

Membership in CLA is open to individuals and organizations. For more information, contact:

**Membership Services**

8550 United Plaza Boulevard, Suite 1001  
Baton Rouge, LA 70809  
phone: 225-408-4417  
email: office@CathLA.org  
website: www.CathLA.org

**CATHOLIC LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

***Bland O'Connor***

P & N Association Management  
8550 United Plaza Boulevard, Suite 1001  
Baton Rouge, LA 70809  
phone: 225-408-4417  
e-mail: boconnor@pnca.com

**PRESIDENT**

***Mary Kelleher***

Cardinal Beran Library  
St. Mary's Seminary  
University of St. Thomas School of Theology  
9845 Memorial Drive  
Houston, TX 77024  
phone: 713-686-4345 x 248  
e-mail: kellehm@stthom.edu

**VICE PRESIDENT/TREASURER**

***N. Curtis Le May***

University of St. Thomas  
260 Summit Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55105  
phone: 651-962-5451 fax: 651-962-5460  
e-mail: nclemay@stthomas.edu

**PAST PRESIDENT**

***Sara Baron***

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS**

***Pat Lawton (2017)***

Catholic Research Resources Alliance  
(University of Notre Dame)  
214 Hesburgh Library  
Notre Dame, IN 46556  
phone: 574-631-1324  
e-mail: plawton@nd.edu

***Ann O'Hara (2017)***

Marquette University High School  
3401 W. Wisconsin Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53208  
phone: 414-933-7220 x 3076  
e-mail: ohara@muhs.edu

***Elyse Hayes (2018)***

Seminary of the Immaculate Conception  
440 W. Neck Road  
Huntington, NY 11743  
phone: 631-423-0483 ext. 140  
e-mail: elysehayes@yahoo.com

***Kathryn Shaughnessy (2018)***

St. John's University  
St. Augustine Hall, Library 306  
8000 Utopia Parkway  
Queens, NY 11439  
phone: 718-990-1454  
e-mail: shaughnk@stjohns.edu



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# DEAR FRIENDS

A Letter from the CLA President



## Libraries Transform

The American Library Association just introduced a new publicity campaign called "Libraries Transform." This campaign speaks to me as a Catholic librarian because I truly believe that my library can be a part of God's formation of our seminarians and lay students of theology here at St. Mary's in Houston. Appropriately, according to the grammar of the campaign, it is libraries that transform, not librarians. For while we can be the instruments of God's grace to our patrons, it is the Holy Spirit who does the transforming. We remain humbly in the background of God's work where, in the words of Mother (soon to be Saint) Teresa, we are "God's pencil[s]."

In current library literature, however, we find librarians who push themselves to the foreground. Many librarians appear to worry a lot about how others perceive them—their jobs, their relevance, their professionalism. Catholic librarians have a different view. While it is good to serve the current needs of our patrons rather than some idealized past need or what are often our own needs, Catholic librarians know that service—and yes, humble service—is at the heart of what we do. We are called not to be librarian rockstars, but to be humble servants of the Word.

It would be a good thing as Catholic librarians to think about how our libraries transform lives and people and even souls. How do our school libraries transform little ones from pre-readers to readers? How do our high school libraries transform non-readers to readers? How do our parish libraries transform unevangelized Christians into evangelized ones? How do our college, university, and seminary libraries transform students into well-informed and well-formed theological thinkers? And how do all our libraries aid our patrons in living as loving followers of Jesus Christ?

Our libraries have a great freedom and a great responsibility that public libraries, public schools, and public universities don't have. We can ask these questions of ourselves and our libraries. Let us do so now. Let us ask ourselves how our libraries transform and then let us enlighten our schools, parishes, universities, and seminaries about what we discover. Let us share with our colleagues what we discover, especially our colleagues in the Catholic Library Association. And finally, let us share with our broader Catholic community what we have discovered. (Those of us who do not work in Catholic libraries can still advocate for them to the wider Catholic community.) Let us explain the essentialness of Catholic libraries for living authentic lives. ■

*Mary Kelleher, President*