stories](#)

[Plain Language Toolkit for Librarians: Practical Tools to Improve Understanding, Engagement and Trust](#)

[Shared Stories: Partnering with Local Authors for Community Impact](#)

[Advocacy in Action: IF Stories of Success](#)

[Eatonville History Preservation Community Quilt Project](#)

[Shared Stories, Different Settings: A Comparative Study of Two Libraries](#)

[Leading and Learning: Paths to Empowerment](#)

["Our Story, Our Place:" An Immersive and Inclusive Library Experience](#)

[Beyond Library Walls: Bringing Programs to Medical Spaces](#)

[The Data Made Us Do It: Cancelling Everyone's Favorite Journals](#)

[What We Learned This Year: Stories of Growth](#)

[Library Storytelling: How to Find Memorable Library Stories to Use for Marketing and Promotion \(EBSCO\).](#)

[Open Rules for Cataloging](#)

[Telling Your Library's Story Through Signage](#)

[Cosplay Workshops: Skill-Building & Community-Building at the Library](#)

[Training that Sticks: Improving Onboarding for Staff](#)

[Career 411: Never Too Late to Jumpstart Your Career!](#)

[Creating a Legacy: Mascots in Academic Libraries](#)

[Seeds of Change: Agricultural Stories In Programming](#)





BREAKOUT SESSIONS

From Shelves to Safety: Equipping Library Staff for Crisis De-escalation

Cultivating Readers: Libraries as Literacy Leaders

Bookshelves of Curiosity

Once Upon a Dataset: Planning, Promoting, and Proving Impact in Children's Services

Shelf-Promotion: Crafting Your Brand in the Digital Age

Retired Not Expired: Stories of Engagement in Retirement

Librarians & Leviathans: Using TTRPGs in the Library

Do You Work Here?: Managing Volunteers in Libraries

Amplifying the Impact: Effective Marketing Strategies for Your FEL Resources

Navigate and Advocate: Our Stories of Library Accessibility

Gotta Catch Them All: Nontraditional Programming to Level Up Impact

Video Storytelling: Capture and Share Meaningful Stories Using a Smartphone

Building a Pipeline to Increase Fundraising for Your Library

From Galaxies to Gardens: Storytelling Through Collaborative Library Programming





CLOSING CEREMONY

The conference's Closing Ceremony both concludes the annual conference, and gives attendees a chance to reflect on the previous days. Awards and scholarships are given, new FLA Board members are sworn in, FLA business is attended to, and the new President of FLA is welcomed.



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2026 FLA AWARD WINNERS!

Every year, the Florida Library Association bestows awards to outstanding libraries, librarians, library workers, Friends groups, volunteers and more.

To learn more about all of this year's winners, [**click here.**](#)

AWARD	WINNER
Library of the Year	Broward County Library
Adminsitrator of the Year	Casey McPhee, Largo Public Library
Lifetime Achievement	Lois Eannel, East Lake Community Library
Librarian of the Year	Miriam Kashem, Miami-Dade Public Library
Outstanding New Librarian	Ashton Maggard, Orange County Library System
Outstanding Paraprofessional	Nayvelis Castineira, Miami-Dade Public Library
Betty Davis Miller Youth Services Award	Sara White, Seminole County Public Library
Betty Davis Miller Youth Services Award - Teen	Sharlene Fagan and Sarah Gantt, Volusia County Public Library
Innovative Program or Service	I Read Dead People, Palm Beach County Library
Communications Excellence	Freegal Quest, Broward County Library
Libraries Mean Business	Fara Jacobson and Janelle Gonzalez, Miami-Dade Public Library
Intellectual Freedom Award	Broward County's African American Research Library and Cultural Center
Outstanding Citizen	Maria Guerrero, Women in the Arts, Inc.
Outstanding Business or Media Partner	The Westside Gazette
Maria Chavez-Hernandez "Libraries Change People's Lives" Award	David Hildenbrand, Miami-Dade Public Library

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2026 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS!



Sarah Romero

FSU iSchool Scholarship

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Florida Library Association for presenting me with the Kimberly L. Amos-Tata Florida State University iSchool Scholarship. Your generosity provides meaningful support as I pursue my graduate education at Florida State University. It is truly an honor to receive this recognition as I continue this rewarding path toward academic librarianship."



Melina Gaitanis

University of South Florida Bernadette Storck Graduate Scholarship

"I cannot fully express how much this scholarship means to me. Balancing my education and my health has been one of my greatest challenges, and opportunities like the Bernadette Storck Scholarship give me hope and motivation to keep moving forward. I am committed to continuing my studies and working hard to achieve my goals so that I can make a meaningful difference in the library field. I am deeply grateful for the support I have received in pursuing my education thus far."



Kismet Kohn

FLA Past Presidents Scholarship

"Receiving the Florida Library Association Past Presidents Graduate Scholarship is both an honor and a meaningful milestone in my journey toward a career in librarianship. This recognition affirms the value of the work I am pursuing, and it motivates me to continue developing the skills needed to serve user communities effectively. The financial support provided by this scholarship will help me focus more fully on my studies and professional growth, and I am deeply grateful for the investment in my future in the library field."

 **Follett** Content

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Let's talk Florida libraries.
Connect with your rep:



Fred Harvey
fharvey@follettcontent.com

FLORIDA LIBRARIES is looking for:

- Article submissions
- Volunteers for the Editorial Board

Email executivedirector@flalib.org
for more information.



Save the date for the 2027 FLA Annual Conference!



THE THEME WILL BE

“AI IN LIBRARIES: FRIEND, FOE, OR FUTURE?”

Calls for presentation proposals will open soon, so be sure to follow us on social media and subscribe to our emails for the latest info.



Christmas in July

Help FLA keep the spirit of libraries alive all year long! Your donation brings the gift of advocacy, learning, and connection to Florida's library community.

As little as \$20 from each member of our library community can make a big difference!

Not a member? Join now for 50% off Personal Memberships through December!

Donate today and be the reason FLA keeps growing, thriving, and serving.



SCAN HERE TO DONATE

