

american libraries

November/December 2020

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION



Distance & Dragons

p. 26

Archiving the
Pandemic p. 30

Teen-Led
Activism p. 40

PLUS: Deaf StorySlam,
Magic Collection, BCALA at 50



ALA

JANUARY 22–26, 2021

MIDWINTER MEETING & EXHIBITS

VIRTUAL

ALA American Library Association

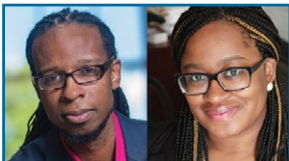
A Fresh Take on the Midwinter Meeting & Exhibits

More speakers ... more education ... and more celebrations and networking opportunities than ever before!

Highlights include:

- Symposium on the Future of Libraries—*offering sessions on future trends to inspire innovation in libraries*
- News You Can Use—*with updates that highlight new research, innovations, and advances in libraries*
- Interactive Author Events & Live Chats
- Awards celebrations, including the Youth Media Awards and the I Love My Librarian Awards
- A Virtual Exhibit Hall with **NEW!** Presentation Stages

Featured Speakers with more to be announced:



Ibram X. Kendi and
Keisha N. Blain
Opening Session



Joy Harjo
ALA President's Program



Emmanuel Acho
Featured Speaker

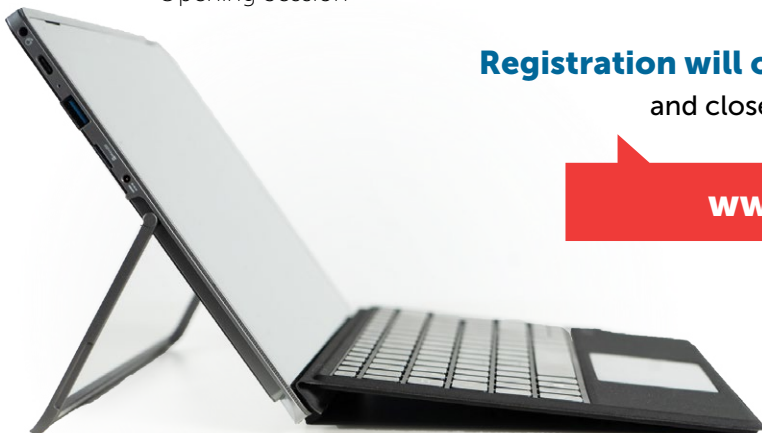


Cicely Tyson
Featured Speaker

Registration will open November 5, 2020, Noon Central
and close January 15, 2021, Noon Central.

www.alamidwinter.org

#alamw21



CONTENTS

November/December 2020

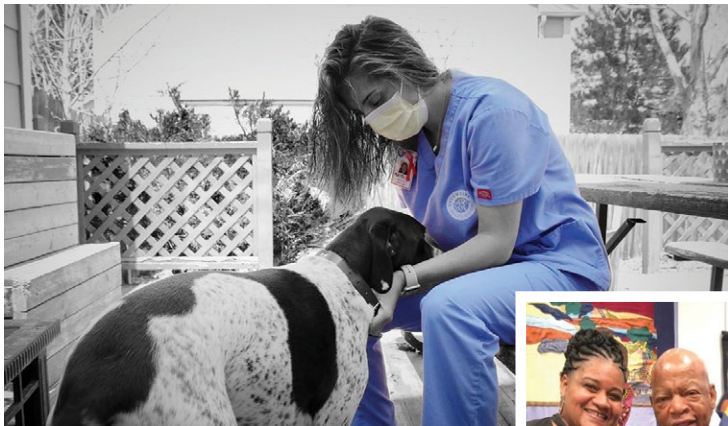
American Libraries | Volume 51 #11/12 | ISSN 0002-9769

COVER STORY

26 **Escape for the Isolated**

Dungeons & Dragons offers online realms of fantasy, adventure

By Timothy Inklebarger



30

FEATURES

30 **Collecting Coronavirus Stories**

Librarians and archivists around the country ask patrons to document history in the making

By Claire Zulkey

34 **Black Caucus of the ALA Celebrates 50 Years**

Members look at what's ahead for Black librarianship

By Alison Marcotte

40 **Let Them Lead**

In a new age of protest, teen librarians support youth interests and activism

By Emily Udell

44 **The Weight We Carry**

Creating a trauma-informed library workforce

By Rebecca Tolley



34



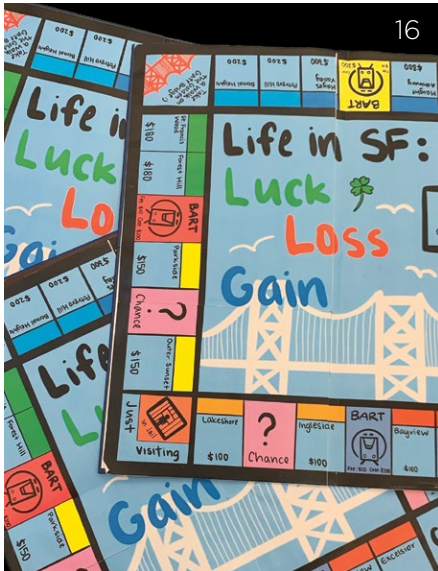
44



40

ON THE COVER: Illustration by Katie Wheeler

CONTENTS



UP FRONT

3 **From the Editor**
A Welcome Escape
by Sanhita SinhaRoy

6 **From Our Readers**

ALA

4 **From the President**
We the People
by Julius C. Jefferson Jr.

5 **From the Executive Director**
Ending Information Redlining
by Tracie D. Hall

8 **Update**
What's happening at ALA

TRENDS

14 **The Great Outdoors**
Libraries turn to drone delivery, outdoor browsing, and other alfresco services
by Anne Ford

16 **The Missing Piece**
Libraries use board games to encourage critical thinking in young people
by Diana Panunial

18 **Drawing the Line**
How libraries handle the legacy of racist murals
by Cass Balzer

SPOTLIGHT

20 **Signing Stories**
New narrative series features Deaf artists and their experiences
by Kristina Gómez

NEWSMAKERS

22 **Marcus Samuelsson and Osayi Endolyn**
Their new volume showcases the diversity and wealth of Black cooking
by Anne Ford

PLUS

- 15 By the Numbers
- 19 Global Reach
- 24 Noted & Quoted

PERSPECTIVES

IN PRACTICE

48 **Our Collective Power**
by Meredith Farkas

DISPATCHES

49 **One Country, One Collection**
by Mirela Roncevic

YOUTH MATTERS

50 **Reset and Reconnect**
by Becky Calzada, Anita Cellucci, and Courtney Lewis

ON MY MIND

51 **More Seats at the Table**
by Joslyn Bowling Dixon

LIBRARIAN'S LIBRARY

52 **Empower, Provide, Engage**
by Allison Escoto

PEOPLE

54 **Announcements**

THE BOOKEND

56 **Conjuring a Collection**

56



ADVERTISER INDEX

Digital Society Press 11 | University of Nebraska 21 | American Library Association Conference Services Cover 2 | Development Office 13 | Editions 25 | JobLIST 55
Public Library Association Cover 3, Cover 4

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from the
EDITOR

A Welcome Escape



Sanhita SinhaRoy

Fantasy! Adventure! Peril! That may sound like a description of everyday life in 2020—but, as you'll read in our cover story ("Escape for the Isolated," p. 26), those elements are actually the big draw of virtual *Dungeons & Dragons* games, which many library workers are hosting to build community during the pandemic. Timothy Inklebarger reports that the ever-popular role-playing game is providing entertainment for some ... and a lifeline to others.

This year we celebrate the semicentennial of ALA's Black Caucus, which has done so much for so many. In "Black Caucus of the ALA Celebrates 50 Years" (p. 34), Alison Marcotte speaks with 10 members of the affiliate organization about the role of libraries in combating systemic racism and fighting for social justice, especially during this very turbulent anniversary year.

Also making history—or rather, archiving it—are the library workers gathering local COVID-19 experiences for posterity. In "Collecting Coronavirus Stories" (p. 30), Claire Zulkey interviews librarians and archivists about the snapshots they're capturing of the pandemic's effects on society.

Pandemics pass, but the strength and passion of young people don't, as you'll read in "Let Them Lead" (p. 40). In the context of Black Lives Matter and looming elections, among other issues, some library workers are helping young activists "not only develop and amplify their voices but also build awareness and change in their communities," reports Emily Udell.

You may know award-winning chef Marcus Samuelsson from his many TV appearances, including *Chopped*. His new cookbook, *The Rise: Black Cooks and the Soul of American Food*, coauthored with Osayi Endolyn, celebrates the richness and range of Black cooking. As our Newsmakers (p. 22), Samuelsson and Endolyn talk with Anne Ford about the racial dynamics of the food publishing world. Find a couple of recipes from *The Rise* on americanlibraries.org after November 2.

It'll be sure to inspire ideas for holiday meals—and provide an escape.

Sanhita

From archiving pandemic stories to supporting young activists in this new age of protest, library workers have been vital.

We the People

Let's carry the profession into the future by working together



Julius C. Jefferson Jr.

As a career federal employee, I took an oath of allegiance to the US Constitution, which begins with three words that are the bedrock upon which our country stands: *We the People*. To me, it means the government exists to serve all citizens of this experiment called the United States of America. And yet we know that when the Constitution was penned in 1787, ratified in 1788, and in effect after 1789, *We the People* did not include all the people.

The primary focus of my ALA presidency is to serve the people—*all people*—with particular attention to those who were not included or who are underrepresented or forgotten.

In my last column, I shared the idea behind ALA's "Holding Space" tour, which began in July and featured virtual visits to 11 libraries across the country that serve the people, highlighting communities that have too often been voiceless.

The goal was to listen and accept the truth, reality, and experiences of library workers and the communities they serve. A major part of the success of "Holding Space" was rooted in our relationships with ALA chapters, state libraries, affiliate organizations, and the local people we visited virtually in amazing communities across the country. We discussed each community's specific needs while connecting ALA's strategic priorities with community leaders and elected officials at all levels of government. Our online travels were led by our incredible ALA staff, notably our virtual tour bus crew from ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office.

Here are takeaways from the tour:

- Libraries across the country are doing concrete, effective work, serving the needs of their communities.
- Libraries are critical infrastructure in their communities, especially in workforce development, innovation, connectivity, leadership, and community engagement.

- Library workers are committed and resourceful and have served as second responders in times of crisis.
- Too many communities remain under-resourced, without basic access to information technologies in the digital age.
- Libraries collaborate with local partners and find ways to remain essential, useful institutions.
- Our best advocacy tools are the stories we hear from those who benefit from library services in their communities.
- Change in national library policies begins with stories of hardship and success, like those we heard along the virtual road.

Libraries need our help. If they lack resources to serve all people, this American experiment fails. In 2020, this year of crisis, do we have 20/20 vision for our future? With so much division and turmoil in the world, we as a people must move forward together.

The work of our Association is at a crossroads as well. ALA staff and members have been considering the Association's future governance structure, constitution, and bylaws for the past few years, led initially by the Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE). We now have a new working group under the direction of Council called Forward Together. The group will facilitate discussions regarding SCOE's recommendation to the ALA Executive Board. This phase will lead Council to a constitutional convention aimed at structuring ALA for long-term success and sustainability.

Our role as ALA members is to advocate for library services and library workers, ensuring access to information for all. Our mission can be successful only when everyone is included in *We the People*. **AL**

JULIUS C. JEFFERSON JR. is president of the American Library Association.

If libraries lack resources to serve all people, this American experiment fails.

Ending Information Redlining

The role of libraries in the next wave of the civil rights movement



Tracie D. Hall

Information redlining is the denial of equitable access to information, information services, and information retrieval methods.

This past June, in my first address before ALA's membership as executive director, I outlined three urgencies facing the library and information science field: expanding digital and data access; rapidly diversifying the racial composition of the LIS workforce; and preserving library services by cultivating new stakeholders and partnerships.

In my most recent column, I called out equitable information access as a matter of social justice and questioned how ALA and its collective constituency might work even more intentionally to eradicate information poverty.

I want to pick up this discussion. Let's look at the pervasive and persistent inequities in information and digital access—and the degree to which they are profoundly raced and classed—as an instance of what I call *information redlining*.

Redlining is “the practice of arbitrarily denying or limiting financial services to specific neighborhoods, generally because its residents are people of color or are poor,” according to *Encyclopedia of Chicago*.

Information redlining, as I am asserting it, is the systematic denial of equitable access to information, information services, and information retrieval methods.

Though this definition is my own, in researching other occurrences of the term, I discovered references to scholarship in the mid-1990s by researchers Marvin Anderson, Gary Bass, Patrice McDermott, and Henry Perritt, who forecast the increasing dependence on digital access and formats. Their writings argue that information redlining consists of, but is not limited to, not only *how* low-income, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color), and rural communities access information, but *what* information is most readily available and discoverable by these groups.

In September, a study from Deutsche Bank called *America's Racial Gap and Big Tech's Closing Window* (bit.ly/DBstudy) showed that 76% of

the nation's Black residents and 62% of Latinx residents are slated to be shut out of or under-prepared for 86% of US jobs by 2045. They are experiencing a “racial tech gap” that threatens their future economic mobility. The researchers observed that Black and Latinx households are a decade behind white households in broadband access. The study states: “If this digital racial gap is not addressed, in one generation alone, digitization could render the country's minorities into an unemployment abyss.”

ALA and the nation's libraries have a primary role to play in closing this gap. In fact, I believe countering information redlining is at the center of the next wave of the civil rights movement that's already under way.

The Association's recent release “Built by E-Rate: A Case Study of Two Tribally-Owned Fiber Networks and the Role of Libraries in Making It Happen” (bit.ly/ALAE-Rate) illustrates how tribal libraries have used the federal E-Rate program to bring high-speed internet to sovereign nations in New Mexico. It's just one of many examples of how we can bring awareness to an area that urgently demands investment and advocacy.

The persistence of the coronavirus pandemic continues to expose the degree to which societal inequities are inextricably linked. Information disparities beget education and employment disparities; education and employment disparities beget economic, health, and housing disparities; economic, health, and housing disparities beget justice system and incarceration disparities; and justice system and incarceration disparities circle back to create information disparities.

The last link in this cycle—the relationship between justice system and incarceration inequities and information disparity—will be the focus of my next column. Until then. **AL**

TRACIE D. HALL is executive director of the American Library Association.

Here's when to call the cops at a library: never.

@NORA_CHARLES in response to "When Not to Call the Cops" (Sept./Oct., p. 49)

Dear #librarytwitter, what's the most library-esque thing you've done recently? Me, it would have to be cutting out a felt for a virtual storytime on top of my recent Cops of @amlibraries.

@COLLEGECUSINER in response to the Sept./Oct. issue

Policing the Library

I really appreciated "Rethinking Police Presence" (Sept./Oct., p. 46). Since my library branch recently reopened, I have had a recurring nightmare: A patron is in the middle of the library, refusing to wear a mask and shouting that the pandemic is a hoax. Our staffers take turns asking [them] to wear a mask or leave the library until somebody calls the police. The police come, and, as we have seen happen time and again, they shoot first and ask questions later.

In some versions of the nightmare, the patron is killed for being ignorant of the true dangers of this pandemic, because they do not have the information access needed to learn about it (whereas misinformation is easy to access). In other versions of the nightmare, it is one of my coworkers who takes the bullet. What does it say that we cannot trust police not to kill the very workers we are trying to protect?

So far, everyone coming into the library has been compliant with safety precautions. There has been no need for action from our guards, let alone the police. But I still worry. I worry that if it doesn't happen at my library, it will happen at a library in another county, or another state. At any library whose plan for handling a hostile patron is to call the police. I worry, because we have directed more funding to punishing poverty and ignorance than combating these issues.



I don't know if my library will ever see a patron become so hostile that we'll need to ask them to leave. I don't know if the patron will leave, or if the police will be called, or if the police will shoot someone. I do know we could invest in educating the public and fighting against the economic disparities that lead to information deprivation in the first place. It's just a matter of what we prioritize in our city budgets.

Shelley Rosen
Philadelphia

The nation is grappling with what role law enforcement officers should hold in society. More people are realizing that Black and Brown people haven't just been blowing hot air for all these decades when we've discussed the abuse our communities suffer at the hands of cops. We're seeing some cities take steps toward police reform. We're also seeing libraries rethink their relationship with law enforcement and security firms.

I once worked in a library that I didn't feel particularly safe in. I admit that even as a Black man, someone who is most likely to be assumed a threat by cops, I'd be nervous if I still worked at

that library and was told it would cease employing uniformed security and conducting routine police walkthroughs.

While I felt safer in that library with security and police present, one thing I realized was that within the confines of that library, I could briefly taste the privilege that white people experience with police. Police and security saw me every day, knew I worked there, and made no false assumptions on my motives. But once I left work, I looked just as suspicious as any other Black man to those police who didn't know me.

Library patrons—even regulars—may never realize such comfort. Regulars may still be eyed with suspicion by security personnel who don't know their motives even if they know their faces. Should my comfort come at the expense of the comfort of library visitors in this regard? If I'm committed to solidarity, no.

Jason Alston

Kansas City, Missouri
Alston is a member of the American Libraries Advisory Committee.

The article was very interesting, but it gave me a concern. Past *American Libraries* articles

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have attacked the stereotype of the overeducated-old-maid and milquetoast-male librarian. Yet this article seems to give credence to the stereotype of the police officer as a bully and brute. Why should one stereotype be opposed and another promoted, especially when both are wrong?

Not everything that happens in libraries is all sweetness and light. We have all seen and experienced bad things, from drug deals to brawls, and they are not what we are equipped to handle well. Police officers are trained to deal with these things and have the legal authority to do things we don't. The question is not how do we keep cops out of libraries or hide them somewhere; the question is how do we work with the police so staffers can do their jobs and patrons can use libraries with peace and security?

Public service staffers need all the help they can get in dealing with what we euphemize as "problem patrons." Administrators need to work with their own staff and with the police to devise ways and means of dealing with crisis situations without either locking down libraries or turning them into free-for-alls.

Kathleen Stipek
Gainesville, Florida

Honoring John Lewis

After reading ALA President Julius C. Jefferson Jr.'s "Stand Up, Speak Out" (Sept./Oct., p. 4) and Executive Director Tracie D. Hall's "Necessary Trouble" (Sept./Oct., p. 5), both discussing the legacy of the late John Lewis, I was reminded of a recent historical discovery that connects Martin

Luther King Jr., John Lewis, and two Southern public libraries.

While researching *Part of Our Lives: A People's History of the American Public Library* (Oxford University Press, 2015), I found out that in the 1930s Black librarian Annie Watters purchased works by Mohandas Gandhi for adult education discussion groups at her segregated Auburn branch of Atlanta Public Library. The patron most attracted to them, however, was an adolescent Martin Luther King Jr.

While researching *The Desegregation of Public Libraries in the Jim Crow South: Civil Rights and Local Activism* (LSU Press, 2018) with my wife Shirl, we came across David Halberstam's *The Children* (Fawcett, 1999), a story about eight young civil rights activists in Nashville in the early 1960s. Halberstam described how Jim Bevel, one of those activists, "found a wealth of books on Gandhi" at the already desegregated Nashville Public Library and circulated them among his friends—including John Lewis, then a student at Nashville's American Baptist College.

Two civil rights leaders committed to nonviolent civil disobedience to correct injustice, I thought to myself, and two public libraries whose collections influenced the course of American history.

Wayne A. Wiegand
Walnut Creek, California

CORRECTION

In "Don't Touch" (Sept./Oct., p. 60), Princh's transaction fees apply only to electronic payments. The stated amount of 7 cents is an average, not a flat fee.

What You're Reading

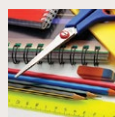
- 1 Virus-Responsive Design** In the age of COVID-19, architects merge future-facing innovations with present-day needs. bit.ly/AL-VirusDesign
- 2 Conscientious Cataloging** Librarians are working to advance equity in their catalogs' subject headings. bit.ly/AL-ConsCat
- 3 Ready for Action** As cities undertake climate action plans, libraries emerge as partners. bit.ly/AL-ClimateAction

In Case You Missed It



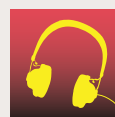
REALM Project Announces

Test 4 Results Study shows how long COVID-19 virus lives on common library materials. bit.ly/AL-REALM4



Teaming Up for Teaching

Public librarians, school librarians, and teachers are working more closely than ever to help families navigate an unpredictable school year. bit.ly/AL-TeamingUp



Small and Rural Libraries

Episode 54 of our podcast looks at issues affecting remote communities, including the digital divide. bit.ly/AL-PodcastSRL

Coming Soon

Our preview of **ALA Midwinter Virtual**, taking place January 22–26.

Referenda Roundup, our annual recap of library bills on the ballot around the country.

A look at how **presidential libraries** are rethinking their subjects' complicated histories after a summer of racial justice protests.

ALA Supports ACCESS the Internet Act

U.S. Sens. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) and John Cornyn (R-Tex.) introduced the bipartisan Accelerating Connected Care and Education Support Services on the Internet Act (ACCESS the Internet Act), which includes funding for libraries. The \$2 billion legislation addresses immediate gaps in internet access necessary for distance learning and telehealth. The distance learning provision will fuel a two-year, \$200 million hotspot pilot program for libraries, to be administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). A minimum allotment of \$1.6 million per state will allow states, tribes, and territories to purchase internet-connected devices for libraries in low-income and rural areas. The bill includes funding for the Department of Education, Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Federal Communications Commission.

American Library Association (ALA) President Julius C. Jefferson Jr. praised the legislation in an August 7 statement: “[ALA] is pleased to see the introduction of Senator Manchin’s and Senator Cornyn’s solutions to keep their communities connected, and Wi-Fi hotspots are in high demand as people pivot to learning, working, seeking healthcare, and [doing] many day-to-day tasks online. With so many households still without broadband at home, libraries are

key to addressing digital inequities the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare.”

Ensuring that libraries have affordable, high-capacity internet access is a priority of ALA’s national advocacy agenda. Throughout the pandemic, libraries have been working to ensure their communities remain connected by loaning Wi-Fi hotspots, extending their Wi-Fi signals beyond their walls, and delivering Wi-Fi access to the community with mobile vans and partnerships with community organizations.

“The ACCESS the Internet Act is a timely step in the right direction, and ALA commends the senators for recognizing that investment in libraries is the most effective way to put the broadband provisions to work,” said Jefferson. “This bill will help millions of underconnected Americans during this critical time.”

In addition to advocating for funding to expand internet access through libraries, ALA is urging Congress to support the Library Stabilization Fund Act (bit.ly/LibFunding), which would address financial losses from COVID-19 and bolster library services, allowing libraries to continue to provide essential community services including distance learning, telemedicine, government services, digital collections, and legal information. ●

ALA Scholarship Applications Open

ALA has more than \$300,000 available to students who are studying library science or are enrolled in school library media programs at the master’s degree level. Scholarships are open to students who are interested in children’s librarianship, youth librarianship, federal librarianship, new media, and library automation. Awards range from \$2,500 to \$8,000 per student per year. In addition, scholarships are available for minorities, persons with disabilities, and people who are already employed in libraries while working toward an MLS.

To be considered for one of these scholarships, applicants must attend an ALA-accredited master’s level program

in library and information science. Applicants interested in school librarianship must attend a program that meets ALA curriculum guidelines for the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

The scholarship process runs annually from September through March. For more information, visit the ALA Scholarship page at ala.org/educationcareers/scholarships. The deadline to apply is March 1, 2021.

Nominations Open for I Love My Librarian Award

ALA invites library users to nominate their favorite librarians for the I Love My Librarian Award. The award recognizes the outstanding public service

contributions of librarians working in public, school, college, community college, or university libraries.

Ten librarians will each receive \$5,000 in recognition of their outstanding achievements. Awardees will be honored at the virtual I Love My Librarian Award ceremony on January 23, which will take place during ALA’s 2021 Midwinter Meeting & Exhibits; winners will also receive free full conference registration as part of their award packages.

To be eligible for the award, nominees must hold a master’s degree in library and information studies from a program accredited by ALA or a master’s degree with a specialty in school library media from an educational program

2021 Midwinter Meeting Goes Virtual

ALA's Executive Board announced in an August 6 statement that the 2021 ALA Midwinter Meeting & Exhibits, originally scheduled for January 22–26 in Indianapolis, will take place on those dates virtually.



Ibram X. Kendi



Joy Harjo



Emmanuel Acho

“It is clear that as we continue to coexist with [the] coronavirus, we need to adjust our approach to meetings and events,” said ALA President Julius C. Jefferson Jr. in the statement. “In the last few months, we have successfully pivoted our delivery to present the Virtual Event in June and ALA’s ‘Holding Space’ tour series this summer. Though we very much hoped to be able to meet in person in Indianapolis, the health and safety of conference attendees, ALA members and staff, exhibitors, and other stakeholders are the priority.”

The preliminary roster of speakers includes author Ibram X. Kendi, US Poet Laureate Joy Harjo, and NFL player Emmanuel Acho. Additional speakers will be announced this fall along with ongoing announcements of programs, sessions, meetings, and exhibits. Registration opens in November.

“This Midwinter would have been ALA’s last before we introduce a totally new convening that I think will truly excite members and the larger field,” ALA Executive Director Tracie D. Hall said. “It would have been great to have a sense of closure and to generate collective excitement in a face-to-face setting for what’s to come. But I am inspired by the more than 10,000 attendees, authors, speakers, and stakeholders who came together for the June Virtual Event.” ●

accredited by CAEP. Nominees must be currently working as librarians, or have been employed as librarians on March 1, at a qualifying institution in the United States: a public library, a library at an accredited two- or four-year college or university, or a library at an accredited K–12 school. Nominations are accepted online through November 9 at ilovelibraries.org/lovemylibrarian.

New Grants for Small and Rural Libraries

On September 21, ALA announced plans to distribute nearly \$2 million to small

and rural libraries in 2020 and 2021 to help them address issues of concern in their communities.

Through Libraries Transforming Communities: Focus on Small and Rural Libraries, up to 650 US libraries in small and rural communities will receive \$3,000 each to tackle issues ranging from media literacy to COVID-19 safety to the unemployment crisis.

Library workers may apply online through December 2 at ala.org/ltc. Grants will be distributed over two funding rounds—the first in December and the second in spring 2021. Funding is open to

CALENDAR

NOV. 6–8

YALSA Young Adult Services Symposium

ala.org/yalsa/yasymposium

NOV. 8–14

International Games Week

games.ala.org

NOV. 18 & 20

2020 Core Virtual Forum

forum.lita.org

JAN. 22–26

2021 ALA Midwinter Meeting & Exhibits

alamidwinter.org

APR.

School Library Month

ala.org/aasl/advocacy/slm

APR. 4–10

National Library Week

ala.org/nlw

APR. 6

National Library Workers Day

ala-apa.org/nlwd

APR. 7

National Bookmobile Day

bit.ly/BookmobileDay

APR. 10–17

Money Smart Week

moneysmartweek.org

MID-APR.

ACRL 2021

conference.acrl.org

APR. 25–MAY 1

Preservation Week

ala.org/preservationweek

APR. 30

Día: Children's Day/Book Day

dia.ala.org

JUNE

Rainbow Book Month

ala.org/rt/rrt

JUNE 24–29

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bit.ly/ALAUcomingConf

UPDATE

libraries serving small and/or rural communities in the US and US territories.

Selected libraries will develop their facilitation skills through online training, talk with community members (virtually or in person) about local needs, and undertake a project that benefits their community. Grant funds may cover expenses such as hotspot purchases, personal protective equipment, and staff time used to undertake engagement work.

The initiative is offered in partnership with the Association for Rural and Small Libraries and supported by a private donor and IMLS.

ALSC, Netflix Celebrate Black Voices

The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) partnered with Netflix in support of *Bookmarks: Celebrating Black Voices*, a 12-episode series featuring

Black celebrities and artists reading children's books by Black authors.

As part of the *Bookmarks* project, ALSC also shared its #LookToLibraries resources to encourage families to explore the power of connecting with children's library professionals. The materials were created to help families navigate life during the pandemic and include tip sheets for families on a range of topics (bit.ly/LooktoLibraries).

Visit netflixbookmarks.com to view the episodes and access links to additional resources. The videos are also available for free without subscription on the Netflix Jr. YouTube page at youtube.com/c/NetflixJr.

Apply Now for AASL Awards, Recognize Achievement

Applications for AASL's 2021 awards are now available. AASL awards and grants recognize excellence and showcase best

practices in the school library field in categories that include collaboration, leadership, and innovation. AASL members are encouraged to nominate a colleague or themselves in recognition of their talent and dedication to the profession.

Awards and grants include, among others, the National School Library of the Year Award, AASL Chapter of the Year Award, Distinguished School Administrator Award, AASL Research Grant, and Roald Dahl's Miss Honey Social Justice Award.

With one exception, applications and nominations are due February 1; National School Library of the Year Award applications are due January 1. Learn more and apply at ala.org/aasl/awards.

AASL Partners with Human Rights Campaign

AASL has partnered with the Human Rights Campaign Foundation on Project THRIVE, a multiyear campaign to create more equitable, inclusive support systems and help families and youth-serving professionals become better equipped to affirm, support, and care for LGBTQ youth.

In partnering with Project THRIVE, AASL joins more than 20 of the nation's largest health, education, child welfare, legal, and juvenile justice organizations. Project THRIVE promotes well-being and lifts up populations of LGBTQ young people, with a special focus on those of color, those disconnected from school and work, those involved in the child welfare and/or juvenile justice systems, and those experiencing poverty. Project THRIVE's goals include reducing significant disparities in mental and physical health outcomes and improving school safety and inclusion.

IMLS Grant for PLA Research on Latinx Parents

On July 23, IMLS announced that PLA and the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) received a planning grant under the National Leadership

America's Libraries Receive Inaugural FCC Honor

Federal Communications Commissioner Geoffrey Starks has named "America's libraries" as an honoree at the inaugural Digital Opportunity Equity Recognition (DOER) Program. Starks established the award this year to recognize the efforts of Americans working to close the digital divide in communities without access to affordable, reliable broadband.

In a September 14 press release, Starks stated, "Libraries across the nation have consistently bridged the digital divide by providing essential access to the internet, devices, digital literacy training, rich content, and services to the disconnected.

"In response to COVID-19, 93% of public libraries surveyed by the Public Library Association said they provide or plan to provide free Wi-Fi access on their grounds even when their buildings are closed to the public; 44% of public libraries moved routers outdoors to improve public access; and 23% of libraries surveyed also provide Wi-Fi hotspots for patrons to check out and use at home. Additionally, at the time America's libraries were nominated, PLA was in the process of providing 80 library systems with devices for over 160 branch and community locations."

Added Michelle Jeske, president of PLA, in a September 15 statement: "Even as library doors had to close and staff had to consider everyone's health and safety, libraries responded quickly and with creativity to keep their communities connected." ●

ALA Awards \$1.3 Million for Entrepreneurship

In July ALA announced that 13 public libraries will receive a total of \$1.3 million to bolster their library entrepreneurship centers. Established as part of a Google.org initiative, Libraries Build Business will enable libraries across the country to increase the number of business creators they serve.

The core objective of Libraries Build Business is to identify library-led entrepreneurship models that will best help low-income and underrepresented entrepreneurs to start and grow small businesses. The initiative aims to provide direct services to 15,000 people over the course of 18 months, during which the participating libraries will also develop a framework with common metrics to evaluate the progress and success of entrepreneurship programs and a peer-learning network for librarians interested in developing or expanding entrepreneurship programs of their own.

Funding for Libraries Build Business was announced in fall 2019 as part of a \$10 million pledge to help entrepreneurs from low-income and underrepresented groups start new businesses via access to training and capital. The grant builds on Google's ongoing support of ALA and libraries, including the Libraries Lead with Digital Skills collaboration funded by Grow with Google and the Libraries Ready to Code initiative with Google for Education. ●

Grants for Libraries category. The grant is part of an ongoing \$18.2 million investment in US library initiatives by IMLS meant to support projects that address significant challenges and opportunities facing the library field and have the potential to advance theory and practice with new tools, research findings, models, services, practices, or alliances that will be widely used.

As one of the 38 projects selected, PLA and NCFL will receive \$99,949 to develop and document methods for how library staff can support authentic Latinx parent participation. Working in three (urban, suburban, and rural) locations, PLA and NCFL will codesign a process to involve Latinx parents in creating services designed for them.

The project will undertake an environmental scan and engage in community-based learning with library staff and parents. The intent is to generate strategies and practices for authentic parent participation and identify approaches and best practices that can be piloted on

a national scale. The project will work with the Dallas Public Library; Arapahoe Libraries in Denver; Forest Grove City (Ore.) Library; and Latinx families in their communities.

Accreditation Decisions Announced

ALA's Committee on Accreditation (COA) announced in an August 13 statement accreditation actions taken at its meeting during the 2020 Virtual Event.

Continued Accreditation status was granted to the following programs, with the next comprehensive review visit scheduled to take place in spring 2028: master of library and information studies at University of Alberta in Edmonton; master of science with majors in library science and information science at University of North Texas in Denton; and master of library and information science at University of Maryland.

Initial Accreditation status was granted to the master of library and information science program at Southern

Connecticut State University in New Haven (with follow-up reporting required), with the next comprehensive review visit scheduled for spring 2028.

Precandidacy status was granted to the master of library science program at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro.

ALA accreditation indicates that the program has undergone a comprehensive external review and meets the standards established by the committee and adopted by ALA Council.

COA evaluates each program for conformity to these standards, which address systematic planning, curriculum, faculty, students, administration, finances, and resources.

Review visit dates reflect a one-year extension afforded all programs due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

A complete list of programs and degrees accredited by ALA can be found

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in the directory of ALA-accredited MLIS programs at bit.ly/ALA-accredited.

CSK Book Donation Grants Announced

Three organizations have been selected to receive books as part of the 2020 Coretta Scott King Book Awards Donation Grant program: Companions Journeying Together in Western Springs, Illinois; Impact Academy in Indianapolis; and Marshallville (Ga.) Public Library.

Awarded each year by ALA’s Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee, the grant program donates books originally submitted for consideration for the Coretta Scott King Book Awards to organizations demonstrating need and potential benefit from receiving the collection. All winners will receive copies of titles submitted to the 2020 awards, including a full set of the year’s winner and honor books.

Companions Journeying Together offers a program called Aunt Mary’s Story-book in 16 county jails and state prisons. Through it, imprisoned parents record themselves reading kids’ books aloud; the books and recordings are then sent to those parents’ children. Through five satellite residential centers, Impact Academy promotes reading among children in grades 2–12 from diverse backgrounds.

ALA Promotes UN Sustainable Development Goals

ALA’s Task Force on the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals has updated its website with new resources (bit.ly/ALA-SDGs) to help libraries highlight their efforts to help their communities end hunger, ensure gender equality, provide quality education, and encourage sustainable practices.

Resources include new visual charts from Los Angeles Public Library that

speak to each of the 17 goals and can serve as a model for other libraries as well as a recording of the task force’s webinar, “Libraries Contributing to Meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals.”

Past ALA President Loida Garcia-Febo, who chairs the task force, will be sharing ALA’s efforts with other nations at upcoming events, including a forthcoming webinar with the German Library Association.

Disaster Relief Funds for Iowa Library

A severe storm in August destroyed much of Marion (Iowa) Public Library and damaged its collection. A \$10,000 grant from the ALA Disaster Relief Fund is helping the library purchase mobile technology to aid its recovery, including a printer with scan-and-send capabilities, laptop and desktop computers, and mobile hotspot access.

The goal of the grant is to benefit underserved neighborhoods, daycare centers, senior living centers, and individuals who have limited transportation options and access to technology; provide internet access via mobile hotspot locations to areas hardest hit by the storm; assist school-age virtual learners with limited resources; and provide consistent library services during rebuilding. To contribute to the ALA Disaster Relief Fund, visit ec.ala.org/donate.

More Census Equity Fund Grants Awarded

With support from Facebook, ALA awarded Library Census Equity Fund \$2,000 mini-grants to 100 more libraries to bolster their service to hard-to-count communities and help achieve a complete count in the 2020 Census. See the full list at bit.ly/LCEFgrants.

ALA has awarded 193 Library Census Equity Fund mini-grants to libraries in 46 states and the District of Columbia since December 2019, providing more than \$380,000 in support. Applications were reviewed by a selection committee established by ALA’s 2020 Census Library Outreach and Education Task Force. **AL**

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

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	Percent paid	97.85%	98.38%
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	Paid electronic copies	0	0
	Total paid print copies	48,559	48,762
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TRENDS



Montgomery County Public Schools in Christiansburg, Virginia, uses drone delivery service Wing to transport library books to the town's students.

The Great Outdoors

Libraries turn to drone delivery, outdoor browsing, and other alfresco services

BY Anne Ford

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, students at Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in Christiansburg, Virginia, got books from their school library shelves. Now they're getting them from the sky.

Thanks to an idea from MCPS middle school librarian Kelly Passek and a partnership with Wing, the first commercial drone delivery service in the US, any of the 600 or so households that have a student in the district and that fall within Wing's delivery zone can request a book through the school system's library catalog. Passek locates the book, checks it out, and drives it to the Wing facility, where it is dispatched via drone to the student's home.

As the pandemic continues to make indoor library visits difficult for many (and impossible for some), Passek is just one of many librarians across the country who have turned to the outdoors as a means of putting books in the hands of readers.

"We're not concerned with getting the books back right now—we just want [students] to read as much as they can possibly read," Passek says.

Outdoor browsing

In La Grande, Oregon, Cook Memorial Library (CML) responded to the pandemic first by closing to the public entirely; then, after a few months, opening its book drop for returns; and now, since mid-June, offering curbside service, or "library

takeout." It's unclear when the library will open its building to the public again.

While the library takeout program has been popular, "we noticed people weren't placing holds on new items," says Library Director Kip Roberson. "Most of the time, I think, new books are discovered just by browsing." Library staff tried to boost interest in new titles by posting photos of them on social media, "but that wasn't really hitting the audience we wanted to," he says. In the meantime, would-be browsers were constantly knocking on the library's door and imploring, "I can't tell you what I want until I see it!"

So in early August, CML introduced Library Take-Out(side). Twice a week, for two hours at a time, library staffers set up three tables just outside the building's main entrance and fill them with items for checkout. "The first day, we had something like 35 patrons," Roberson recalls; that number has risen to about 75 a week.

Patrons who stop by the tables must wear masks. In addition, anyone who touches library materials must wear food-handler gloves, which CML supplies. "We don't want to have to put items into quarantine if people touch them," Roberson explains. To avoid handling library cards, staff check out books by looking up patron names in the ILS via a laptop that accesses the building's Wi-Fi.

How far into the fall will Library Take-Out(side) last? "It depends on what the weather allows us,"

“We were able to work to prevent not only the ‘summer slide’ but also the ‘COVID slide.’”

KELLY PASSEK, middle school librarian at Montgomery County (Va.) Public Schools

Roberson says. Meanwhile, he and his colleagues are enjoying it. “It’s really great just to be able to connect with our patrons again,” he says. “We get to talk about the library and the pandemic and what’s going on in town, sort of reestablishing some of the relationships that we had been missing.” As for the patrons themselves, he adds, they’re “wowed by what we’ve been doing.”

A lakeside library

Even before the pandemic struck, Lorain (Ohio) Public Library System (LPLS) was hatching a scheme to use the outdoors as a way of attracting more patrons. Now, during COVID-19 times, that plan is proving particularly apropos.

In a partnership with Lorain County Metro Parks, Lorain County Public Health, and the State Library of Ohio, LPLS purchased a shipping container, placed it across from a beach in nearby Lakeview Park, equipped it with sports and exercise equipment, and operated it in July and August as the “Little Library on the Lake.”

“LPLS had been thinking about how it could serve an area which is very popular locally,” explains

Outreach Services Manager Nick Cronin. “When things seemed to be at a standstill due to the pandemic, it was a really great time to push ahead with it, to meet with the public in the open.” (LPLS closed its six branches to the public in March and reopened them with limited hours in June.)

At the Little Library on the Lake, nearly 700 patrons checked out soccer balls and goals, horseshoe sets, obstacle-course kits, yoga mats, jump ropes, bicycles, and many other items for use outdoors. (After being returned, each item was washed and disinfected.) Most of the equipment was checked out by parents for their children’s use. In addition, 25 new library cards were issued. Visitors could also take advantage of the little library’s free Wi-Fi, which covered the entire beach.

“The feedback we got from people was universal delight,” Cronin says. “People were very, very glad to see us.”

The Little Library on the Lake closed for the year August 30 but will remain in the park—with its Wi-Fi active—and reopen in June. “The hope is to continue to loan out equipment but also do programming,” such as storytimes, craft programs, bird-watching sessions, and sports tournaments, he says. “The options for programming are really infinite down there. Hopefully COVID will be behind us.”

Continued on page 17 ▶

BY THE NUMBERS

Teens and Libraries

1957

Year the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) was founded.

6–8

Dates in November that YALSA will host its 10th symposium, “Biggest Little Spaces: How Libraries Serve the Expanding Worlds of Teens.” Originally scheduled for Reno, Nevada, the symposium will be held virtually.

1994

Year that Teen’Scape, considered by many to be the first young-adult public library space with teen-specific design features, opened at Los Angeles Public Library.

550

Number of people who attended Comics Relief, a virtual event hosted by Macmillan imprint First Second in April. Sessions focused on YA graphic novels and gave readers a chance to learn about comics creation from novelists, editors, and designers.

15

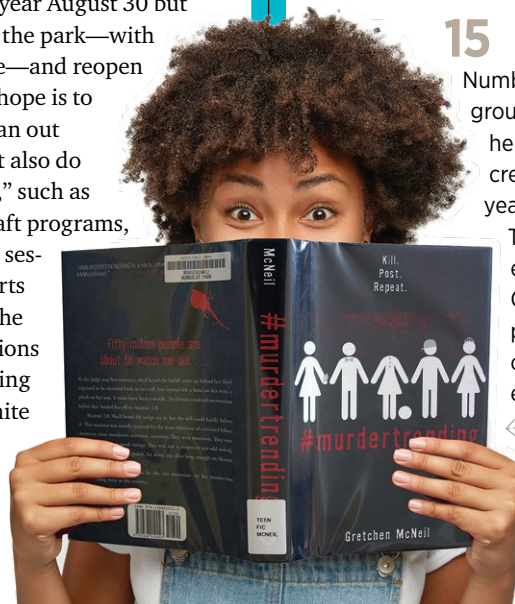
Number of groups that helped create this year’s Teens’



Top Ten, a book list entirely by and for teens. Groups are from school and public libraries around the country and represent readers ages 12–18.

1

Rank of *#MurderTrending*, a dystopic novel by Gretchen McNeil, on the 2019 Teens’ Top Ten list. ●



The Missing Piece

Libraries use board games to encourage critical thinking in young people

BY Diana Panuncial

In summer 2019, teens at San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) filed into a room and sat in chairs strategically marked with dots. Depending on the color of their dot, they were categorized into one of three social classes—lower, middle, or upper.

In turn, each player’s social class determined their stakes in *Life in SF: Luck, Loss, Gain*, a *Monopoly*-esque game that simulates poverty and inequity in San Francisco, complete with properties and transit lines familiar to the group. Around the time the teens were developing the board game last year, San Francisco reported a nearly 7% surge in its homeless population from two years prior—in total, more than 8,000 unsheltered individuals in the city. “[Teens] chose the topic because they’re aware of how big the issue is,” says Marla Bergman, young adult librarian at SFPL, who facilitated the game’s creation through SFPL’s Youth Engaging in

Library Leadership program.

SFPL’s program is one example of how libraries across the country are using game creation as a way to cultivate an understanding of social issues and promote self-improvement among youth. Stanford University calls this approach *game design thinking* (gdt.stanford.edu) and describes it as a combination of game design, human behavior, and neuroscience concepts that help participants navigate life decisions and social structures.

Advance from start

Elisabeth Gee, professor at Arizona State University in Tempe, partnered with Phoenix Public Library (PPL) from 2016 to 2018 to run a study and program called “Play in the Making,” which explored the value of game design thinking and



Teens at San Francisco Public Library created *Life in SF: Luck, Loss, Gain*, a board game that explores inequity in their city.

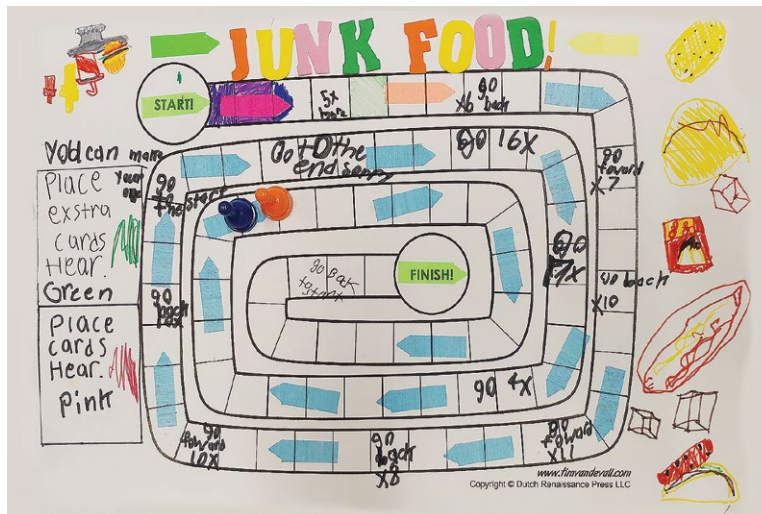
its potential for fostering problem-solving skills in kids and teens. A specific aim of the program was to get youth interested in STEM fields.

Gee and her team instructed youth at PPL to create board games based on any educational topic, as long as they followed these basic steps: consider who will play the game, define the problem to be addressed, brainstorm the game, create a prototype, and test it with a first round.

About 150 games were developed, with subject matter that ranged from water pollution and endangered species to anxiety. Gee remembers a middle school student who created a game in which the player had to defeat monsters in order to rescue a child who couldn’t get to sleep.

“You pull a sheet up that only allows you to see part of the game, which imitates what it’d be like to be afraid of the dark, to not know what’s hiding until you get there,” Gee explains. “But you gain the skills to battle it, and it makes you more confident to overcome the monsters.”

Students at University of Chicago’s Weston Game Lab collaborated with teens at Chicago Public Library in 2019 to develop and play games with health and safety themes, such



A board game about junk food was one of 150 games created at “Play in the Making,” a study and program conducted by Arizona State University professor Elisabeth Gee and Phoenix Public Library.

Photos: Dorcas Wong/San Francisco Public Library (*Life in SF*); Luis Pérez Cortés (junk food game)

as sexual health, mental health, health disparities, and youth obesity. Ashlyn Sparrow, assistant director of the lab, remembers a group's interest in teen pregnancy, and how its members initially believed that "once you became pregnant in high school, your life was over."

She adds: "What it meant for them was, those teen parents could no longer hang out at the movies when they wanted to, or spend money in the ways they wanted to." As the teens developed different pathways in the game for their players to take, their views on teen pregnancy expanded. "They said they would really like it if they could show it's possible to graduate from high school with a baby," Sparrow says. "I thought that was interesting because that's the complete opposite of what they learned from society. Here we are saying your life isn't over at all."

In her view, games are one of the best ways to introduce and communicate ideas to youth because they mix the fun of play with more serious elements of trial and error, identity and representation, and social systems. When children and teens are empowered to create their own games, they're able to share their own experiences.

Sparrow often asks young people whether they feel they're represented in the games they play and what they can do while developing their own to change that. She notes that widely popular games tend to overrepresent stereotypes of marginalized groups. "Why can't I live in this fantasy of being a powerful Black woman with natural hair, riding a dragon?"

Winning strategies

Libraries are an ideal arena for creating board games, as they often already have the necessary materials available, and programs can be budget-friendly.

"Board games are a low-tech way to attract kids into makerspaces, to serve as a hub that scaffolds other interests and participation at the library."

ELISABETH GEE, professor at Arizona State University in Tempe

"Board games are a low-tech way to attract kids into makerspaces, to introduce parents to those spaces, and to serve as a hub that scaffolds other interests and participation at the library," Gee says. Most board games at the three libraries were made with basic art supplies or templates found online.

Sparrow says the teens who participated in her program were "comfortable and eager" with the content. She and Bergman both intended to continue their programs this year, but COVID-19 derailed these plans.

Sparrow's advice to librarians who want to undertake a game creation program is to be involved in the ideation process as much as they can. Asking questions of the game-makers is vital. "Your objective is to get people to think steps ahead on how the underlying systems of the games work and how it affects the world," she says.

It's also important for the program to be led by those participating in it, Bergman says: "The teens having come up with that initial spark, gaining momentum, and knowing about the issues in our town, knowing they could be helpful—that's what'll make the program successful." **AL**

DIANA PANUNCIAL is a writer in Zion, Illinois.



In La Grande, Oregon, Cook Memorial Library Teen Services Librarian Celine Vandervlugt takes a turn staffing Library Take-Out(side), a service that allows patrons to browse materials outdoors.

◀ Continued from page 15

Flying high

MCPS's library-book drone-delivery service isn't going anywhere, either, even though students in the district have been given the option to return to partial-day in-person classes.

"We've gotten such great feedback from kids and also from parents," Passek says. "And there is no cost—this is an amazing service that Wing has offered to the school system." (So far, Wing's US drone delivery service is limited to pilot site Christiansburg, a town of about 22,500 people.)

"We are the first in the world to deliver books this way," Passek continues. "And we were able to work to prevent not only the 'summer slide' but also the 'COVID slide.' We have kids who request books every few days."

This article first appeared on americanlibraries.org on September 14. **AL**

ANNE FORD is *American Libraries* editor-at-large.



University of Kentucky in Lexington is attempting to remove a 1934 mural by artist Ann Rice O'Hanlon (detail shown here).

Drawing the Line

How libraries handle the legacy of racist murals

BY Cass Balzer

In the 1930s and 1940s, federal programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) paid artists and artisans to create thousands of artworks. Some of those works ended up on display in public buildings such as libraries.

Roughly eight decades later, some of the images depicted in those murals are now recognized as racist. Deciding whether to remove, alter, or retain these murals can be challenging; not all stakeholders agree on a course of action.

At University of Oregon's (UO) Knight Library in Eugene, four stairwell murals commissioned under the WPA have been the center of scrutiny for many years. These murals include visual hierarchies in which Black people using early tools appear at the bottom, while white people with items such as violins and motorized engines appear at the top. One of the murals also includes text invoking the preservation of "racial heritage."

UO Provost and Senior Vice President Patrick Phillips says these murals are inappropriate in a library setting, which he calls the heart of

student engagement on campus: "It feels like the most inclusive, welcoming place, so to have these additional barriers is not okay."

The murals, which date to the library's 1937 construction, have been a flashpoint for activists; in 2018, for example, an unknown person used red paint to strike out the words "racial heritage."

The university previously attempted to address the situation by installing explanatory panels to contextualize the artworks. Protests in recent years, however, have pushed the administration to take more drastic action. Because the pieces are affixed to the walls, they cannot be removed without damaging the building. So, after a conservator assessment, the university committed to covering the paintings with aluminum panels, reportedly at a cost of just over \$30,000. The murals were covered in September.

It's not only students who object to racist artwork. At University of New Mexico's (UNM) Zimmerman Library in Albuquerque, staff members have come out in opposition to four murals collectively known

as *Three Peoples* that were commissioned in 1939 by the federal Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). The murals show Native Americans creating traditional crafts and performing manual labor, while white people are depicted as scientists and doctors. In one of the murals, a white man with clear facial features is flanked by a faceless Latino man and a faceless Native American man.

"Students can go study wherever they want, but the staff works there. They don't really have any control over their environment," says Assata Zerai, UNM vice president for equity and inclusion. Zerai also notes that many staffers have told her they feel that the mural contributes to a hostile work environment. "I have not had one person tell me we need the murals, but I've had hundreds of people ask me why they aren't gone yet," she says.

Earlier this year, library staff started an online petition—which by early September had drawn nearly 1,000 signatures—to have the murals removed. Also by September, UNM had submitted an application for the removal of the murals—which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places—to the state of New Mexico. In the meantime, they have been covered.

Censorship claims

At University of Kentucky (UK) in Lexington, efforts to remove another PWAP-commissioned mural have attracted litigation, as well as debates about artistic censorship. The unnamed 1934 work by Ann Rice O'Hanlon, which depicts images of enslaved Black

GLOBAL REACH

400-Year-Old Album Sold

GERMANY Between 1596 and 1647, art dealer and diplomat Philipp Hainhofer traveled around Europe collecting signatures in his *Große Stammbuch*, or *Album Amicorum*. Similar to an auto-graph book, Hainhofer's register includes the marks of Cosimo II de Medici, Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II, and Christian IV of Denmark and Norway, to name a few. On August 25, Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel purchased the book—which was thought to be lost until it emerged at a London auction in 1931—for about \$3.1 million.—*Colossal*, Aug. 31.



Coronation of Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II with personal signature in *Große Stammbuch*.

IRELAND The Department of Education may drop *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Of Mice and Men* from the Irish secondary school curriculum after parents, teachers, and students emailed Norma Foley, Ireland's Minister for Education, directly to complain about the books' use of racial slurs. The novels, set in the American South, have appeared on the Irish Junior Certificate syllabus for years but

now face calls to be replaced with other texts in the wake of global Black Lives Matter protests following the killing of George Floyd in May.—*IrishCentral*, Sept. 14.

LEBANON Sheikha Bodour Bint Sultan Al Qasimi, vice president of the International Publishers Association and head of the advisory committee of Sharjah World Book Capital 2019, issued a directive to restore and develop several libraries damaged by the August 4 explosions in Beirut. The three libraries are affiliated with the nongovernmental organization Assabil, which promotes public libraries in Lebanon that are free and open to all. The work will include extensive renovation of the Monnot library, which suffered major damage, and new equipment upgrades for the Bachoura and Geitawi libraries.—*Gulf News*, Sept. 8.

NEW ZEALAND In September, the National Library of New Zealand in Wellington announced plans to remove more than 600,000 "foreign books" from its collection, saying it needed to make room for more works in its New Zealand, Māori, and Pacific collection, to which it adds 80,000–90,000 titles each year. The library's Director of Content Rachel Esson says the cost of maintaining the older overseas titles is massive, but scholars and researchers fear that once the books—many of which are out of print—leave the national collection, they will be lost and may end up destroyed.—*The Guardian (UK)*, Sept. 11. ●

people working in a tobacco field and a Native American holding a tomahawk as if prepared to attack, is in one of the most heavily used classroom spaces on campus.

UK Chief Communications Officer Jay Blanton says the fresco's location argues for its removal. "If you're a student, there's almost no way to go into class without viewing that mural," he says. "I think students would say that ... you should have a choice about whether to see that," particularly since it may, for example, remind Black students that their "grandfather or great-grandfather was subjugated as chattel."

As UK Libraries' online research guide to the mural notes, "The complaints [about it] date back to at least the 1970s." In 2015, UK President Eli Capilouto ordered the mural to be covered; in 2017, it was uncovered and contextual information was added; in 2018, a new work by artist Karyn Olivier was commissioned and installed nearby as a response to the original piece (bit.ly/Olivierart).

As students continued to protest, Capilouto agreed earlier this year to remove the mural, sparking a lawsuit filed by writer Wendell Berry and his wife, artist Tanya Amyx Berry, who argue that because the mural was created under a federal program, it belongs to the people of Kentucky and not to the university. (Mrs. Berry is a niece of the mural's creator.) Meanwhile, Olivier told *The New York Times* that removing the mural would be censorship, not only of it but of her companion artwork as well.

UK has moved to dismiss the lawsuit. "I would say ... removing art is not the same as erasing art," Blanton says. "The university has the authority to remove [it], and we're doing that, we think, to further dialogue, to further the exchange of ideas. In this case, we think the art is a barrier to that dialogue, not something that's helping it." **AL**

CASS BALZER is a writer in Chicago.



Mayra Castrejón-Hernandez performs at Milwaukee Public Library's first Deaf StorySlam event in September 2019.

Signing Stories

New narrative series features Deaf artists and their experiences

In September 2019, Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) hosted its first Deaf StorySlam, a storytelling event intended to highlight Deaf voices of color and their lived experiences and bring together the city's Deaf and hearing communities. Out of 112 applications, the project was selected to receive the inaugural Libraries Transform Communities Engagement Grant, a \$2,000 prize funded by American Library Association (ALA) donors and matching funds from former ALA President Nancy Kranich. The award supports a new iteration of the program, which MPL hopes other libraries will replicate.

BY Kristina Gómez

I saw Mayra Castrejón-Hernandez's story before I heard it, as her hands jumped from word to phrase to feeling. A mentor, mother, community activist, tutor at Milwaukee Area Technical College, and member of Deaf Women of Color, she was born in Guadalajara, Mexico, and lost most of her hearing during childhood. She introduced herself with a combination of American Sign Language (ASL), regional hand slang, and facial

expressions, as a local interpreter skillfully kept pace.

Castrejón-Hernandez's was the first of many personal stories presented as part of Deaf StorySlam, a new live storytelling project in our city. A partnership between Milwaukee Public Library (MPL), local storytelling nonprofit Ex Fabula, and Milwaukee's Deaf community, the initiative centers Deaf experiences in a space where our Deaf and hearing communities can connect.

MPL's collaboration with the Deaf community began as part of an Our Town placemaking grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. One of our library's goals as a grantee was to provide opportunities for cross-cultural connection among residents of the Historic Mitchell Street district, a predominantly Latinx neighborhood on Milwaukee's South Side. Mitchell Street is also home to the Greater Milwaukee Association of the Deaf, and it was in conversations with residents that we learned our Deaf community felt underserved by arts organizations—especially when it came to being recognized as creators.

How could the library support Deaf individuals as artists while facilitating connections between neighbors? A past collaboration between MPL and Ex Fabula showed us that personal stories can create powerful opportunities for people to listen, feel heard, and grow in empathy and understanding. With Ex Fabula's storytelling expertise, MPL's connections and resources, and the Deaf community's narratives and guidance, we set to work planning our first event for Deaf Awareness Week 2019.

Castrejón-Hernandez, along with Deaf community members Jose Barraza, Jonathan Petermon, and Erin Wiggins, co-led the Deaf StorySlam planning team and helped focus the project's purpose. They made it clear that the program should prioritize Deaf voices of color and support the development of Deaf individuals as performers. Participants were given instruction in identifying, crafting,

and telling their narratives over the course of three workshops. The small-group exercises were led by Castrejón-Hernandez and Barraza, who were trained as coaches for the project.

In planning the event, we learned that Milwaukee's Latinx Deaf community often faces multiple barriers to event participation. For instance, Mexican Sign Language, rather than ASL, may be their primary form of communication. Some in our Latinx Deaf community have friends and relatives whose primary language is Spanish. To ensure the Deaf StorySlam was inclusive and welcoming, we decided that including Spanish translation was essential. The event became trilingual: ASL, English, and Spanish.

As MPL's programming librarian, I collaborated with the planning team's Deaf members to make logistical and facilities decisions. I developed a relationship with Milwaukee's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinator, and we worked together to identify ASL interpreters with performance skills, schedule interpreters for planning meetings and media interviews, and make sure the event space complied with ADA requirements. Considerations such as stage height, audience seating, sight lines, and interpreter placement required close attention. Many of the lessons learned from this project will affect MPL programs and services in the future.

The initial Deaf StorySlam at our Mitchell Street branch focused on the theme of "labels," including the many misconceptions and stigmas the Deaf community faces. The event, emceed by Castrejón-Hernandez and Barraza, was well attended—more than 150 community members showed up—and positively received, with many

How could the library support Deaf individuals as artists while facilitating connections between neighbors?

attendees asking when the next slam would be. One of our storytellers commented: "This is what the Deaf community needs the most. Raw experiences need to be expressed. Countless people have untold stories that need to be found and shared."

Even before that first Deaf StorySlam was over, we knew we wanted to continue its momentum. MPL and Ex Fabula began to identify funding sources for the costs of interpreter fees and community advisor stipends. Our award from ALA's Libraries Transform Communities Engagement Grant, along with money from local donors, will support the project's next phases.

During this year's storytelling workshops, Deaf community members began developing stories around Black Lives Matter, police encounters, workplace challenges, and survival during COVID-19. Our planning team renamed the project ReImagining Stories in ASL, and we partnered with a local Deaf artist to develop a logo. We were faced with new opportunities and unexpected challenges when the pandemic moved our workshops and second annual event online, but we are ready to continue re-envisioning the program's possibilities. **AL**

KRISTINA GÓMEZ is events and programming librarian at Milwaukee Public Library.

"The instructors make sure the content they are teaching is relevant today, so we have a broad scope of where libraries are now and where they can be in the future."

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Marcus Samuelsson and Osayi Endolyn

Their new volume showcases the diversity and wealth of Black cooking



James Beard Award-winning chef, restaurateur, author, and newly appointed *Bon Appétit* brand advisor Marcus Samuelsson has joined forces with James Beard Award-winning writer Osayi Endolyn to create *The Rise: Black Cooks and the Soul of American Food* (Voracious, October). The cookbook celebrates the richness and range of contemporary Black cooking with 150 recipes that roam from San Diego to Chicago, Martinique to Manhattan, and points in between.

Among the many talented Black chefs whose cuisine is highlighted: Cheryl Day of Savannah, Georgia's Back in the Day Bakery; Gregory Gourdet of Portland, Oregon's Departure; and former *Top Chef* contestant Nyesha Arrington of Los Angeles.

Samuelsson and Endolyn spoke with *American Libraries* about their work—and about the racial dynamics of the food publishing world.

and then to look into the future. The idea that Black food has to be one thing—nothing could be further from the truth. We're layered, we're complex, just like our fellow chefs who are white. They can come from the Midwest and all of a sudden become Italian chefs. We [aren't

allowed to] do that, you know what I mean?

Endolyn: Some of the folks in *The Rise* are very well known in their own right. Some of them are newer to the scene. I think all of them deserve to be household names. The book is not encyclopedic. It's not biblical, in the sense that we're not trying to define and contain. We're trying to say: "This is but a taste of all that is available."

Samuelsson: What has come out of this Black Lives Matter movement is a lot of incredible people—regardless of their race and background—asking, "How can I help?" You know what? I'm going to give you a step so you can help. When you go with your family to Austin or New Orleans or Seattle, you can look in this book: "Is there a Black chef I can support here or not?" If you work in a corporate environment and want to have a party catered, here it is.

How would you describe the current landscape of food writing and publishing as it pertains to race?

Endolyn: It's quite dismal. And it illustrates that there are many more people invested in the status quo than they are in the tangible shifts that would give us an opportunity to bring more equity to the book publishing space that relates to food.

BY Anne Ford

What role have libraries played in your education and career?

Endolyn: I remember the library at my elementary school; I was there a lot because my mom didn't let me buy as many books as I wanted from the Scholastic leaflets. Every city I've lived in, I've had a library card. For my book [on dining history and systemic racism] that I sold earlier this year, I'll be leaning a lot on New York Public Library, specifically the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Samuelsson: I grew up in Sweden. I always wanted to be a chef in a French restaurant, and the only place that had books about French cooking was the local library. Very often you could look at the back page of the book and find the

restaurant address. My mom and I spent tons of time finding the addresses of these amazing places in France, so I could write and apply. We wrote 30 letters, and we got 29 nos and one yes.

Tell us about *The Rise* and your hopes for it.

Endolyn: The cookbook aims to celebrate and acknowledge the indelible contributions of African-descended people in the culinary world and in the United States, and to reference the contemporary figures who are doing that work now. It is an effort to illustrate how diverse Blackness has always been and continues to be, and to define a uniquely American food story that has often gone under-told or outright erased.

Samuelsson: African-American culture, it's almost written out of the food journey. That's why it was important for Osayi and me to go back to the generations before us,

MORE ONLINE

For recipes from *The Rise: Black Cooks and the Soul of American Food*, visit bit.ly/al-RiseRecipes.



Marcus Samuelsson



Osayi Endolyn

Photos: Angie Mosier (Samuelsson); Lucy Schaeffer Photography (Endolyn)

I want everyone to get the chance to work on the projects they want to work on. Of course that's going to cross cultures and racial and ethnic identities. But I tend to have to demonstrate my worthiness to be on those projects. Whereas I don't see white authors having to prove they can carry the torch on stories that don't come from their own experience. I would like to see more people of color, and especially Black people, get the opportunity to do the so-called mainstream projects. I don't see the book industry reckoning with itself in that way yet.

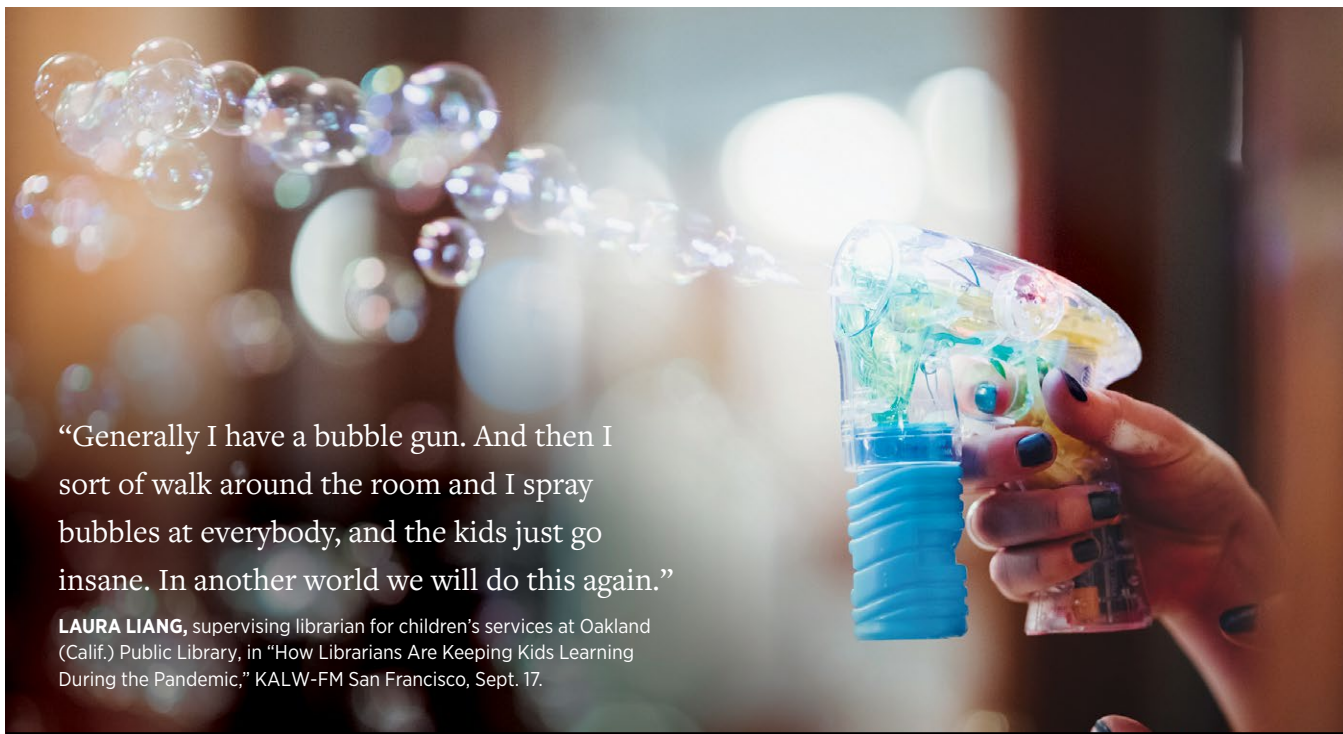
Samuelsson: In publishing, there has been a club that a lot of people of color have not been invited into. I work to be part of change. And that change is to give amazing people—whether they're writers, bartenders, or chefs—an opportunity to publish. Because once you publish, no one can take that away from you.

Endolyn: Bookmaking is not just about the person whose name goes on the cover. As we have moved into this era of cookbook writing that focuses less on encapsulating a restaurant experience and more on teasing out the personal

narrative of a food figure, it becomes very important that the people involved in the bookmaking process can speak to and understand and support the nuances of that person's culture and history. That affects everything from design to marketing.

You start to see that you are dealing with an ecosystem full of creative people who want to see good books made, and who are sometimes not aware of their own bias and assumptions. That can be a real challenging thing for folks to hear when [they're] on deadline. That's a long way of saying: There's a lot of work that could be done, and there are people doing that work, and sometimes it's in tiny steps.

Samuelsson: The food world is a reflection of America, right? And America is on a journey to improve its race relations. The structural racism that is reflected in other workplaces is reflected in food, too. The reason I put [my restaurant] Red Rooster in Harlem was to present opportunities for people of color. The same thing with *The Rise*, right? Here we are, so let's do the work. **AL**



“Generally I have a bubble gun. And then I sort of walk around the room and I spray bubbles at everybody, and the kids just go insane. In another world we will do this again.”

LAURA LIANG, supervising librarian for children’s services at Oakland (Calif.) Public Library, in “How Librarians Are Keeping Kids Learning During the Pandemic,” KALW-FM San Francisco, Sept. 17.

“Libraries are not designed to keep children occupied for eight hours a day, and it’s not safe in a pandemic.”

SONDRA EKLUND, Loudoun County (Va.) resident, in “With Schools Closed, Public Libraries Are Being Used as Day-Care Centers, Angering Some People,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 9.

“Libraries buy, preserve, and lend. That’s been the model forever. [Libraries] actually supply about 20% of the revenue to the publishing industry. But if they cannot buy, preserve, and lend—if all they become is a redistributor, a Netflix for books—my God, we have a society that can get really out of control. Because if a publisher maintains control over every reading event, who’s allowed to read it, when are they allowed to read it, *if* they’re allowed to read it, and be able to prevent anybody, or particular regions, from being able to see something, we are in George Orwell world.”

BREWSTER KAHLE, founder of the Internet Archive, in “Publishers Are Taking the Internet to Court,” *The Nation*, Sept. 10.

“IN A RECESSION OR AN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN, WE SEE MUCH HIGHER USE OF LIBRARIES HISTORICALLY, WHEN PEOPLE ARE STRUGGLING WITH MONEY. THAT’S THE TIME THEY DISCOVER EVERYTHING THAT LIBRARIES HAVE TO OFFER.”

CHRISTINA DE CASTELL, chief librarian at Vancouver (B.C.) Public Library, in “How Public Libraries Play a Vital Role in Restoring the Economy,” *Toronto Globe and Mail*, July 28.

“For at least 15–20 years, libraries have been evolving into community hubs, places to have meetings and meet your friends and come on in and stay awhile. We can’t be that right now.”

JENNIFER PEARSON, director of Marshall County Memorial Library System in Lewisburg, Tennessee, in “The Pandemic Is Transforming How Americans Use Public Libraries, Parks, and Streets—and It’s Depriving Vulnerable People of Space When They Need It Most,” *Insider*, Sept. 14.

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Escape for the Isolated

Dungeons & Dragons offers online realms of fantasy, adventure

BY Timothy Inklebarger

When you seek the advice of a goblin priest in the fantasy world of *Dungeons & Dragons*, beware: Instead of helping you in your quest, he might try to feed you to a tentacled monster with a taste for adventurers.

A crew of six explorers—library patrons playing as a gnome, two half-elves, two humans, and a wood elf—learned this lesson during their weekly online game, led by Greenfield (Mass.) Public Library (GPL) Assistant Jeremiah Rood.

Spoiler alert: The adventurers went on to slaughter the monster, as well as the campaign's goblin king, before reaching the forgotten dwarf mine they were looking for, says Rood. As “dungeon master,” he guides the players and sets the parameters of the game.

Rood, who launched GPL's program in June, joins a growing community of *Dungeons & Dragons* enthusiasts who are connecting through virtual library programs. Unlike libraries that transitioned their *Dungeons & Dragons* games from meetups at the library to online, Rood began holding virtual games during the pandemic as an inexpensive way to bring people together.

“I think what people miss in this time and what a library can offer is

community,” he says. “I don't think they need more stuff to do. They need more ways to interact.”

THE DUNGEON IS OPEN

Librarians who run *Dungeons & Dragons* programs emphasize the low-cost nature of the game and others like it. Krista Hutley, teen and adult librarian at Wilmette (Ill.) Public Library (WPL), has been holding games on a weekly, rather than monthly, basis since the pandemic



Illustrations: Katie Wheeler



lockdowns began for a fraction of the usual expense, she says. That's mainly because online gatherings don't require her to buy food for the participants.

"My cost for *Dungeons & Dragons* in person was all pizza," she says. "If you think about it, on average, I had 15 to 20 players once a month plus dungeon masters and myself—it was expensive. The games themselves were not."

Librarians typically use some combination of Zoom, Google Hangouts,

and Discord to communicate during the games; some also use the online gaming platform Roll20, which offers shared maps and other features. Librarians also might consider using the Discord bot Avrae to perform the often burdensome mathematical calculations that follow each roll of the dice.

Platform ease of use is among librarians' top considerations, since games typically last between an hour and a half and three hours. After all, the

more time you spend getting patrons logged in online, the less time everyone has to fight monsters.

Some librarians have made it even easier for patrons. Kathleen Uy, adult and teen librarian at White Oak Library (WOL) in Silver Spring, Maryland, uses the share-screen function on Zoom to display her Roll20 account, which makes it easier for participants to play the game. "I didn't want patrons to have the added burden of



Librarians running *Dungeons & Dragons* games remotely attest to the community-building aspects of the game during this time of isolation.

having to create [their own] Roll20 accounts,” she says.

MASTERING YOUR DOMAIN

While *Dungeons & Dragons*’ low cost and popularity among teens make it an attractive program, librarians who are new to the game—particularly those who choose to serve as dungeon master—do face a learning curve.

Zoë DiGiorgio, library associate at Harford County (Md.) Public Library, says she had played *Dungeons & Dragons* only outside of work prior to becoming a dungeon master for the library. Even with her knowledge of the game, she describes leading an adventure as a learning experience.

“Becoming a dungeon master is tricky because there’s no one way to do it,” she says, noting the preparation it takes to learn the rules of the game.

She says the game can be a challenge to learn from an organizer’s perspective because you must understand the complex character sheets that define the players’ various traits. Dungeon masters also guide the narrative flow of the game, setting its pace and providing feedback to players.

That said, in some ways, operating in a digital environment is easier, she says. Working at a computer during the games allows her to quickly look up answers to players’ questions, and she’s found that younger kids are better behaved in the virtual world. “They know this environment now, and they’re really comfortable with it,” DiGiorgio says.

Libraries can also get their programs up and running online faster through collaboration with other libraries, she adds. Her library works with a staff member from another branch who serves as a game moderator—different from a dungeon master—and handles tech issues that arise during the games. “The moderator ... can jump in and triage problems,” DiGiorgio says.

DiGiorgio advises finding a system that’s comfortable and suggests keeping notes explaining the process for later reference. She points out that it’s not hard

to find blog posts and online videos that explain how to use Discord and other programs. “You don’t have to reinvent the wheel,” she says.

A NEW AUDIENCE

Not only is *Dungeons & Dragons* attracting teens to the library, it’s also gaining the attention of younger middle-school students and adult patrons.

Arra Katona, teen services coordinator at Belmar Library in Lakewood, Colorado, says her library’s *Dungeons & Dragons* program was already in place prior to the pandemic, which made it easier to transition to an online environment. Its program has been so popular that the library holds two sessions every Saturday—one for beginning players and another for advanced.

The games at Belmar are for patrons ages 11–18, but one player participates with her father. Katona wouldn’t normally allow a parent to join but allows it in this case because he often coaches other players.

Meanwhile, WPL’s program is for grades 7–12. “I wanted to do that because our high school has a pretty big *Dungeons & Dragons* club that meets weekly,” Hutley says. She chose to include the high school age bracket to attract older students who could serve as dungeon masters. She also recruited adult volunteers—who underwent background checks—to help facilitate. Hutley ultimately created two groups, one for middle school kids and another for high school students, because of the games’ popularity.

She notes that her program uses Zoom and Roll20, which might be advanced for younger kids. “Roll20 is approved for ages 13 and up. It’s a little less protected [than other platforms],” she says. “For the younger kids, it can be too much technology for them to figure out.”

Uy, who shares WOL’s dungeon master duties with her husband, says that in her program, which she markets to middle school kids through adults, parents commonly play alongside their

children. Uy says in her experience, kids under 10 or 11 years old don’t do as well with *Dungeons & Dragons*.

GPL’s program is available to anyone who wants to participate. Rood originally focused on older patrons in their 30s and 40s, promoting game nights to those who might have watched the popular Netflix series *Stranger Things* (which draws heavily on 1980s popular culture, including *Dungeons & Dragons*).

“I thought we’d target people who wouldn’t necessarily do this but might give it a shot; I thought we’d get bored dads, but instead we got moms,” he says, noting that all but one of his six regular players are women. Rood uses Google’s video chat platform for the games, but players use only the voice function, so they can’t see one another. “I couldn’t pick them out on the street; I know only their voices and the characters they’re playing,” he says.

The longstanding stereotype is that *Dungeons & Dragons* players are mostly white and mostly male. However, the five librarians who discussed their programs with *American Libraries* reported a more diverse array of participants. The beginner’s group in Colorado, for instance, is made up of mainly female players—only two of the eight are male.

Several sources say they were unaware of the racial makeup of their group’s players because many participate without appearing on video. Three of the five libraries reported that the majority of players are white with some Asian and Latinx players, while about a quarter of players at Harford County Public Library are Black or biracial. WPL’s program attracts an above-average number of LGBTQ+ teens.

WHAT’S THE ENDGAME?

Librarians running *Dungeons & Dragons* games remotely attest to its ability to build community during this time of



isolation. But the game offers more than just a social outlet.

Math, storytelling, acting—players develop a variety of skills, says DiGiorgio. “They’re also learning teamwork, and they gain confidence; it’s a great fit for libraries,” she says. “It’s a good escape, but it’s also a good way to connect.”

Rood echoes that sentiment. “Personally, I have a 4-year-old who I love dearly, and a wife who I love dearly, but when Daddy goes down to the basement, it’s his time to play *Dungeons & Dragons*,” he says with a chuckle.

The games are also about personal connection. Hutley laments the departure of one participant, a student who is headed to college. “I’m so sad, because he’s written 100–200 pages of a campaign guide in that world [of *Dungeons & Dragons*]; he’s telling this incredible story,” she says. “It’s such a wonderful game, because you can use all kinds of creativity; you can tell any kind of story you want.”

For many, online role-playing games are a lifeline, says Uy, who hosts games on Saturdays and Sundays for WOL patrons. She gives up her weekends because “I know things are hard on people,” she says. “Some are totally alone and not with a quarantine family.”

Rood says his players never talk about the elephant in the room that has sickened and killed so many and put millions of people out of work: “These people don’t really talk about COVID-19 at all.”

On the best nights, he says, everyone is sitting around, trading stories, laughing, and having a great time. “If that isn’t a win in these difficult times, then I’m not really sure what is.” **AL**



TIMOTHY INKLEBARGER is a writer living in Chicago.

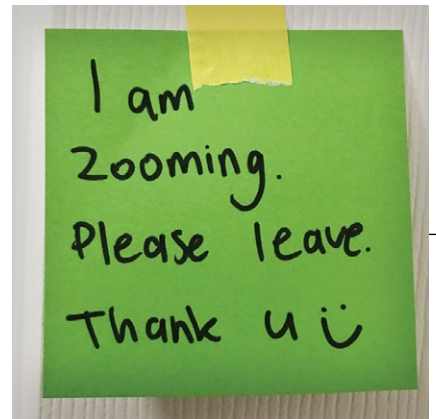
COLLECTING CORONAVIRUS STORIES

Librarians and archivists around the country ask patrons to document history in the making

by Claire Zulkey

The Palos Verdes Library District (PVLD) coronavirus archiving project started with a cat.

Monique Sugimoto, archivist and local history librarian at Peninsula Center Library, a branch of PVLD in Rolling Hills Estates, California, was quarantined at home in March like the rest of her staff and patrons when she sent a photo of her feline home office companion to her team and asked them to share their own remote workspaces. The responses, which included an image of a colleague's dog refusing to relinquish a work chair, made Sugimoto realize she could prompt the whole community to capture a snapshot of life in the time of coronavirus.





“I realized how upside-down our world had changed,” she says. She sent a request through the library’s channels inviting the library community to share their COVID-19 stories and images, saying, “Your contributions will help build a resource of primary documentation so future generations can understand the history we are now living.”

Sugimoto’s library is one of many asking its community members to contribute to local coronavirus archives. Some, like PVLVD, were inspired by the way their community had been affected by prior global events. In 2016, Sugimoto began gathering history and

Patrons at Palos Verdes Library District in Rolling Hills Estates, California, submitted photos that include images of empty highways, protests, and jigsaw puzzles.

records from the area’s aging population—many of whom had lived through World War II—for a collection

called *Your Story Is the Peninsula’s Story* (YSPS), which shares a home in PVLVD’s digital repository with the *Coronavirus Pandemic 2020 Collection*. “We have all these seniors who are aging and passing away. They’re taking all their knowledge with them; the history they have of the [Palos Verdes] Peninsula is evaporating with them,” she says. In a letter translated into Chinese, Farsi, Japanese, and Korean, she asked community members to bring in any documentations of change within the area over the decades since developers arrived in the 1920s.

Lisa Cohn, special collections librarian at Bloomfield (N.J.) Public

Library (BPL), says that the World War II section of its collection includes well-kept records of the contributions community members made to support the military overseas. “It looked like a librarian had put out a call for people to say what their organizations did to help the war effort,” Cohn says. She thought, “let’s do the same thing to collect COVID-19 stories.”

SOLICITING HISTORY

BPL’s COVID-19 Archive Project invites patrons to share documents, handwritten journals, social media handles, photographs, audio/video recordings, drawings, and poetry. In some cases, the call for documents has opened a discussion of what counts as history.

“It’s a tricky thing, because a lot of people don’t think their knowledge or experiences or history are important,” says Sugimoto. “It’s not just the history textbooks. It’s their interactions that build the community. The idea of what is historical is not that well understood.”

Mark Shelstad, coordinator of digital and archive services at Colorado State University (CSU) Libraries in Fort Collins, wanted to capture the campus experience broadly by launching a project encouraging students, staff, and faculty to document their personal experiences during the coronavirus outbreak and contribute them to the university archives.

Shelstad started by documenting the real-time changes reflected in university communications. “Obviously first

A student photographer at Colorado State University Libraries in Fort Collins documented the routine of another student who works as a nurse.

was capturing the university’s website and all these changes and updates that came about before spring break,” he says. “Then we wanted to see if we could get individual contributions from the campus community.”

He asked students to write about what it was like to miss spring break, go home, have to quit a job, or move in with parents. “We were also interested in how this affected them personally in terms of finances as well as studying in online courses for the semester.” One of his favorite submissions came from a student photographer who documented another student working as a nurse, capturing the time and precautions she had to take to avoid getting coronavirus.

Marietta Carr, librarian at Grems-Doolittle Library and Archives, part of the Schenectady County (N.Y.) Historical Society, included prompts for its COVID-19 collection project: Who did you talk to today? What did you talk about? How did you feel during and after the conversation? What new piece of information did you learn today? How do you think you will use this information? Where did this information come from? Why do you trust the source of this information?

RESOURCES

The librarians in this story used these online collections and resources when strategizing rollout, engagement, technology, and legal issues:

The Blackivists (theblackivists.com) A group of Black archivists in Chicago trains and consults with community groups on how to properly preserve archives, prioritizing projects that fill in the gaps in history.

Documenting the Now (docnow.io) A tool for and community dedicated to ethically capturing social media content.

The Tenement Museum (tenement.org) Sugimoto used its call for stories and submission form when putting together the updated YSPS request for submissions.

Society of American Archivists (archivists.org) Its Documenting in Times of Crisis resource kit provides templates and documents that assist archivists in collecting materials on tragedies within their communities, including toolkits for collecting oral histories, resources and ethical considerations when working with trauma-based collections, and practical digital content guides. ●

Carr says sites like History Colorado (historycolorado.org) and A Journal of the Plague Year (bit.ly/AL-JOTPY) gave her “ideas for specific questions that might prompt answers rather than just a ‘Hey, we’re collecting!’” Like Sugimoto, she encountered patrons who didn’t think their lives were interesting enough to merit a journal. “One of the things I suggested when people talked to me about those concerns was, ‘Are you talking to your family more often? Could you keep a record of what kind of conversations you’re having? You might feel like you’re not doing much and not anything worth recording, but those conversations can be valuable information,’” Carr says. Thanks to widespread electronic communication, she says, there’s little physical record of our everyday lives unless people make a point of collecting and sharing it.

As of early October, Sugimoto had received 106 submissions—some even from out of town—that included photos of plastic dividers at the grocery store, restaurants promoting their takeout services, and a sign on a tween’s bedroom door saying I AM ZOOMING. PLEASE LEAVE. Some sent photos of peaceful streets. “Here in Southern California, no traffic on the freeways is an incredible sight in itself,” says Sugimoto.

Carr says she received COVID-19 haikus written and submitted by a local writer’s group and a report from members of a local quilting group who made and distributed masks, along with some samples of their project. “That was interesting because it was not something we had specifically asked for or expected,” she says. “It was also amazing how organized and detailed this group was when they went into production and how organized they were with their recordkeeping.”

Along with figuring out how to elicit contributions, many librarians building COVID-19 archives have strategized how to be truly inclusive in their collections. BPL, for instance, has many immigrant patrons, and Cohn says that she asked

“It’s not just the history textbooks. It’s their interactions that build the community. The idea of what is historical is not that well understood.”

MONIQUE SUGIMOTO, archivist and local history librarian at Peninsula Center Library in Rolling Hills Estates, California

one of the library’s ESL teachers to consider using the new archive as a literacy lesson: “I wanted to know what it’s like for people who just came here—maybe they’re really cut off from their family.”

Carr observes that most responses she’s received so far have come from retired older white people who may have extra time to record and submit and are not representative of essential workers, the African-American community, the Latinx community, or recent immigrants. “Those are definitely populations that we want to work with specifically to document their experiences. Especially right now, with Black Lives Matter and the other recent protests. We want to be mindful of that and supportive of that,” she says, “rather than just be passive about it.” Carr is contemplating expanding her library’s project to include oral history and photography that captures the lives of health care workers, small business owners, and unsheltered members of the community. As she says, “If you don’t have access to a computer, how can you send me your emails?”

SYSTEMS AND TOOLS

Each library’s system for submission and storage varies according to their existing resources and systems. Shelstad admits that Google Forms might have been



How Do You Archive Your Internet?

In 2017, the digital library nonprofit Internet Archive kicked off the two-year Community Webs program, wherein participating libraries created hundreds of archived collections of web-published primary sources totaling more than 40 terabytes of data.

In addition to digital storage, the program provides educational resources and training materials that support digital curation skills development, local history, and web collecting.

“Archives tend to be the rich, the famous, the elected, people who can donate their money along with their personal materials, or academic institution research collections, which historically have excluded many voices,” says Jefferson Bailey, director of web archiving and data services at the Internet Archive.



A web page that has been archived by Denver Public Library through Internet Archive's Community Webs program.

Through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and matching donations from the Internet Archive, the program has given grant money to 28 libraries for its initial two-year cycle, which has now expanded to four. The most successful applicants clearly articulated the demographics of the community they wanted to archive. The participating Birmingham (Ala.) Public Library, for instance, focused on documenting LGBTQ life in Alabama, while Denver Public Library wanted to supplement its collections documenting “neighborhoods, events, news, people, and politics in Denver’s African-American community” and thus received training on how to archive social media, communications from activist and social-service groups, podcasts, community message boards, newspapers by local ethnic groups, minority online newspapers, online syllabi, and social media hashtags.

While Bailey says that the focus on marginalized communities was a soft requirement—“We don’t tell people what they can or can’t archive”—the heart of the training is showing librarians how to build and diversify their archival collections.

With an infusion of an additional \$1 million over the next two years, plus a \$1.1 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Internet Archive can expand Community Webs to include 400 public libraries across all 50 states and 10 Canadian provinces, which, Bailey says, would result in a collection that would rival the scale of the entire national web domains of many countries. ●

easier to use than the current Microsoft form, which requires a university login. But, he says, “we didn’t want to open ourselves to spamming, and it ensured that faculty, staff, and students would be submitting content. It’s a double-edged sword.”

Sugimoto honed her library’s acquisition process with the launch of YSPS,

when she took inspiration from projects like University of Boston’s Mass. Memories Road Show (bit.ly/AL-MassMem). “They have a little handbook about how to conduct these things.” She crafted intake forms to record permissions as well as the formats, contributors, origins, and historical relevance of images and documents. For the pandemic, she

moved intake to Google Forms, which can present a hitch for those without a Gmail account, but Sugimoto offers assistance as needed. After a patron uploads an image, Sugimoto adds metadata and uploads the file to the digital repository, a process that takes less than 15 minutes. The files are hosted through Lyrasis, which also handles web security. An additional downside of self-upload versus scanning in person is that Sugimoto can’t always control image quality, but something is better than nothing, she says: “That was one thing as an archivist I had to let go of and say, ‘You know what, this is documenting it. It might not be the highest quality, but it’s speaking to what’s happening now.’”

There are also legal issues to consider, such as permission to use imagery, electronic signatures, and age requirements to ensure minors aren’t submitting without their parents’ permission. Many libraries, like CSU, already have boilerplate language that applies to the request for archive donations. “We have a standard form that turns over certain rights,” says Shelstad. “The donor can retain or pass along those rights to us, and we have the ability to share that content.”

Other challenges and unknowns can be handled only in real time as librarians and patrons alike live through history. It may be difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of calls to contribute as the pandemic stretches on. Additionally, motivating a population that may simply have a hard time taking on new projects can be tough. “The timing is very difficult to work with,” says Carr. “People need to focus on survival first and then take time to reflect. You want to capture the moment as it’s happening but not detract from anyone’s energy that they’re putting into survival or easing suffering.” ^{AL}



CLAIRE ZULKEY is a freelance writer and author in Evanston, Illinois.

Black Caucus of the ALA Celebrates



Members look at
what's ahead for
Black librarianship

BY Alison Marcotte

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA). “BCALA comes out of an unflagging commitment to equity,” says Tracie D. Hall, executive director of the American Library Association (ALA) and herself a member of the affiliate organization. “I cannot help but think of how prescient its founding was 50 years ago.

“The history of segregated library service is almost forgotten, but we must be reminded that some of the first sit-ins and civil rights demonstrations took place in



Makiba Foster

James Allen Davis Jr.

Victor Simmons

libraries, because so many libraries followed Jim Crow laws that offered separate and unequal library service to Blacks or excluded them altogether.

“Today, in an era where we are seeing too much polarity and lack of inclusion in systems and in social discourse, we need BCALA more than ever,” Hall says.

American Libraries spoke with 10 BCALA members—all leaders in the library field—about what the 50th anniversary means to them, their hopes for the future, and the role of libraries in combating systemic racism and discrimination and fighting for social justice. The 10 leaders include:

- **Andrew P. Jackson (Sekou Molefi Baako)**, BCALA president (2004–2006), BCALA executive board (1996–2016)
- **Stanton F. Biddle**, BCALA president (1994–1996), BCALA treasurer (2002–2008)
- **Dolores Brown**, BCALA executive board (2020–2022)
- **James Allen Davis Jr.**, BCALA executive board (2019–2021)
- **Jermaine Dennis**, Spectrum Scholar (2018–2019), BCALA member since 2019
- **Rhonda Evans**, BCALA History Committee (2019–2020)
- **Makiba Foster**, BCALA executive board (2014–2016), BCALA newsletter editor (2010)
- **Em Claire Knowles**, BCALA secretary (1994–1996), BCALA executive board member (1986–1993, 2000–2006, 2010–2013)
- **Victor Simmons**, BCALA Marketing and Public Relations Committee since 2020
- **Shaundra Walker**, BCALA Marketing and Public Relations Committee chair since 2019

From the COVID-19 pandemic to police brutality to economic turmoil, our communities have been weathering a great deal in 2020. What should a library’s role be during these trying times?

James Allen Davis Jr.: Libraries must encourage these conversations through social book groups like RADA (Read. Awareness. Dialogue. Action.), which was started in 2015 at Denver Public Library. This program has opened the door for brave spaces, addressing issues such as mass incarceration, police brutality, and immigration, as well as providing workshops on talking to kids about race.

Some libraries have also adopted the Harwood Institute model for having community conversations to assure that services to their communities are relevant.

Connecting with the nonprofit Government Alliance on Race and Equity [a national network of cities and towns that promotes

racial equity in government and communities] will provide libraries with training and resources to meet the needs of the communities they are part of.

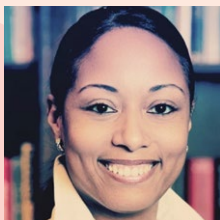
Makiba Foster: Libraries should reconsider trying to lead on larger societal issues if they are not willing to address these very same issues and how they manifest within our own institutions. I’m not saying libraries don’t have a role in helping to advance social justice within their communities, but to be true to the work, we must practice those ideas within our institutions.

For example, during the pandemic, how are libraries treating their staff and addressing safety concerns? With respect to policing, what authority does your library give to police and security when they patrol spaces and interact with your patrons and staff? With all the statements affirming Black lives that library directors and administrations across the nation have shared, this has triggered a reckoning within our profession. It’s why Black workers at the Free Library of Philadelphia (FLP) called out the hypocrisy and asked for administrative accountability with regard to discrimination, wage inequality, and unsafe working conditions. [FLP’s director resigned in July.]

Libraries certainly should continue with reading lists, social justice programs, and services that address those marginalized within our communities. Creating space within our buildings and offering programs to support the work of community activists and organizers is critical. However, I am conflicted about the role of library as facilitator for conversations about race and social justice. Facilitation connotes a neutrality, a kind of disassociation, as if we haven’t been struggling for years in these areas. If libraries serve as anchors within their communities, and if we are truly invested in their outcomes, then we have a duty to be vocal and not equivocate on issues that help our community advance social justice and equity. In turn, libraries have a duty to be more introspective, rooting out discriminatory practices and attitudes to ensure our institutions are not pillars upholding structural oppression with respect to staff, patrons, services, and policies.

BCALA Leadership Today

I'm truly grateful to be president of this prestigious organization during its 50th anniversary. I pay homage to the trailblazers who came ahead of me. It's because of them that other people of color and I have a voice within the profession. The Black Caucus is looking at its past while celebrating our future. So first, we will stay true to our roots and continue to focus on collaboration and fundraising efforts that will influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions. Second, we want to be at the forefront of establishing great reading materials for our communities—creating book lists, working closely with authors and publishers to support diverse books, and helping students gain knowledge through reading. Lastly, we want to support our members in becoming the next generation of leaders within the library profession. Together we are strong, and together we can make a difference.

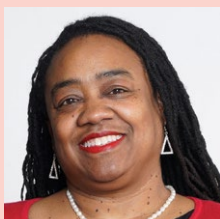


Shauntee Burns-Simpson

Shauntee Burns-Simpson
BCALA president (2020–2022)

As we celebrate half a century of BCALA, I'm honored to be the vice president of this illustrious and hardworking organization. Our caucus is nothing without its members. Incredible strides have been attained over the past five decades.

BCALA stands on the shoulders of library giants like Virginia Lacy Jones, Clara Stanton Jones, and Dorothy Burnett Porter Wesley. BCALA will continue to honor their legacy by advocating for the development, promotion, and improvement of library services and resources to the nation's African-American community, and by providing leadership for the recruitment and professional development of African-American librarians. BCALA seeks to recruit a significant number of Black librarians into the profession.



Nichelle M. Hayes

Nichelle M. Hayes
BCALA vice president (2020–2022)

Victor Simmons: A library's role during these difficult times is strongly rooted and defined in ALA's Library Bill of Rights: to provide "information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues." We must still maintain a strong moral compass to assure we are forever on the side of what is right for our communities as a whole. The conversation on race in America must begin by accepting the hard truth that not enough open conversations are happening.

Libraries must begin to broach the topic of race with our adolescent users. We must open our spaces for discussions with youth to help them understand the beauties of cultural and racial diversity. We need to have storytimes that highlight amazing people of various backgrounds to show children the similarities these individuals had with them as they were growing up. This should be coupled with providing adult programming to draw a diverse audience and offer opportunity for interaction and discussion, not only on similarities but on differences as well.

Jermaine Dennis: Far too often, libraries do not provide enough opportunities for the public to be integral in deciding the role libraries should play in their communities. Who is better to decide these roles than the people libraries serve? They are the most informed about and the most affected by their conditions, and it's time the library profession made a more conscientious effort to get community members involved in deciding the roles of libraries.

The 11th National Conference of African American Librarians (NCAAL) in Tulsa, Oklahoma, was postponed until July 2021. What past conferences have been memorable, and why?

Davis: Members of BCALA had been excited to host NCAAL in Tulsa—home of the Black Wall Street—while remembering the 1921 Tulsa massacre by the white populace. Once the pandemic hit, we were forced to postpone, but BCALA hosted its first free virtual summit May 15–16.

The most memorable conference for me was the 10th NCAAL, held in 2017 in Atlanta. The theme was "Culture Keepers X: Beyond Library Walls: Innovative Ways to Engage Our Communities," which really spoke to the importance of libraries becoming advocates for intellectual freedom and social justice. It was here that I heard the late civil rights leader US Rep. John Lewis share his experience of going to a public library in 1956 with his cousins and being denied access to the collection because of his race. This showed how important it is for libraries to be at the forefront of removing barriers to services and collections as well as being proactive in building a community where all its members can thrive.

Foster: Attending NCAAL is unlike any library conference. It is intimate, it is safe, it is affirming, it is a true community of practice. Unlike other conferences where there is a feeling that your sole purpose is to be there to work on behalf of the larger national organization, NCAAL is a conference for the attendee.

My experience with NCAAL is that its purpose is to empower, reinvigorate, and support you at whatever phase of your professional journey. I had the great honor to cochair the 9th NCAAL.



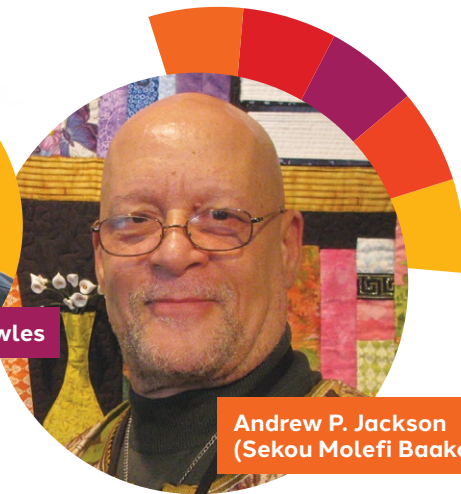
Jermaine Dennis



Stanton F. Biddle



Em Claire Knowles



Andrew P. Jackson
(Sekou Molefi Baako)

in St. Louis and it took place during a time not unlike what we are experiencing now with the racial unrest related to police killings of unarmed Black people. Teenager Michael Brown had been murdered, and the nation watched the aftermath unfold with protest, militarized police presence, and the failure to indict his killer.

In 2015 we wanted to encourage people that if they could just make their way to the conference, we knew that by being in community together, we could offer a respite, a balm to ease the racial fatigue. I am very proud of that conference, not because I helped organize it but because it had an impact on attendees.

Stanton F. Biddle: I have attended and played a key role in the planning of all 10 national conferences. Each has been unique, with a special local flair.

In Birmingham, Alabama, in 2010, for example, we visited the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the 16th Street Baptist Church, site of the 1963 church bombing.

While in Covington, Kentucky, and Cincinnati in 2013, we visited the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

In St. Louis in 2015, we visited the Ferguson (Mo.) Public Library and the site where Michael Brown was killed. In fact, BCALA purchased a memorial tree that later had to be replaced because of local vandalism.

The historic tour of Atlanta in 2017 took us to the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, as well as the Atlanta University Center, home of Spelman and Morehouse colleges.

The unique contribution of NCAAL is the opportunity it affords African-American librarians, their friends, and supporters to get together and spend several days focused on our specific concerns as librarians and the ways in which we can be more effective within the profession and in meeting the needs of society, especially our African-American communities.

Many of us work alone or as one of a handful of Black librarians in our institutions. At our national conferences, we are reminded that we are part of a much larger national community of African-American librarians. None of us are fighting the forces of racism and discrimination alone. We have allies.

Em Claire Knowles: The first NCAAL [in 1992] was significant because it drew so many people of color together, not just librarians but also other ethnic group members who serve African-American populations. This type of conference spurred other ethnic affiliates to establish their respective national conferences, which has been a great fundraiser for each organization.

What does the 50th anniversary of BCALA mean to you?

Andrew P. Jackson (Sekou Molefi Baako): I reflect on the history of progress made through the courage and strength of its founders, leadership, and members. I celebrate our founding members who stood tall and straight in the face of serious challenges to their agenda—their commitment to bring to ALA Council issues and concerns for needed change and to improve the climate within ALA. BCALA challenged the selection process for Midwinter and Annual Conference and demanded new standards that allowed growth and upward mobility of all qualified library professionals.

At the same time, this 50th anniversary serves as a reminder that with all the accomplishments made, there is still much work to be done for true equity, equality, and justice in our profession, our libraries, and our communities in the 21st century. It is painful to reread the writings of E. J. Josey and see how similar the issues and

conditions of the 1970s are to 2020. Our work is not done. [See p. 39 for an interview with Renate L. Chancellor, who recently published a biography about Josey, who cofounded BCALA.]



From left: Librarian Tammi Lawson, the late US Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), and current BCALA President Shauntee Burns-Simpson at the 2017 NCAAL in Atlanta. Lewis spoke to attendees about his lifelong fight for civil rights.



Librarian Em Claire Knowles with Scott Bonner during a 2015 NCAAL site visit to Ferguson (Mo.) Public Library, where Bonner is director. While there, BCALA dedicated a memorial tree and stone monument to the city in honor of slain teen Michael Brown.



Dolores Brown



Shaundra Walker



Rhonda Evans

Simmons: BCALA throughout its 50 years has been nothing short of a family for those who have had the privilege to call themselves members. In a country as large as the United States—and for a people who make up a relatively small percentage of the population—the organization has allowed many, including myself, to have a place to call home. Its members come from all walks of life, with open hearts and minds, with a willingness to teach and learn. The African proverb “It takes a village to raise a child” couldn’t be better exemplified than in the confines of a BCALA membership.

Dolores Brown: The anniversary means that despite the overwhelming whiteness of the profession, Black librarians have found a way to use their strength in community to support and uplift the profession through many different times when all the cards were stacked against us.

What are your hopes for the future?

Rhonda Evans: That we continue to work to diversify the profession of librarianship. According to a recent survey (bit.ly/LibFactSheet), more than 83% of librarians are white, which obviously does not represent the population of library users. Looking back at the contributions of librarians of color and librarians from other marginalized groups, we have diversified collections, fought for equal access to library spaces, practiced counter-cataloging to improve access to information, and so much more. Also, as with most professions, a lot of work still needs to be done to promote equal pay and more equity at the management level. I truly hope we can continue to work hard to make these improvements and to promote the profession to a diverse group of people.

Shaundra Walker: I’m really excited about the leadership of our current administration. BCALA President Shauntee Burns-Simpson has a bold vision for the future. The organization is

exploring creating round tables or interest groups, for example. I’ve been amazed at what she, [BCALA Vice President] Nichelle [M. Hayes], and the board have been able to accomplish during their administration, which started just in July. I hope we will be able to grow our membership.

I’m a part of an IMLS grant that focuses on Black MLIS students. Building a welcoming and inclusive community is even more important now that so many students are earning their degrees online. There is a lot of value in bringing together librarians around the different specializations in the profession and having equity-focused conversations.

Libraries have been putting out public statements and fostering conversations. How do they also do the work needed?

Jackson/Baako: Libraries are a microcosm of the inequality of opportunity that is America. Libraries will change when America changes. Our goal must be to set a new standard across faculty and library leadership and in library organization, policy, and hiring practices.

Evans: ALA recently put out a statement taking responsibility for past racism (bit.ly/ALApast racism). I believe that acknowledging the past and understanding the history of systemic racism within libraries is an incredibly important first step. When studying the historical periods of Jim Crow, the civil rights movement, and even the Black Power movement, the fight for library access has been largely ignored. Many public library systems did not allow people of color into their spaces, and many library professional organizations did not allow library professionals of color to become members. For example, until 1965, the Georgia Library Association allowed only white librarians to join. To act as if the profession is no longer dealing with the ramifications of these practices puts us at a disadvantage when it comes to making positive changes for the future.

Walker: Inequality lives in systems, so we need to look at our infrastructure to really effect change. We should critique our hiring practices, collection development policies, and acquisitions. Library staff throughout the library—not just front-line staff—must maintain cultural competence to best serve their communities.

Brown: Support and incentivize support staff of color to get the schooling and move into leadership roles. Build the leadership from within. Libraries also have to be willing to have hard conversations, to listen to what is being shared, and to act on the outcomes. It must be more than just talk of equity and diversity. **AL**



ALISON MARCOTTE is a freelance writer for *American Libraries*.

The Activist Life of E. J. Josey

Atowering figure in both librarianship and the civil rights movement, E. J. Josey (1924–2009) cofounded the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA) and served as ALA president (1984–1985). He inspired and mentored colleagues and students with a leadership style that reverberates today.

Renate L. Chancellor, associate professor in the Department of Library and Information Science at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and author of *E. J. Josey: Transformational Leader of the Modern Library Profession* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2020), is a leading Josey scholar. *American Libraries* spoke with her about his life, activism, and impact on the library world.

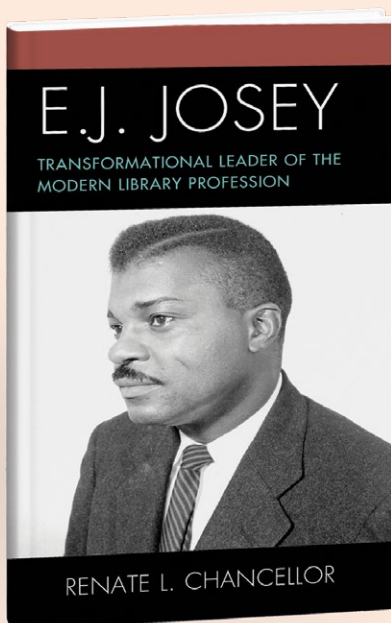
How did E. J. Josey’s childhood in the segregated South influence his work as both a librarian and an activist? Josey was the oldest of five children, and he came from very humble beginnings in the Mount Hermon section of Portsmouth, Virginia, which was predominantly African American at the time. His parents were very poor, and his father died when Josey was a sophomore in high school. He graduated early and scrambled to find jobs to help the family—so he didn’t really have much of a childhood. He then went into the Army, where a defining event forced him to never back down from racism: He was boarding a bus, and the white bus driver told him to move aside so the other soldiers could come on first. He wouldn’t do it. The driver pointed a gun at him, and Josey wouldn’t back down. That speaks a lot to who he was as a person and about the transformative period that inspired him to fight for equality for all.

You write about Josey’s leadership style and his work as a mentor and community builder. Can you elaborate? He was charismatic. He

was able to rally and bring people together and to galvanize them to fight for what was right. He was a firm believer in education and community. He was big on fighting for equality, not just for Blacks but also for women and other people of color.

People were almost fanatical about him, and they still are to this day. He had a charisma few have.

Josey helped organize BCALA, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. What’s the significance of his legacy for BCALA, ALA, and library workers of color? What he did in 1964 [at the ALA Annual Conference] when he drafted a resolution that forced ALA to disallow Southern state library chapters from being part of the Association if they refused membership to Black librarians—that was pivotal. But he saw that wasn’t enough. BCALA was formed in 1970, and even though there was integration, there weren’t opportunities for leadership within the profession for Black librarians, who were still also dealing with discrimination in the workplace. His idea, along with the other founders, was to form



Renate L. Chancellor

an organization that can grow the leadership of Black librarians. That was important.

How would Josey have responded to today’s racial, political, social, and economic unrest? He would probably be the same as he was then: feisty, encouraging people to fight and speak out. During the time he did his activism in ALA in the 1960s, the Civil Rights Act was passed [in 1964]. A lot of inequity remains in the United States. Josey would push ALA to be more responsive to people of color. He would push people in his workplace to fight for justice, because when you look side-by-side at what’s going on today [compared with the 1960s], you see a lot of parallels with the civil rights movement.

What would Josey think of the profession today? He would see that there’s still much to be done. There have been efforts and initiatives to bring people of color into the profession, but I don’t think he would feel it’s enough. With everything going on in larger society, such as the policing of Black people, he would want to see more action. He would be on the front lines. He would pull people together to fight this fight.

What advice do you think Josey would give to new librarians entering the profession? He would say, “Be active, be smart, and pick and choose your battles. Be involved: Don’t just come into the profession and think that it is going to work for you. You have to work for it. You have to be a leader. You have to be a voice.” ●

LET THEM LEAD

In a new age of protest, teen librarians support youth interests and activism

BY Emily Udell



Black Lives Matter (BLM) demonstrations—renewed by the death of George Floyd in the custody of Minneapolis police—may be the largest social movement in US history, according to a recent *New York Times* analysis. Half a million people turned out at 550 sites across the country at the protests’ peak on June 6 (bit.ly/BLMstats). And many of the movement’s supporters are young people: This past summer, high school students organized and led BLM protests in California, Maryland, Michigan, Texas, and other states (bit.ly/BLMteens).

This isn’t the first time in recent years that teens have taken a visible role in public protests. Many of them marched in support of the DREAM Act and spoke out about immigration policy; advocated for gun control after the 2018 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland,

Florida; and followed environmental activist Greta Thunberg’s lead in organizing school strikes to bring attention to the climate crisis. Some librarians are using these galvanizing moments to engage teens around issues that matter to them. In the context of national and international social justice movements, libraries are helping teens develop and amplify their voices and build awareness of matters affecting their communities.

Donnell Washington, senior library assistant at Charlotte Mecklenburg (N.C.) Library (CML), thinks the library is a natural place for teens to develop both answers to societal problems and the skills to implement them. He was inspired by the teens he encountered while protesting with his local BLM group, as well as his prior experience working with youth in the nonprofit sector.

“My biggest thing is to create that atmosphere to engage and empower them to come up with solutions,” Washington says. “A public library has the ability and the power to do that.”

While participating in BLM demonstrations, Washington came up with the idea to hold a teen summit at the library that would highlight issues relevant to youth. He reached out to seven of his colleagues working in teen services departments across the CML system to get the ball rolling, then brought in the library’s VolunTeens, a group of volunteers ages 13–17, to help shape the program’s content.

Washington and stakeholders created the Better Hope for Tomorrow virtual summit and four accompanying weekly town hall events, with the aim of covering topics such as race, discrimination, immigration, ability, mental health,

Photos: Erwin Cardona/Waltham (Mass.) Public Library



Teen leader Iris Alvarenga poses in front of yard signs at Waltham (Mass.) Public Library that depict issues youth patrons care about. The installation was a partnership between the library, civic organization For Freedoms, and local art group Blueprint Projects.

gender identity and sexuality, and interactions with police for a largely teen audience. Six panel experts—three adults in relevant human-service fields and three teen activists passionate about tackling social inequalities—were invited to the summit. Following the conference, teens will be invited to attend monthly workshops and discuss solutions to the issues addressed by the program, Washington says.

“If we’re talking about allowing their voices to be heard, you have to allow them to speak and listen,” he says. “As adults, let’s pull back. Our teens are intelligent enough to have the conversations.”

START WITH DIALOGUE

Jennifer Johnson, who works with teens as a forum manager and library services coordinator at two locations of York County

(Pa.) Libraries—one rural and one urban—says that BLM has made a universal impact on the youth in her area.

“I had understood the interests of the teens at both locations to be quite different,” says Johnson. “Since the BLM demonstrations, I’m finding their interests are weaving together. Both sets of teens are interested in supporting social justice issues.”

To better support their concerns, she interviewed two local teens who had, independent of the library, organized a successful peaceful demonstration in the area.

“I wanted to find out what advice they had for me. It was a huge learning experience,” she says. “The group I’m working with doesn’t want to organize a protest, [but] they want to address some of their perceptions of the issues at the heart of the BLM [movement].”

Right now the group is meeting weekly over Zoom to decide how to move forward with its initial ideas and develop them into action. Johnson stressed that the teens would shape the progression of the project, which they’ve decided to call “Recognize Me.” They also met with one of the teen BLM organizers as well as a member of a local borough council to discuss conflict resolution in the community.

Opening a dialogue with youth patrons can spark programming around social justice, says Virginia A. Walter, professor emeritus at UCLA and author of *Young Activists and the Public Library* (ALA Editions, 2020). She was inspired to write her book (see p. 52) by experiences on the job as far back as the 1960s, including discussions she had with teens while working at a neighborhood branch of Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL).

“They cared about so many things, but really didn’t have—as I didn’t at that age—an idea of what they could do,” Walter says. “They love being able to talk to adults about things that matter. Kids are hungry for that; they just don’t [often] have the opportunity.”

She recommends libraries turn to their teen forums or other influential teens in the community to get started.

“I think every community has a different way that this can happen,” she says. “Be open to listening. Both children and teens are eager for a sympathetic adult to talk to. I think that’s more valued than we know.”

“AS ADULTS, LET’S PULL BACK. OUR TEENS ARE INTELLIGENT ENOUGH TO HAVE THE CONVERSATIONS.”

DONNELL WASHINGTON, senior library assistant at Charlotte Mecklenburg (N.C.) Library

Social justice programming helps teens develop real-world skills, community connections, and confidence in translating their opinions into actions. Libraries can play a key role in this development.

“The kids have firsthand experience with a lot of these issues,” Walter says. “One of the key ingredients in this is a sense of efficacy. That’s something that a library can be involved with.”

TEENS IN CHARGE

In addition to making space for conversations, librarians say involving teens in decision making and execution is key to success. Teens respond more when their peers drive ideas and fill leadership roles.

“We try to make everything as teen-led as possible,” says Luke Kirkland, teen department head at Waltham (Mass.) Public Library (WPL), who helps facilitate regular discussions in the library’s teen room. “I’m like a human footnote/bouncer/moderator. It almost always goes better for the participants, the audience, when other teens are involved. It’s so much more interesting when they’re running it.”

WPL hosts an array of regular events for young people that connect them to social justice issues. Twice a month, teens gather in a dedicated space for a forum called Real Talk. Led by high schoolers, it’s considered the centerpiece of the library’s teen programming.

The mission of Real Talk, which was founded in 2016 by a local teen named Rachel Cosgrove, is to help youth develop their own voices within a social and emotional learning environment where they can explore issues affecting their community. The first iteration of the group drew 30–40 teens.

“There was a spirit of risk-taking and an honest desire to have serious conversations,” says Kirkland.

“I think it really starts with trust and relationships,” he adds. “Youth are not going to have honest conversations with people they don’t trust. It has to start there.”

Occasionally, WPL invites community guests—but only those who can really engage young people—to present on social justice issues or hold special interactive events, such as a game show on teen sexual health. Real Talk meetings involve a lot of collaborative elements and movement.

“These topics can get very loud,” he says. “If you want an active teen life in your library, you have to defend that type of usage in your library from people who would criticize it.”



As a result of Real Talk, WPL has developed projects based on participants’ experiences and interests. Before the 2018 midterm elections, the library partnered with civic organization For Freedoms and local art group Blueprint Projects to create yard signs based on teens’ responses to fill-in-the-blank prompts: FREEDOM OF..., FREEDOM TO..., FREEDOM FOR..., and FREEDOM FROM....

“With teens who don’t get to vote, it’s an opportunity for the adults in town to get a sense of what the concerns of youth are,” Kirkland says.

Responses demonstrated teens’ acute sensitivity to social, economic, and political issues, with slogans such as:

- Freedom to have more teachers of color in my school.
- Freedom from the fear of having my family taken away.
- Freedom from men having to act masculine.
- Freedom to have a disability without being stared at.
- Freedom from a future defined by the effects of climate change.



After staffers collected responses from teens, their messages were printed on double-sided signs and displayed on the library's lawn through Election Day. WPL held an event in which the mayor, local representatives, and the public were invited to view the signs. During the event, which included a voter registration drive, teens mingled with attendees, quizzing them with questions from the US citizenship test. Teens also delivered speeches to the assembled audience, underscoring the importance of leaders listening to youth voices in shaping community policies.

"That kind of platform to speak to representatives—that was really cool for them," Kirkland says. "[To] a lot of students, it feels like adults aren't asking them about issues."

The first year, WPL produced 100 yard signs for the For Freedoms project; the second year, they doubled that number. They hope to recruit other libraries to participate and to continue the program virtually amid the pandemic. Additionally, WPL has

created online resources, including modules and activity guides for Real Talk (bit.ly/AL-RealTalk), to help other libraries start similar programs.

Kirkland says teens often believe they don't have the depth of knowledge or confidence to voice their opinions on the issues of the day.

"You have a teen, who's like: 'I'm not political. I don't go to protests. I don't know what to say,'" he says. "If you engage them, you're able to draw out a story from their life that has community political implications."

FROM IDEAS TO ACTIONS

In Los Angeles, youth are tackling issues in their communities via Teenagers Leading Change (TLC), a program that helps young people across LAPL branches develop the ability to turn ideas into actions. Created by Candice Mack, LAPL's managing librarian of systemwide teen services and 2015–2016 president of the Young Adult Library Services Association, the program

From right: Teenagers Leading Change (TLC) is a program that helps young people at Los Angeles Public Library turn ideas into actions; TLC members from the Pacoima branch painting a mural.

was started as a way to attract library foundation funding for teen services while engaging young people in civic projects.

"So far we've had 26 projects across 33 branches and 362 teens participating," says Mack, who launched the program in 2017 after pitching it for several years.

LAPL's program helps clarify the issues teens care about and move their ideas into research, community engagement, and implementation phases. The initiative has addressed topics such as media literacy, eviction and displacement, homelessness, and voting rights. Past projects saw teens hosting a tenants' rights day at the library, compiling an oral history of Los Angeles' Little Tokyo neighborhood, and creating a mural with an environmental justice theme.

Mack says one thing LAPL has learned from the project is that YA librarians need training and support to have the kind of conversations with youth that lead to social justice projects.

"Our staffers have the heart to do it, but some of those conversations are heavy discussions," she says. LAPL has since held systemwide facilitation trainings for YA librarians, most recently in August with the library's newly hired curriculum designer.

Mack believes any library can adopt a version of TLC that meets its needs and helps teens develop their skills for activism.

"We hope that things like this can be duplicated in other communities. I think [what we do] can definitely be scaffolded up or down," she says. "The more teens and youth doing awesome things in their communities, the better." **AL**



EMILY UDELL is a freelance writer based in Indianapolis.



The weight we Carry

Creating a trauma-informed library workforce

BY Rebecca Tolley



As librarians, we are affected by our work. We're often directly exposed to traumatic events or feeling the indirect results of natural disasters, terrorist events, or rioting. We experience secondary exposure by hearing patrons speak out about their traumas and even by helping them find the resources they need to realign their lives. While we are not specifically tasked with meeting patrons' emotional and physical needs, we do perform emotional labor while communicating with them.

Our physical spaces provide comfort, peace, and sanctuary for adults, teens, and children.

Although stereotypes about cold, harsh, robotic librarians persist, those of us who work with the public must display emotional intelligence for our patrons' sakes—and our own.

EMOTIONAL LABOR

Vicarious traumatization (VT) occurs when we work with patrons whose traumatic stories transfer onto us. We may not realize that transference has happened. Subtly and gradually, it adds to the daily anxiety and stress that many of us carry home. VT happens from more than one story; it happens as a result of the hundreds or thousands of stories we hear over the course of years.

Depending on the type of library we work in, the region in which we live, and whether we're in an urban, suburban, or rural environment, we all contend with various levels of VT. Many readers may ask: "Isn't this simply burnout dressed up in a trauma-informed approach?" No, burnout doesn't always mean that our view of the world is affected, which is one outcome of VT. Burnout combines low job satisfaction with feeling both powerless and overwhelmed in the workplace. VT, by contrast, changes our view of the entire world into a scary, negative place.

TOXIC WORKPLACES

Workplace conditions affect our mental and emotional well-being also. We feel it, and research supports it: We are exhausted and overwhelmed by our jobs. Whether library administrators explicitly overburden us with too many tasks or implicitly assume that library workers are not entitled to work-life balance, the stress we experience remains the same. Some library workers even lack support from administration for taking earned time off.



Photo illustration: ©Victor Tongdee/Adobe Stock

Library cultures can change dramatically from one administration to the next and degrade when the wrong person is put in charge. The overwhelming stress decreases our productivity, effectiveness, and happiness, thus creating low morale. Those who work a traditional Monday–Friday workweek typically dread Sundays because they anticipate Monday looming on the horizon, promising just another day in a toxic and stressful workplace.

One strategy for neutralizing toxicity is to approach library meetings differently. Naturally, meetings between staff and the administration exist along a continuum. Some may be collegial and warm, some may be abrasive and chilly, and some may flip-flop between these extremes. General dysfunction often appears. People talking over each other, having side conversations, or interrupting when people are speaking are all signs of team dysfunction and disrespect.

Alternately, no one talking at all is also a sign of team dysfunction and may indicate a fear of sharing ideas with the group because participants have been verbally attacked or seen it happen to others. Silence may also indicate some participants' complete disengagement from their coworkers, especially if they display negative body language or bury their attention in mobile devices or laptops under the guise of following the agenda or notetaking.

The library team needs to collaborate and agree on how its members will work together. An important first step is to create a safe team environment. For example, when a new dean joined my library, the dean discovered that people did not respect each other in meetings and that one person in particular was a disruption. In response, the dean instituted a policy whereby people who wanted to speak held up their hand to be acknowledged, so that everyone could be heard in turn.

While this helped the team dynamic tremendously, it was also a passive-aggressive strategy the dean used in place of meeting directly with the person who was unprofessional and asking them to change their behavior. This passive-aggressive strategy continued a legacy of silence, secrecy, and workarounds, when dealing with the problem directly would have been a more effective response.

Spending 20 minutes together to outline agreements on how meetings are to be run is a valuable way for libraries (and any group of people) to eliminate toxicity. I learned this

practice as part of my Our Whole Lives: Lifespan Sexuality facilitator training (uua.org/re/owl). I mention this practice to provide an example of how other organizations handle meetings outside of following Robert's Rules of Order, as well as to illuminate the importance of including everyone in rule-making. When the people who attend meetings and trainings are involved in their operational aspects, they're empowered.

WHY SELF-CARE IS IMPORTANT

Self-care allows us to level up our compassion and empathy. Working with patrons, coworkers, bureaucracy, and administrators can deplete our emotional reserves. Forgoing self-care or being unaware of its importance is a poor strategy for long-term mental and physical health. When you feel like you kill a small part of yourself every day you show up at work, that is a major problem. The anxiety can range from occasional feelings of being out of your element to months or years of just barely keeping your head above water in a sink-or-swim environment. That's why self-care and peer support are essential elements of the trauma-informed library. Being overwhelmed by situations, personalities, or interactions in the library workplace can be addressed with several self-care methods.

In her book *Simple Self-Care for Therapists: Restorative Practices to Weave through Your Workday* (2015), Ashley Davis Bush introduces the concept of macro and micro self-care. Macro self-care includes vacations, massages,

hobbies, a healthy diet, and exercise; these traditional activities are essential for self-care.

But Bush also suggests micro practices such as breathing exercises, meditation, and positive thinking for the moments between and during everyday activities. These micro moments are dedicated to what she calls "calm, awareness, rejuvenation, and balance."

Micro habits help librarians ground themselves when they feel scattered, energize themselves when they feel depleted, and relax when they feel bodily manifestations of stress and anxiety such as headaches, muscle tightness, nervous stomach, chest pain, rapid heartbeat, and clenched jaw. These symptoms, of

course, can vary from person to person.

Just as bodies experience and exhibit stress differently, what works for one person's self-care may be anathema to another. Getting quality sleep, exercising regularly, and following a nutritionally sound diet are the three big macro areas of

**Forgoing
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self-care that everyone should focus on. Healthy relationships, rewarding hobbies, community involvement, and spiritual connection round out the macro practices.

But for some of us, hobbies, massages, and mini-vacations are difficult or impossible because of our professional lives and personal obligations. Finding the time, money, and sometimes even the energy for those indulgences can be challenging. This is why incorporating micro practices into our daily routine is essential for our optimal functioning as human beings and helpful library workers.

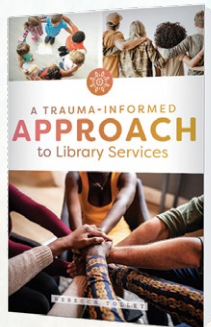
Bush recommends micro practices for a variety of times and places. Remember, these practices were designed for therapists, who usually have time between clients. For library workers, adding self-care moments between sessions of editing metadata or handling reference or circulation transactions may take some practice.

The kind of micro self-care practices you can perform habitually depends a great deal on the type of services you're providing. Those who are working busy service desks and offering constant answers, referrals, and directions to patrons have less room for rituals and formal breaks between these activities. But those offering in-depth research consultation or library instruction do have moments for grounding, energizing, or relaxation practices. Whether we take prescribed breaks or work through them, most employers mandate two 15-minute breaks and an hour-long lunch break during the typical eight-hour workday. We make time for what we deem important, and we library workers are important.

PLAN FOR SELF-CARE

Developing a self-care plan is an individual project, but library administration can encourage these practices. The administration should generate awareness of self-care and its importance in the organization. Having outside experts address the library workforce is also important in creating an organization that recognizes and values self-care. Helping workers devise plans in a workshop or a professional development setting demonstrates the library's commitment. Building in opportunities and providing spaces for self-care within the workday helps workers help themselves.

Reminding library workers to take mandated breaks and step away from their desks is simple but effective. Asking library staff to schedule time for self-care on their calendars makes the practice part of the daily routine. Outfitting



This is an excerpt from *A Trauma-Informed Approach to Library Services* by Rebecca Tolley (ALA Editions, 2020).

break rooms with quiet spaces where people can collect their thoughts while breathing deeply is another suggestion. If break rooms are too small or too heavily trafficked, the administration can set aside other areas—tech-free or contemplative spaces, for example—where staffers can take a minute to collect themselves. Often, briefly escaping the building completely is helpful for resetting one's attention, and then returning with a renewed focus on empathetic and helpful customer service.

REACHING OUT

Don't be afraid to ask for help with your workload in the library and at home. In our work life and our personal life, independence and self-sufficiency are expected. But many of us—either because of our family's values or from the philosophy and practice of American individualism that Herbert Hoover spoke about—feel that we cannot ask for help. Hoover said that individualism is the key to progress and that our pioneer spirit has underpinned America's political, economic, and spiritual institutions for the last three centuries. Our spirit of American individualism has imbued us with stoicism, initiative, and opportunity.

But this emphasis on the individual can sometimes preclude taking comfort from others and asking for help when we need it. We might fear that asking for help makes us seem weak, ineffective, and unable to tend to our duties. But asking our colleagues, friends, and family members for help when we need it is one of the most effective forms of self-care, and it's available to just about everyone.

One of my daily practices is to check in with my immediate colleagues and those I supervise. During the check-in, I ask how they are and how their work is going, and I listen carefully, observe them with care, and note any concerns. When they're having off days, when they're stressed, or when something may prevent them from being their best at the library that day, I offer my help. If I can relieve a burden so that they feel less stressed, that creates a culture of caring and support within my immediate domain.

Last year a colleague asked me to complete a task that she had zero time for that week. I finished it in an hour, and my colleague's sense of relief was immense. Helping her remove that obstacle from her workflow increased my usefulness to her as a colleague and as a friend. It reduced her stress and frustration at having a staggering workload, and it affirmed our relationship as warm colleagues. **AL**



REBECCA TOLLEY is librarian and professor at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City.

Our Collective Power

Coming together for mutual aid and advocacy

BY Meredith Farkas



MEREDITH FARKAS is faculty librarian at Portland (Oreg.) Community College. Follow her on Twitter @librarianmer.

Library workers are well practiced in advocating for their libraries, whether that's finding ways to demonstrate the value of what they do or lobbying leaders for additional funding. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, webinars on advocacy have helped library workers become even more effective in these areas.

However, during this crisis, many library workers are unexpectedly forced to advocate for themselves. Early in the pandemic, Twitter became a vital space for workers seeking advice and support when trying to get their libraries to close or to demand adequate safety measures. I know many library workers who are fierce advocates for their patrons but are far more reticent when speaking up for their own well-being. At a time when some library workers are being furloughed, laid off, or forced to work in hazardous situations, library workers need to take collective action, something that presents barriers for many, and that many feel unprepared to take on (bit.ly/AL-SelfAdvocacy).

Now and over the past few years, our profession has seen inspiring examples of advocacy and mutual aid rise from shared values and necessity. These formal and informal communities came together outside of the usual structures of state or national associations, allowing them to respond more nimbly to issues and crises.

A wealth of literature describes the racism and exclusion faced by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) library workers, as illustrated in Kaetrena Davis Kendrick's annotated bibliography, *The Kaleidoscopic Concern* (bit.ly/AL-Kaleidoscopic). We Here (wehere.space) is a private online community created by BIPOC library workers to support and help retain BIPOC workers in the profession. In addition to this grassroots organization's online space for mutual support, We Here recently launched its Community School, which offers professional development, and awarded its first COVID-19 relief grants for Black members.

When I applied to join the third cohort of the Library Freedom Institute (libraryfreedom.org), founded by Alison Macrina with the support of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, I knew I'd receive valuable training to become a privacy advocate. What I didn't realize was that I was joining a vibrant community focused on advocacy and mutual support around issues of privacy and surveillance. Members of the Library Freedom community have helped one another advocate for privacy and social justice in their libraries and communities; several members were involved in the recent successful campaign to ban facial recognition technologies in Boston (bit.ly/AL-FacialRec).

As it became obvious that libraries staying open in the spring endangered workers and patrons alike, Callan Bignoli, director of Olin College of Engineering Library in Needham, Massachusetts, began collecting information about libraries whose staff were advocating for closure and promoting it with the Twitter hashtag #protectlibraryworkers so others could support their efforts. In May, Bignoli organized a free online conference called #LIBREV(olution) and founded the LIBREV community (librev.info), both focused on supporting and advocating for

library workers. The community is a space where library workers can discuss issues of concern, like reopening safety and anti-racism work, and find likeminded colleagues with whom to take collective action.

This pandemic has highlighted the fact that library

Library workers need as much training in collective action and self-advocacy as they do in lobbying for library funding.

workers need as much training in collective action and self-advocacy as they do in lobbying for library funding. Strong online communities such as those described here have never mattered more than now, especially when we are often physically distant from one another and when so many library workers' jobs are in jeopardy. This kind of collective organizing requires a willingness to look beyond our institutions and traditional hierarchies, but the collective influence we wield can create powerful positive change. **AL**

One Country, One Collection

Rethinking the role of an open digital library

BY Mirela Roncevic



MIRELA RONCEVIC is a writer, journalist, editor, content developer, and publishing and library consultant.

When I lived in Croatia, I managed a project called One Country One Library (OCOL) from 2017 to 2020. The project’s goal was to develop a national platform of books and other publications (including short stories, academic articles and journals, textbooks, audiobooks, educational videos, and podcasts) that would be freely accessible via a website or app within the country’s borders.

This open digital library not only introduced users to a new way of engaging with digital content but also offered a sustainable business model to publishers, authors, libraries, and those who wished to support it financially.

The idea for the national library did not come overnight. It was the result of working on various projects over a long period of time with a number of for-profit and nonprofit companies and organizations that cater to public, academic, and school libraries and use technology to deepen the impact of digital libraries in their communities.

Since the advent of the internet, many projects have brought ebooks and other digital publications to patrons outside the confines of physical libraries. Having participated in such projects and worked directly with libraries and publishers to create positive outcomes for all sides, I witnessed firsthand their power to transform education and lifelong learning for people who otherwise may not have easy access to libraries.

I also saw that every initiative centered on opening digital content legally and promoting reading and education was also, at its core, an attempt to redefine the role of a library.

Over time, these projects revealed to me the possibility of a library that could take several forms at once: a publishing platform for emerging authors; a talent discovery tool for publishers; a learning platform for schools and universities; a classroom tool for educators; a promotional tool for established authors and influential figures; an information platform for visitors and tourists; and, of course, the same thing that libraries have been for centuries: the place to go to read for pleasure or to enrich one’s knowledge in every way imaginable.

During the three years I worked on this project, I applied knowledge acquired from working with innovative organizations on transformative ebook and digital content projects. I challenged myself and colleagues to overcome potential obstacles for readers, publishers, and

libraries, such as making books available to readers while paying copyright holders fairly, protecting reader privacy, building affordable and sustainable platforms, serving readers with disabilities, and meeting the needs of students and patrons via a single platform.

While I do not think that this project offered the ideal solution to every challenge, I believe we raised the bar, introducing bold ideas that invited libraries as well as publishers to consider brand-new possibilities.

My hope is that the One Country One Library project and Library of Croatia platform will inspire others to build similar digital libraries in their own countries.

As the uncertainty surrounding education and access to reading and learning materials escalates during the COVID-19 pandemic, with no end in sight, libraries and those working with collec-

tions now have an opportunity to transform education and reading by placing the idea of an open library at the center of public life like never before.

Envisioning and building a library of this scope brought me to the realization that the power of digital content and digital

libraries to transform the world—truly transform it—is not only undeniable but fast approaching.

Adapted from “One Country One Library,” Library Technology Reports vol. 56, no. 7 (Oct. 2020). [AL](#)

We raised the bar, introducing bold ideas that invited libraries and publishers to consider brand-new possibilities.

Reset and Reconnect

Adapting and advocating amid the pandemic

by Becky Calzada, Anita Cellucci, and Courtney Lewis



BECKY CALZADA is library services coordinator at Leander (Tex.) Independent School District.



ANITA CELLUCCI is library teacher and K-12 libraries department chair at Westborough (Mass.) High School.



COURTNEY LEWIS is director of library services and innovative research at St. Catherine's School in Richmond, Virginia.

Our world is desperate for assistance right now: College students need more support, families seek help with distance learning, and teachers require ready access to ebooks and databases their districts may not be able to afford. This crisis provides an opportunity to remind audiences what librarians do and how we can help the young people we once saw on a daily or weekly basis.

This past summer, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) created a document and chart titled “School Librarian Role in Pandemic Learning Conditions” to assist K–12 librarians as they encounter a variety of situations this school year (bit.ly/AASL-pandemic). The document analyzes the five key roles that we fill—instructional partner, teacher, leader, information specialist, and program administrator—in the context of three learning models: face-to-face (with social distancing requirements), blended (at home and school), and distance (no face-to-face contact).

Recommendations address the challenges of our constantly changing work environments while also highlighting the ways in which school librarians may adapt roles, strengthen relationships, and create inclusive learning cultures. For example, in our role as instructional partners in a blended-learning model, we might create and curate instructional videos for the classroom. As information specialists in a distance-learning model, we may focus on incorporating free open educational resources and appropriate assistive technology in ways we hadn't before. And as program administrators in a face-to-face model, we have the unprecedented duty of managing library capacity, seating arrangements, and the safe handling of materials.

In creating these resources, AASL aims not only to share crowd-sourced ideas but also to give school librarians a tool to communicate what they do to administrators and community members seeking solutions amid our new normal.

Overwhelmed librarians who are wondering how to advocate for our profession in current conditions might want to press the pause button and reflect on what author and speaker Simon Sinek means when he says we should start with “why.” In his TEDx talk, “How Great Leaders Inspire Action,” he puts forth the idea that “people don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it” (bit.ly/AL-Sinek). The pandemic can reset and reconnect the work we do serving young people and make our motivations visible to our communities in crisis.

One way to do this is by building partnerships. Librarians can amplify their work by collaborating with nonprofits and corporations to serve children, particularly the most vulnerable ones. Checking in with local homeless shelters, food banks, social service organizations, and existing outreach programs—and sharing that information with our networks—extends our influence as librarians and helps us reach more of the youth who need us.

Our profession's dual focus on human connections and data collection can also illustrate our value to the people who decide how personnel, hours, and dollars are ultimately distributed. By using survey results and contextualizing information with seminal research, librarians can show their expertise is needed in areas most exacerbated by

the pandemic, such as learning loss, digital literacy, and internet access. We can use this same data-driven approach to write grant proposals when community needs are not covered by our budgets.

Though this pandemic has shaken many traditional institutions and norms, it is important to note that every librarian—not just school librarians—has the inherent power to lead. When we accept this charge and work together, we make our communities stronger and serve more of the young patrons who need us. **AL**

This crisis provides an opportunity to remind audiences what librarians do.

More Seats at the Table

Diversity in librarianship starts with hiring

BY Joslyn Bowling Dixon



JOSLYN BOWLING DIXON is director of Newark (N.J.) Public Library. She is an ALA councilor-at-large and cochair of the ALA Forward Together Working Group.

Last year, when I was running for a leadership position in the Virginia Library Association (VLA), I gave a speech to the organization’s executive committee and council chairs. As I looked out into the audience from the podium, I realized that—save for one other person—I was the only person of color in a room full of dozens of decision makers from across the state.

I was reminded of the words of the late US Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm: “If they don’t give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.” When I was eventually elected to the VLA vice presidency, I established the VLA Librarians of Color (LOC) Forum with that goal in mind—to provide more seats at the table and create space for meaningful engagement.

The lack of diversity in librarianship is a well-established fact (over 83% of librarians are white) that reflects the entrenchment of our nation’s power dynamics in sexism, racism, and social inequality. Less well established is the path toward a more equal playing field, which must start with recruiting and retaining qualified candidates of color and overcoming persistent wage gaps that shut them out of the profession.

A March 2020 study from the National Partnership for Women and Families found that Black women and Latinas earn just 62 cents and 54 cents, respectively, for every dollar paid to white men. With library compensation trending low compared to other professional fields and the expense of a master’s degree in library science, the return on investment isn’t guaranteed for candidates of color.

Hiring based on “fit” is often vague shorthand for in-group identification (see “Is ‘Fit’ a Bad Fit?,” June 2019, p. 78). We must work actively to overcome these unconscious biases and provide opportunities for qualified candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and convey their full potential. Often this means looking past demographic traits or keywords and critically evaluating a candidate’s competence, qualifications, and relevant experience. We also need to account for the possibility that some minority candidates self-select out of certain opportunities when they don’t see themselves reflected in the library staff, a phenomenon that I’ve personally experienced. Take a look at your library’s website, branding, and social media pages. Who do you see?

The COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on hiring and employment have disproportionately been felt by people of color, but some doors have opened. The virtual environment has reduced a few barriers for professionals, such as costly travel, overnight stays, and relocation—while

facilitating access to speaking opportunities, fellowships, and job interviews. Recognizing opportunity amid the chaos is how I arrived at a new role as director of Newark (N.J.) Public Library—an in-depth interview process facilitated entirely online. (My term with the VLA ended this fall.)

We all need to be the change that we seek, especially when it comes to increasing diversity in the profession. Look around: If the staff and leadership of your organization don’t reflect the diversity of the communities you serve, step back and look for ways to remedy that. Be intentional about hiring people of color. When comparing qualifications, give candidates of color the same benefit of the doubt you would give a more traditional (likely white) candidate. Encourage and support people of color to complete an

MLIS as a path to higher compensation and securing a seat at decision-making tables.

Despite myriad challenges and pervasive inequity, this time in the history of the profession—this period of reckoning,

reconciling, and collective efforts to do better—offers significant opportunity. Nothing can or will improve without continued reflection and bold action. I am encouraged by this moment, when we are confronting matters in an unflinching way, and I believe the conversations that are happening now will help bring about meaningful change in staffing the profession. **AL**

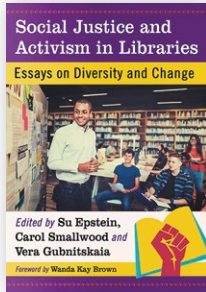
Hiring based on “fit” is often vague shorthand for in-group identification.

Empower, Provide, Engage

Social activism and libraries



ALLISON ESCOTO is head librarian at the Center for Fiction in Brooklyn, New York.



Social Justice and Activism in Libraries: Essays on Diversity and Change

Edited by Su Epstein, Carol Smallwood, and Vera Gubnitskaia

For a holistic look at the role libraries can play in the realm of social activism, *Social Justice and Activism in Libraries* is a comprehensive collection of essays that covers a range of issues—including the rights of prisoners, trans Americans, Black Americans, Americans with disabilities, and many more. These essays not only introduce the theoretical aspects of how activism intersects with libraries but also provide practical, real-world ways that libraries can participate in the changing social landscape, whether through building community, reflecting diversity in teaching, or providing vital support. McFarland, 2019. 228 p. \$55. 978-1-4766-7203-8. (Also available as an ebook.)



Young Activists and the Public Library: Facilitating Democracy

By Virginia A. Walter

Activism is often a youth-driven enterprise, and this book offers a wealth of information, case studies, interviews, and resources on the role public libraries can play in fostering civic engagement in young people. This wide-ranging volume provides a solid overview of prevalent social issues and the ways public libraries can offer reliable information, safe gathering spaces for open discussion, and programming ideas that can be used when serving a variety of patrons. Drawing parallels between the foundational values of the profession and the principal philosophies of engaging in a democracy, this is an excellent manual for stewarding youth through responsible and effective activism. (For more on Walter's work, see p. 40.) ALA Editions, 2020. 128 p. \$45.99. PBK. 978-0-8389-4738-8.

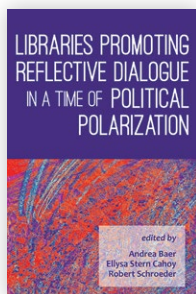


Makers with a Cause: Creating Service Projects for Library Youth

By Gina Seymour

The purpose of activism is to effect change and make a difference. *Makers with a Cause* makes a case for empowering young people to bring about change through tangible, hands-on activities that raise their awareness of key issues and provide opportunities to create end products. Using library makerspaces for real-world benefit by partnering with community organizations introduces youth to the value of service-oriented projects and collaboration. Accessible, practical, informative, and resourceful, this book is for librarians who want to encourage young people to engage in activities that enhance their compassion, empathy, and knowledge of the world around them—and their place in it. Libraries Unlimited, 2018. 147 p. \$45. PBK. 978-1-4408-5728-7. (Also available as an ebook.)

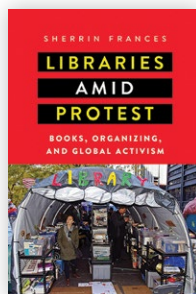
BY Allison Escoto



Libraries Promoting Reflective Dialogue in a Time of Political Polarization

Edited by Andrea Baer, Ellysa Stern Cahoy, and Robert Schroeder

Communication is the foundation of activism. This book presents a rich examination of what reflective dialogue is, why it is important to understand and put into practice in library communities, and how library work is affected by its use or absence. Less of a practical, hands-on guide and more of an exhaustively researched selection of academic essays, this collection delves into various aspects of communication facilitation that apply to patrons as well as the library profession. Positing that reflective dialogue is essential to healthy communities and empathy-building, the editors offer 16 chapters that argue libraries can be active participants in dialogue during these divisive times. ACRL, 2019. 404 p. \$80. PBK. 978-0-8389-4652-7. (Also available as an ebook.)



Libraries amid Protest: Books, Organizing, and Global Activism


By Sherrin Frances

In *Libraries amid Protest*, Frances looks at *protest libraries*: temporary libraries that form during political protest movements. Inspired by the People's Library that formed during Occupy Wall Street in 2011, the author began researching the proliferation of these often quickly assembled and organized collections within the scope of different movements around the world. This book discusses the nature of these libraries and compares them with the American public library as an institution. By outlining the political history of libraries, Frances turns a critical eye on the modern library's relationship to capitalism, the influence of Andrew Carnegie on contemporary ideas of what constitutes a library, and how "outsider" libraries fit into the future of library interactions with movement members. University of Massachusetts Press, 2020. 216 p. \$90. 978-1-6253-4490-8.



Activist: Portraits of Courage

By K K Ottesen

One way libraries can foster and support activists among patrons and staff is by providing access to inspirational stories like the ones contained in this book of photographs and first-person narratives. Featuring the portraits of 41 activists involved in a variety of movements—including gender equality, Black Lives Matter, environmental preservation, labor reform, and gun control—this beautifully arranged tome also details the issues that roused these individuals to action. The hard work of activism, whether as a leader or as a participant, requires a mixture of motivation and stamina; this elegant collection is an asset to libraries, one that will inspire and challenge socially engaged readers. Chronicle Books, 2019. 300 p. \$35. 978-1-4521-8277-3. 

PEOPLE

Announcements

ON THE MOVE

In August **Natalie Bennett** joined Auburn (Ala.) University Libraries as electronic resources and discovery librarian.

August 3 **Milan Budhathoki** became GIS librarian at the University of Maryland Libraries in College Park.

Jessica Collogan was appointed dean of library services at University of North Carolina at Pembroke effective September 8.



September 1 **Jennifer Jones** started as executive director of Mattapoisett (Mass.) Free Public Library.

July 1 **Mike Kirk** became director of Galion (Ohio) Public Library.

September 21 Berkeley (Calif.) Public Library appointed **Tess Mayer** director of library services.



In August **Laura Rios** joined the Free Public Library of Hasbrouck Heights (N.J.) as head of adult services.

Kaubisch Memorial Public Library in Fostoria, Ohio, appointed **Scott Scherf** director July 6.

July 6 **Katrina Spencer** became librarian for African American and African Studies at University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

Austin Stroud became director of Monon (Ind.) Town and Township Public Library August 1.

Stacy Torian joined the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Health Sciences Library as librarian July 6.

In July **Beth Vredenburg** became head of youth services at Mahopac (N.Y.) Public Library.

Kudos

State University of New York at Morrisville presented **Angela Rhodes**, associate systems and electronic resources librarian, with its Distinguished Librarian Award in August. ●

Christopher Warren was appointed director of Dothan Houston County (Ala.) Library System in July.

Rebecca Wilden became director of Mechanicsburg (Ohio) Public Library in August.

PROMOTIONS

Salina (Kans.) Public Library promoted **Amy Adams** to assistant director in August.

Larissa Cason was promoted to director at Marion County (W.Va.) Public Library System in July.

The Free Public Library of Hasbrouck Heights (N.J.) promoted **Maureen Herman** to full-time youth services director in July.

Framingham (Mass.) Public Library promoted **Lena Kilburn** to director August 31.

Norman (Okla.) Public Schools promoted **Amanda Kordeliski** to director of libraries and instructional technology May 18.

Melissa Kuzma was promoted to director of East Brunswick (N.J.) Public Library in August.



Jeremy Reeder was promoted to director of Maricopa County (Ariz.) Library District September 1.

RETIREMENTS

Cynthia Berner retired as director of Wichita (Kans.) Public Library September 18, after 36 years with the library.

July 31 **Mary M. Case** retired as university librarian and dean of libraries at University of Illinois at Chicago.

Karl Debus-López retired June 30 as chief of the US Programs, Law, and Literature Division of the Library of Congress Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate.

Linda Duplessis retired as director and CEO of Peace Library System in Grande Prairie, Alberta, after 27 years with the library.

Larry Franke retired as a reference librarian in the History and Genealogy Department at St. Louis County (Mo.) Library July 10.



Cindy Kolaczynski, director and county librarian for Maricopa County (Ariz.) Library District, retired September 1.

Bill Morris, governmental affairs coordinator for the State Library of Ohio, retired June 30.

August 31 **Mitzi Mueller** retired as children's librarian at North Platte (Neb.) Public Library after 38 years with the system.

Susan Pizzolato retired as executive director of Mattapoisett (Mass.) Free Public Library in August.

Andrea Telli retired as commissioner of Chicago Public Library August 31.

Lani Yoshimura, community librarian at Santa Clara County (Calif.) Library District's Gilroy Library since 1982, retired August 23.



SUBMISSIONS

Send notices and photographs to
Amy Carlton, acarlton@ala.org.

MORE ONLINE

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In Memory

Patricia Ann Grodecki, 88, a longtime librarian at Detroit Public Library, died August 24.

Betty DeYeide Lockwood, 92, assistant librarian at Terrebonne Parish (La.) Library 1945–1949, died in August. In her retirement, she returned to volunteer as a storyteller for children and to contribute to adult literacy efforts with the library's Friends group.

Heather Catherine Morgan, 75, director of Mark Twain Library in Redding, Connecticut, for 10 years until retiring in 2011, died August 13.

Arthur Plotnik, 82, editor of *American Libraries* for 15 years, died August 28. During his time at ALA, totaling 22 years 1975–1997, he also served as editorial director for ALA Editions, produced a monthly video magazine, and oversaw cooperative book projects with trade publishers. Prior to joining ALA, Plotnik was a press and public relations assistant and newsletter editor in the Librarian's Office of the Library of Congress, and he served as associate editor of the *Wilson Library Bulletin*. Plotnik wrote eight nonfiction books, including the noted titles on writing *Spunk & Bite: A Writer's Guide to Bold, Contemporary Style*; *The Elements of Editing*; and *The Elements of Expression*. His most recent book was the YA novel *Aaron Schminck's First Crazy Love*. He also taught in the journalism department at Columbia College in Chicago and was a charter board member of the American Book Awards.



Sarah Shulin, 31, children's programmer at Beaufort County (S.C.) Library System, died August 9.

Dane M. Ward, 62, professor and dean of libraries at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, until late 2019, died July 5. He had previously served as a librarian at Wayne State University in Detroit and Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, and dean of Milner Library at Illinois State University in Normal. After being diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) in 2018, he wrote articles for academia (as well as an *American Libraries* column, bit.ly/AL-DaneWard) advocating for collaboration in the search for a cure. ●



AT ALA


Ligia Barac left ALA's Finance and Accounting department August 7.

Julie Cai left ALA Graphics August 7.

Miguel Figueroa, director of the Center for the Future of Libraries, left ALA

September 4 to become president and chief executive officer of Amigos Library Services.

Barbara Macikas retired as executive director of the Public Library Association August 31.

Hannah Murphy left eLearning Solutions August 7. 

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Conjuring a Collection

One day, the magic collection vanished—and then reappeared. That is, the Omaha (Neb.) Magical Society moved its 1,200 magic-related books and materials to the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). A logical choice given that the 60-member society of magicians and magic enthusiasts holds its meetings there.

Before the big move in May, the society's materials floated from member home to member home. Having a permanent location will allow items to be used by students, scholars, and magicians, who can access them onsite or via interlibrary loan, says Amy Schindler (pictured), director of archives and special collections at UNO Libraries.

Included are magic-related materials dating from the late 19th century to the present: titles about card tricks, fortune telling, and hypnotism; biographies of famous magicians like Harry Houdini and Penn and Teller; and books on tangential topics like gambling and joke-telling. One of Schindler's favorite pieces is *Dick Daring's Bag of Tricks*, an early 20th-century magic book for boys. She says texts such as these are important not only for historians but for practitioners of other disciplines as well. Gender-studies students may find them particularly valuable, she says.

"I've not yet found any biographies of female magicians, but there are representations of women magicians in the collection," she says. "Usually when people think of a magic show, they think of a man on stage in a top hat, and the woman is the assistant being cut in half. There were and are women magicians, and this collection can help answer the question, 'What was the role of women in magic throughout history?'" **AL**

THE BOOKEND showcases librarians, their work, and their work spaces. For consideration, email americanlibraries@ala.org.



Photo: University of Nebraska at Omaha



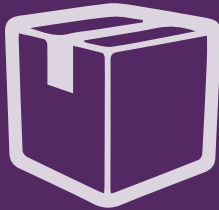


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