

# President - Gail Ament

## Short Bio

Gail's connection to Oaxaca began 60 years ago as a 19-year-old volunteer in the Mixteca Alta—an experience that shaped her entire career as a Spanish professor and sparked a lifetime of commitment to Latin American communities. After earning her PhD and teaching university for 50 years, she returned to Oaxaca full-time in 2022 with two specific goals: join the OLL board and the Learning Center board. She achieved both within months.

As President, Gail has led OLL through strategic planning, worked tirelessly on donataria status to eliminate the library's 30% tax burden, and maintained a productive board despite complex challenges. Her priorities for a second term focus on sustainable annual fundraising, building institutional memory through proper documentation, expanding community partnerships, and bringing fresh talent into leadership while supporting dedicated veterans.

## Longer Bio

Gail's journey with Oaxaca spans six decades, beginning when she was 19 and spent two months volunteering in a Mixteca Alta village of 600 people. That transformative summer redirected her entire career path—she abandoned journalism plans, majored in Spanish, and eventually earned her PhD, dedicating 50 years to university teaching. Her academic work centered on Guatemala, where she completed her Fulbright-funded doctoral dissertation and later spent years working with solidarity movements during times when brutality went unreported in American media.

When she walked into the Oaxaca Lending Library during a 2015 exploratory trip to test whether she could live happily in Oaxaca, she was "greeted like a long-lost friend." Then-president Rebecca Severide immediately recruited her to the book committee to help with Spanish language titles—recognition that she had something valuable to offer. That mentorship experience shaped Gail's own approach to welcoming newcomers and helping them find their niche.

After retiring from Morningside University in Sioux City, Iowa in 2022, Gail moved to Oaxaca with clear intentions: join both the OLL and Learning Center boards. Within months, she joined OLL's board as vice president, advancing to president after observing and learning from her predecessor's skillful management of civil discourse.

As President, Gail has delivered Annual General Assembly Meetings, worked as a key figure in pursuing donataria status that would eliminate OLL's 30% tax burden (an ongoing effort), played a key role in the strategic planning retreat that identified critical priorities for board success, and mediated various

conflicts. She chairs the Terrace Talks sub-committee and uses that hands-on experience to inform her understanding of the library's operational realities.

For her second term, Gail envisions transforming OLL's financial sustainability through extensive fundraising support and annual campaigns rather than crisis-driven efforts. She's committed to creating institutional memory through committee manuals and proper documentation systems, restoring compliance with Libros para Pueblos to serve more Oaxacan families, and genuinely broadening the library's reach—particularly to marginalized communities who have historically been under-represented within the library.

## **Nomination**

After two years as President, Gail has developed comprehensive knowledge of OLL's operations, stakeholder relationships, and organizational processes. She has identified specific contacts across committees, understands which initiatives have been attempted previously, and has established working relationships with key partners including the donataria legal team and Libros para Pueblos leadership.