

Conable Scholarship Reflection

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I would like to thank the Freedom to Read Foundation and the Conable family for sponsoring this scholarship. It was an incredible opportunity for me not only to attend my first ALA annual conference, but also to experience ALA in a different and deeper way than I would have on my own.

Many people have asked me about my favorite part of the conference. I can't even begin to choose between the wonderful discussions, presentations, meetings, and personal connections that made this such a rich experience! However, attending the Freedom to Read Foundation meeting was a particular highlight because it provided a fascinating view into the legal landscape of First Amendment issues. By broadening my perspective, that meeting made me think about the global ramifications of state and local decisions in a new and much more cogent way. I would never have experienced that without the Conable Scholarship, and I am stunned that I might have missed the important and compelling work of such dedicated people! I will always make it a goal to be at that meeting, and am already advocating for my friends and colleagues to join.

But the Conable Scholarship's greatest impact on me was not tied to one particular event. Rather, it was coming to understand the astonishing magnitude of support for those grappling with issues of intellectual freedom. Even small challenges and subtle pressures can feel incredibly isolating; it is too easy for that isolation to become despondence and acquiescence. But after exposure to the incredible support system that includes FRTF, IFC, IFRT, OIF, the Merritt Fund, and others, I now know that there is a resource for anyone grappling with a challenge, a best practice, or even simply a nagging concern that a practice or policy inadvertently abridges some readers' rights. Not only do these groups provide resolutions, guidelines, and a safe forum for powerful discussions, but they bring together an amazing set of professionals with a wealth of personal experience, empathy, and ideas. Getting to know these organizations through the Conable Scholarship has made me realize that there will always be somewhere to turn when in need. Best of all, it has shown me so many ways to become part of that support system for others.

I am looking forward to becoming more involved with FRTF and ALA intellectual freedom initiatives through membership and committee participation. I am also excited to bring your conviction and dedication to my own community, in my work and in my writing. Because of the unique opportunities offered by the Conable Scholarship, I am energized and empowered to make a difference. I am deeply thankful for the opportunity, and thrilled that other new professionals will be able to share it in years to come.