



## **MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

### **Gwendolyn B. Guster Welch**

It has been my pleasure to serve as the library board president for the Birmingham Public Library for the last four years. My, how time flies. I've met so many good people and had the opportunity to see several positive changes develop for BPL. I'm glad to say that I was a part of it. Now, as we get into a new year, I wanted to reflect on my years of service and what I expect to see for our future. Buckle up, folks. We are in for a good ride.

Recently, I stepped down as board president to give an opportunity for new leadership. My departure from the presidency does not mean I'm leaving the board. I will remain a board member, still eager to serve the public. I want you to know that I truly enjoyed my years as president and I look forward to a future as serving as a board member. We've done a lot under my leadership and I expect new developments will continue.

Serving on the board is a serious commitment. We must continue to be dedicated by attending and participating on board committees, the BPL board and the Birmingham City Council Education Committee meetings. I dedicated myself to fulfill that promise. I thank the board for entrusting me with the responsibility to lead the board during such a challenging year.

As we move through 2013, I wanted to share my thoughts on leadership from the book "The Leadership Secrets of Colin Powell." I challenge the board to "Keep looking below surface appearances. Don't shrink from doing so (just) because you might not like what you find." A true leader is one

who takes proactive steps to solve problems as they emerge. A true leader doesn't have trustees tied up for hours and hours in meetings for the sake of meeting. A true leader doesn't sit back, twiddle thumbs and wait days and days to make a decision. A true leader recognizes a problem and pounces, just like a lion hunting for the next meal. If that lion doesn't pounce, he starves. The same is true for a leader. If the leader doesn't jump on an emerging problem or existing problem, such inaction will make survival harder. It's time to find new ways to "pounce" and attack a problem that will benefit your library. A good leader is not stuck in the past and does not back away from seeking out new opportunities and challenges. A good leader welcomes the new. One of the greatest tests of leadership is to recognize a problem before it becomes an emergency.

I wish the new BPL board leaders much success and I want them to know that I stand behind them and the board. Good luck to new board president Gwendolyn Amamoo and vice president Georgia Blair.