american libraries

MARSHALL BREEDING'S
LIBRARY SYSTEMS
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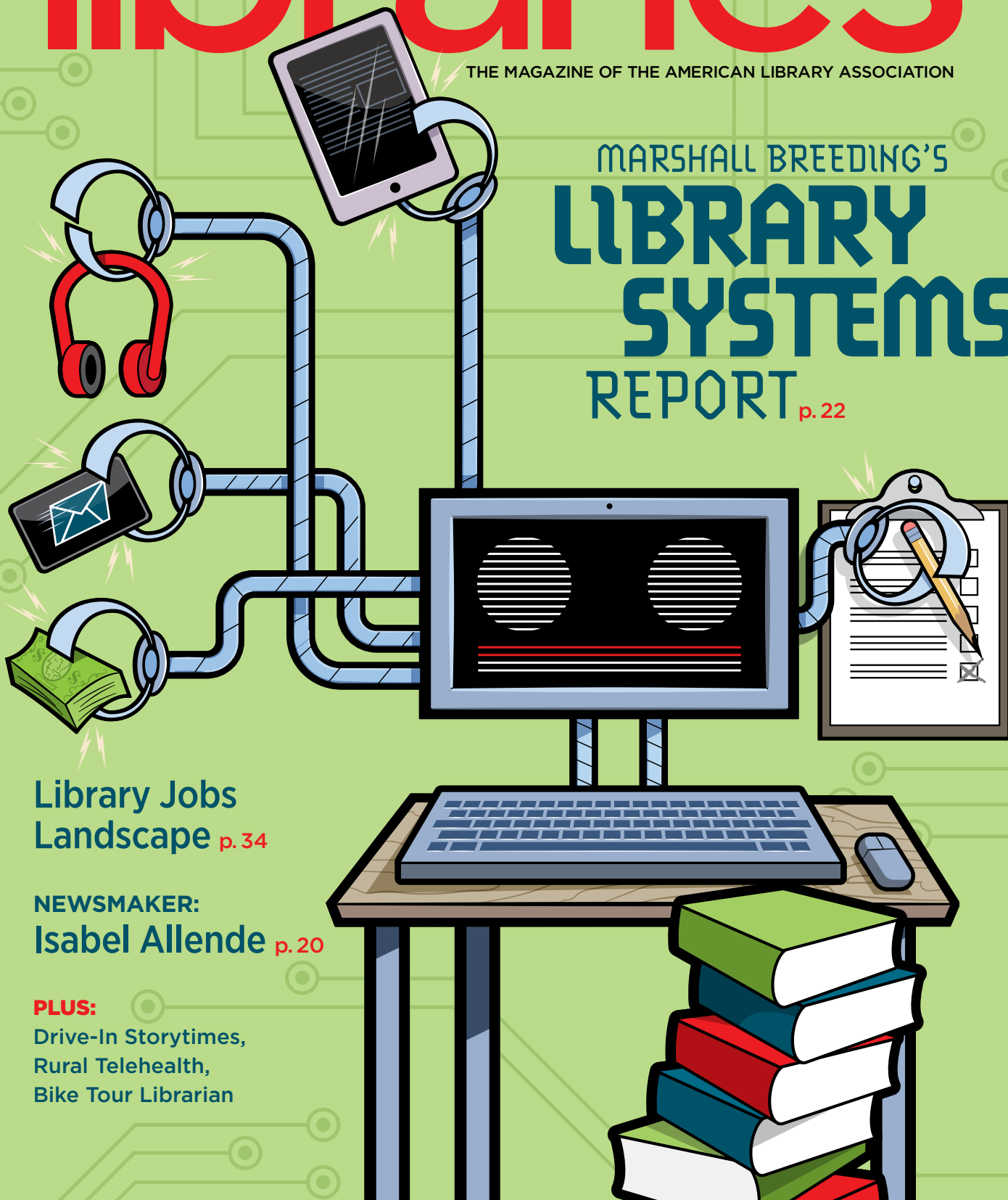
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from the EDITOR

Adapting to Disruption

Sanhita SinhaRoy

Our special jobs report looks at how the pandemic has changed the way libraries recruit and hire staff, and how to get a leg up when looking for the right job or candidate.

So much has changed in the year since Marshall Breeding wrote his last annual Library Systems Report (cover story, p. 22). As he notes, COVID-19 has brought "considerable disruption to the library technology industry," as budgets contracted, investments shifted to digital content and workflows, and the market reached saturation for some products. But Breeding is hopeful, stating that the industry "remains strong and multifaceted."

The pandemic has, of course, also changed how libraries recruit and hire staff. To help you navigate this uncertain terrain, our team put together a special jobs report. In "The Library Employment Landscape" (p. 34), Anne Ford looks at how the foundation for employment opportunities has become rockier, especially for entry-level candidates. And in "The Virtual Job Hunt" (p. 38), Claire Zulkey interviews HR professionals about practical tips for landing the right job. Two other stories in this issue are tied to job searches: "Employment Help? It's in the Bag" (p. 18) and "Tools for the Job" (p. 49).

As we enter the second summer learning season of a pandemic, what lessons can we glean from the first one? For one thing, libraries will need to balance in-person and virtual options as communities gradually reopen, writes Robbi Caldwell, information services manager at Brownsburg (Ind.) Public Library, in this issue's Youth Matters column (p. 48).

With the warming weather also comes a growing desire to gather outside in safe, socially distanced ways. Enter drive-in storytimes, an outdoor program for families that is becoming popular among many libraries, Jessica Cilella reports in "Park and Read" (p. 12). Or, if two wheels are more your speed, you may enjoy our By the Numbers (p. 13) and Bookend (p. 56) in honor of National Bike Month.

Finally, on a sad note, we mourn the death of longtime *American Libraries* editor Leonard Kniffel, who died of pancreatic cancer in mid-March at age 73. Our heart goes out to Carl, his partner of 43 years, and the rest of his family and friends. Leonard was a pillar of ALA Publishing and will be missed dearly.

Sanhita

Making a Difference

Signs of hope after a year of rebuilding

Julius C. Jefferson Jr.

As library workers, we must position ourselves as activists, building and supporting inclusive, healthy communities.

Are library professionals making our communities stronger? Are we addressing inequities, disparities, and racism? Are we making a difference? These are questions I ask myself every day as your president amid a deadly crisis and heightened racial violence.

I am beginning to see the light at the end of a dark COVID-19 tunnel. Many of us have been vaccinated or will be soon—a critical step toward healing all the communities hit by the global pandemic.

Another ray of light came on March 11, when the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 was signed into law. The legislation provides $200 million to the Institute of Library and Museum Services, the largest single increase in its 25-year history. The package also contains billions for academic, public, and school library–eligible programs, including the new $7.2 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund. Administered through the Federal Communications Commission's E-Rate program, the fund will enable schools and libraries to provide devices and broadband internet to students, school staff, and patrons during the pandemic.

We celebrate the many advocates who worked with ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy team to secure this funding for libraries. You are making a difference.

I am also seeing signs of hope with growing attention to systemic racism and efforts to address it. During ALA Midwinter Virtual in January, we took another step toward the light in several timely sessions. One such session, "Disrupting Microaggressions: Engaging in Effective Actions," at which I spoke, addressed how to intervene when microaggressions take place, particularly in ways that maintain relationships with patrons and colleagues. Additionally, we explored how library workers may perpetuate or become targets of microaggressions. It was a preview of what a reenvisioned Midwinter Meeting

could be. As we anticipate our 2022 LibLearnX event in San Antonio, look for a new schedule of interactive and topical programs that can make a difference in your life and library.

More imminently, Annual Conference Virtual takes place June 23–29, where I will have the privilege of presiding over ALA Council one last time as we deliberate resolutions from the Forward Together Resolutions Group. The group will propose ways to improve our governing structure, making our Association more nimble, responsive, and modern. Council will discuss these resolutions before they go to membership for a final vote in spring 2022. Join us in making a difference.

Over the past year, everything has changed. And yet in some ways, nothing has changed. Social and economic disparities and inequality continue. Libraries have demonstrated why they are trusted and valued institutions, and we now have the funding we need to rebuild better.

We must focus on staying connected and advocating for policies that ensure we all have equitable access to knowledge and information, as well as equal protection under the law.

The future of libraries must be inclusive and continue to convey the importance of knowledge and facts. Libraries must also level the playing field by helping patrons navigate information, technology, and social media. The role of the library worker as knowledge navigator—a provider of access to accurate, relevant, and authoritative content to diverse communities seeking information—will be key to the success of our democracy. In the future, library workers must position ourselves as activists, building and supporting inclusive, healthy communities.

As members of ALA, we are making a difference in our communities. Together, we will be the difference that our country needs. **AL**

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

A Hurting Thing

Dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline

Tracie D. Hall

Long after leaving my post as community librarian—the term preferred over branch manager—at Hartford (Conn.) Public Library's Albany branch, I would get updates from my former staff about patrons in the predominantly Black, Latinx, and Caribbean working-class neighborhood.

Usually the calls were about the kids who frequented the library—which ones had graduated, who was off to college or the military, and sometimes, sadly, who had been shot or killed, or gone to jail.

One call still haunts me: A teenage boy I knew well was facing serious time in a juvenile detention center. My heart sank as I recalled the wiry-framed young man, who was prone to frequent angry outbursts. We often had to intervene when he menaced peers. Yet I recall how riveted he was by an after-school program on making papier-mâché masks. Though several years older than the other kids, the young man's eyes sparkled when I asked if he wanted to create one too. He shook his head no and quickly walked away.

When he started coming to the library during school hours, we found out he had been expelled. We had to be strict about truancy in general, but my staff and I agreed that we'd rather he be in the library than out on the street. Yet without other kids to interact with, he seemed lost.

He hastily left the library one day after receiving a warning for repeatedly disrupting a program. As the doors closed behind him, I promised myself I would find a way to get through to him the next time I saw him.

There was no next time. By the time I heard his name again, he was facing time in juvenile detention for assault.

When I was young, my mother would label any incident that was worse than horrible "a hurting thing." A family losing their house to a fire was a hurting thing. Hearing news of this young man's impending incarceration before reaching adulthood was a hurting thing. Even today, I replay our last conversation. Knowing what I know now about the school-to-prison pipeline, what might I have done differently?

Of the 90,400 public K–12 schools in the United States, only 62% have full-time librarians (bit.ly/K-12libs). That's despite the dozens of studies that show students in schools with well-equipped libraries and certified school librarians demonstrate stronger academic performance and school persistence. By contrast, almost 71% of public high schools have sworn law enforcement officers carrying firearms (bit.ly/armedHS).

Students in communities that are lower income and predominately Black, Indigenous, and people of color not only attend disparately resourced schools but also receive harsher, more punitive treatment for school policy infractions. This conduit seems almost intractable when factoring research that estimates that 68% of adults in state prisons lack high school diplomas (bit.ly/StateDip) and 70% of all incarcerated adults have limited literacy (bit.ly/NALSlit).

The school-to-prison pipeline represents the degree to which schools have failed students rather than the other way around. If roadblocks to literacy and school retention rates are at the heart of America's early and over-incarceration, and if staffed school libraries and access to public libraries are an antidote, why not preemptively transfer more Department of Justice funding to libraries where it can do the greatest good?

Let's design services and recruit and train library workers to intentionally shut down the pipeline, or at least stem its flow. By doing our part, we can help end the cycle of hurt. **AL**

BIPOC students attend disparately resourced schools and receive harsher, more punitive treatment for school policy infractions.

TRACIE D. HALL is executive director of the American Library Association. She can be reached at thall@ala.org.

Dismantling Barriers

The article "A Disproportionate Pandemic" by Emily Udell (Mar./Apr., p. 26) shines a light on barriers that keep patrons and volunteers with disabilities from accessing libraries in familiar ways during the pandemic. I appreciate the author's mention of a number of libraries and situations, giving readers a fuller understanding of the current state of affairs, and the inclusion of quotes from patrons with disabilities themselves in addition to ones from caregivers and library staff.

The barriers described in the article are temporary, but unfortunately, they are not the only ones encountered by people with disabilities who use or want to use our libraries. Happily, there is an increasing body of knowledge on how our profession can break down barriers to more equitably serve all community members, including those with disabilities.

Udell's article can raise awareness and start conversations. My hope is that it also inspires readers to learn more and take actions to make their own libraries more inclusive, both now and once the pandemic is behind us.

Barbara Klipper
Provincetown, Massachusetts

Libraries as Protest

I appreciated reading ALA Executive Director Tracie D. Hall's recent column ("Revolutions Where We Stand," Mar./Apr., p. 5). I am a school librarian and have always worked in districts with high rates of families in poverty. I see firsthand the need to provide quality materials, programming, and access to information. Low-income families are less likely to have these items in their own homes, and by not providing a place for them in society, we are perpetuating cycles of poverty and low educational achievement.

All libraries serve a vital role in society. As more government services go online, people get left behind if they don't have access. Being left behind leads to disenfranchisement. Things only get worse from there.

One of the best things about the column is Hall's call to action. She sees investing in libraries as a form of protest. I agree, and it is a protest that has a high probability of making a difference. Where else can patrons find the resources to learn how to cook a meal, fix a leaky pipe, or plant a garden? Where else can children of single-parent families find safe, educational, and entertaining after-school programs to keep them off the streets? Where else can people register for a COVID-19 vaccine, find a private place for telemedicine, get forms to file taxes, or register a citizenship application? The library is where all of these things are possible, and these things happen every day with the support of trained and caring staff.

Not only are libraries a creative form of protest, they are also the ultimate testament to democracy. If we truly believe that all people are equal, then we must invest in equal access.

Diane Rogers
Indianapolis

The Time Is Now

I was inspired by the Academic Insights column ("Call to Action," Jan./Feb., p. 54) by Twanna Hodge and Jamia Williams.

For too long we in librarianship have talked about the importance of diversifying the profession, examining our practices, and elevating BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and people of color] voices, without much action coming as a result. As we grapple with a global pandemic that has further revealed the gaps that exist in our society—particularly shortcomings related to equity,

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inclusion, and racism—the time is right for real change.

Librarianship will never truly shine without a serious examination of the barriers and biases that exist in our collections, services, policies, and within our organizations themselves. This isn't just about diversifying the profession, though it should be a top priority; it's about leveraging the voices and knowledge of existing BIPOC staffers to help us identify changes that must be made.

I very much appreciate the authors' willingness to hold a mirror up to the profession and provide us with an opportunity to do what is right—to ensure that all of us, along with those we serve, are provided with an inclusive, accessible, and equitable environment in which to succeed.
Christopher Cox
Clemson, South Carolina

Freedom to Read?

How ironic that while we celebrated Freedom to Read Week in Canada and Read Across America Day in the US, some libraries are censoring children's literature.

Six Dr. Seuss titles will no longer be published. The publisher explains that the works "portray people in ways that are hurtful and wrong." Critics have pointed out that they align with Orientalism and center whiteness and white supremacy.

When I went to library school in the 1980s, most students were deep-reading book lovers not easily herded by the Thought Police. Has a different breed taken over the management of libraries?
S. B. Julian
Victoria, British Columbia

As a librarian and parent of a 6-year-old, I have concerns with the apparent cancellation of some works by Theodor Seuss Geisel. I find the restriction of any information abhorrent, especially when cloaked as having a moral objective. I sincerely hope that librarians seek to protect and preserve these works within their collections.

From my point of view, the frameworks of critical literacy and critical race theory have been weaponized within academia and corporate culture in a deliberate effort to divide our society. The diversity movement that has arisen from critical race theory is less about equality of opportunity and is more about equity of outcomes, or socialism.

As librarians, we should empower readers to withstand and understand history. We must protect primary source documents that provide historical context, even if they are children's books. As a parent, I feel like this issue is about undermining parental choice.
Mike Wells
Crestview Hills, Kentucky

ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom issued this response: Dr. Seuss Enterprises has not called for the banning or removal of these books from library collections, personal collections, or schools. An author's or publisher's decision to stop publishing a book should not be grounds alone for removing a book from a library's collection. All such decisions should be done pursuant to the library's or district's written collection development policy.

Record Increases for IMLS, E-Rate in Federal Relief Plan

Libraries are eligible for billions of dollars in recovery funding as part of the $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 passed by Congress March 10. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) received $200 million in this plan, the largest single increase in the agency's 25-year history. The package also provides billions of dollars for academic, public, and school library–eligible programs, including the Emergency Education Connectivity Fund through the federal E-Rate program.

American Library Association (ALA) President Julius C. Jefferson Jr. praised the bill in a March 10 statement. "The pandemic has exposed the level to which Americans rely on libraries," he said. "ALA has been working tirelessly behind the scenes for months to secure federal support for libraries and librarians.... In many cases, ARPA means libraries won't have to choose between funding community programs and paying salaries of the professional staff who lead them."

Among the billions of dollars in library–eligible funding provided by this rescue legislation to meet critical needs:

- $360 billion to state, local, and tribal governments
- $130 billion for education costs associated with the safe reopening of K–12 schools; hiring additional staff; reducing class size; modifying school spaces; and addressing student, academic, and mental health needs
- $40 billion for colleges and institutions of higher education to defray pandemic-related expenses and provide emergency assistance to students, with half the funding dedicated to student financial aid
- $135 million each for National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities

ALA will explore opportunities for libraries to leverage these resources. Updates will be posted at bit.ly/AL-ARPA.

ALA also welcomed the introduction in March of the Build America's Libraries Act in the US House of Representatives, which would provide $5 billion to support long-term improvements to library facilities. ●

2021 Carnegie Medals Awarded

During the Reference and User Services Association's (RUSA) Book and Media Awards virtual event on February 4, ALA announced the selection of *Deacon King Kong* by James McBride as the winner of the 2021 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction and *Fathoms: The World in the Whale* by Rebecca Giggs as this year's winner for Excellence in Nonfiction.

The awards, established in 2012, serve as a guide to help adults select quality reading material. Carnegie Medal winners each receive $5,000. All the finalists will be honored during a celebratory event at ALA's 2021 Annual Conference Virtual in June.
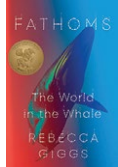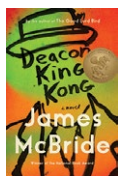
The medals are made possible, in part, by a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York and are cosponsored by *Booklist* and RUSA.

New ALA Executive Board Members Announced

ALA Council has elected Sam Helmick, Christina Rodriques, and Ana Elisa de Campos Salles to serve on the ALA Executive Board. The Executive Board election took place during the 2021 ALA Midwinter Meeting & Exhibits, held virtually January 22–26. Elected members will begin a three-year term beginning in July and concluding in June 2024.

Helmick is community and access coordinator at Iowa City (Iowa) Public Library. They hold a bachelor's degree in human services from Iowa Wesleyan University and an MLIS from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign School of Information Sciences. They serve on the Iowa Commission of Libraries and the Iowa Library Association's executive board, as chair of ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee, and as an ALA chapter councilor.

Rodriques is member relations outreach manager for membership and research at OCLC. She holds bachelor's degrees in history and art history and an MLIS from Kent (Ohio) State University, where she is pursuing a master's of public administration. She serves on ALA Council as the New Members Round Table councilor, is chair of the ALA Membership Committee, and cochairs the Forward Together Resolutions Working Group.

ALA, APALA Condemn Ongoing Racism

On March 11, ALA's Executive Board issued a statement of solidarity with the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA) in recognizing and condemning anti-Asian hate crimes, affirming APALA's March 3 statement denouncing recent bias, bigotry, and violence (bit.ly/APALAstatement). The statement from ALA's Executive Board reads:

"As we mark the one-year anniversary of the coronavirus pandemic, the Executive Board acknowledges that many ALA members, library workers, and our library communities are hurting. The injury that anti-Asian hate speech and crime causes perpetuates that pain.

"The US has seen a wave of anti-Asian language, hate speech, and physical assaults on streets across the country, in media reports, in statements by politicians, and on social media related to the origins of COVID-19. It is our job as knowledge workers to, as APALA urges, join forces 'battling discrimination, xenophobia, and white supremacy' and to stand 'in solidarity with our Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander communities.'

"It is also incumbent upon us as library and information workers to combat cultural bias and bigotry by promoting diversity in our collections, programming, policies, and hiring practices, ensuring that our diverse communities see themselves represented on our library shelves, in our offerings, and among our ranks." ●

Salles is manager of the Parkside branch of San Francisco Public Library. She holds bachelor's degrees in history and environmental geoscience from Boston College, a master's in forensic archaeological science from University College London's Institute of Archaeology, and an MLIS from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. She serves on ALA Council, the ALA President-Elect Advisory Committee, and the Rainbow Round Table Fundraising Committee. She is a 2011 Spectrum Scholar and a 2013 ALA Emerging Leader.

AASL Statement on School Library Supervisors

In a March 9 statement, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) declared that a qualified, district-level school library supervisor is a fundamental component of college, career, and community readiness for students in pre-K–12 education. The full statement, "The Critical Need for and Responsibilities of District-Level School Library Supervisors," was approved in January and includes definitions, references, and a recommended reading list. It is available for download on the AASL website at bit.ly/AASL-statements.

The statement defines the supervisor as a member of the district-level administrative team who has school library certification or experience and is responsible for supervising and coordinating district- and building-level school libraries. The school library supervisor provides leadership, vision, and support, while collaborating with staff to create and sustain effective school libraries.

The new position statement replaces the previous "Role of the School Library Supervisor" with updated language aligned with AASL's *National School Library Standards.*

Anonymous Donor Funds Spectrum Scholarships

An anonymous funder donated $170,000 to ALA's Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services (ODLOS) to provide an additional 20 scholarships as part of the 2020–2021 Spectrum Scholar cohort, ODLOS announced in a January 22 statement.

Every year, the Spectrum Scholarship Program receives roughly four times as many applications as there are available

ALA Praises New Emergency Broadband Benefit Program

On February 25, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted to formally adopt a Report and Order that establishes the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, a $3.2 billion federal initiative to provide qualifying households discounts on their internet service bills and an opportunity to receive a discount on a computer or tablet.

In a March 1 statement, ALA President Julius C. Jefferson Jr. said that the program is "one step among many needed to address longstanding barriers to broadband access and use. K–12 school, college and university, and public libraries see firsthand the digital chasms so many students, families, and people of all ages have experienced."

Jefferson continued: "Library staff have worked tirelessly to keep our communities and campuses connected by extending our Wi-Fi access, lending hotspots and devices, calling and assisting people trying to use online vaccine portals, and expanding digital resources. We are committed to these vital digital inclusion roles and look forward to increasing awareness and empowering participation for those most in need."

The FCC has developed a fact sheet about the program (bit.ly/FCC-EBB-fact-sheet), and ALA will coordinate directly with FCC leadership to engage and support libraries in outreach and education activities in the 60-day lead-up to the program's start. In the meantime, libraries may sign up to receive updates and information about the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program at fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit. ●

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scholarships. According to the statement, this new support will help the program address the devastating combined effects of COVID-19, anti-Blackness, and racism affecting library workers who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

Spectrum Scholars are selected based on their commitment to community building and planned contributions to making social justice part of everyday work in LIS. Learn more about the program at ala.org/advocacy/spectrum.

YALSA's 2021 Great Books Giveaway

The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) has named Belfast (Maine) Area High School; Franklin Township Public Library in Somerset, New Jersey; and Townsend Harris High School in Queens, New York, as recipients of its 2021 Great Books Giveaway.

Each library will receive a share of more than $20,000 worth of books, audiobooks, and other materials donated to YALSA from publishers and producers in 2020.

More than half of the 480 students at Belfast Area High School receive free or reduced-price lunches. Updated materials will help students with research and improve the school's nonfiction collection.

Franklin Township Public Library is building an opening-day collection for its third library facility, inside a new youth community center, opening in late spring 2021.

Although the library at Townsend Harris High School is an active learning center serving an average of 500 students per day, its collection is outdated.

The application form for the next round of the Great Books Giveaway is available at bit.ly/YALSA-GB.

Applications must be received by December 1.

New PLA Benchmark Briefings

The Public Library Association (PLA) has launched Benchmark Briefings, a free resource to support public libraries' access and use of data. The resource (available at bit.ly/PLA-benchmark) translates data from the Public Libraries Survey (bit.ly/IMLS-PLS) conducted by IMLS into accessible infographics to ease library peer comparison across key characteristics.

In the briefings, infographics highlight measures commonly used by public libraries when making decisions about investments—such as expenditures, staff, collections, circulation, visits, and programs—and organizes them by library and community characteristics to better enable libraries to quickly benchmark themselves against others with similar attributes. Demographic characteristics are based on the census tract in which the administrative entity is located and come from the US Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey.

PLA is creating further learning opportunities to demonstrate how libraries may use this resource, as well as additional tools in development.

AASL National Conference Speaker Announced

Motivational speaker, professor, and poet Omékongo Dibinga will keynote the opening session of the 2021 AASL National Conference, October 21–23 in Salt Lake City. Full conference and program information can be found at national.aasl.org.

Dibinga is a professor of intercultural communication and faculty affiliate to the Antiracist Research and Policy Center at American University in Washington, D.C. His most recent book, *The UPstander's Guide to an Outstanding Life,* is designed for students, providing key steps to achieving greatness and effectively advancing causes. AL

Last Chance for 2021 Library Design Showcase Submissions

*A*merican Libraries is accepting submissions for the 2021 Library Design Showcase, our annual feature celebrating new and newly renovated libraries of all types. The showcase will appear in the September/October 2021 issue.

We are looking for examples of innovative library architecture that address patrons' needs in unique, interesting, and effective ways. Following an unprecedented year, we are also interested in submissions from libraries that are responding to the pandemic through building design and renovation.

If your library is on the cutting edge, we want our readers to know. To be eligible, projects must have been completed between May 1, 2020, and April 30, 2021. The submission deadline is May 31, 2021. Unfortunately, not all submissions can be featured.

To have your library considered, send a completed submission form (bit.ly/2021DesignShowcaseForm) and at least five high-resolution digital images with photographer credits to pmorehart@ala.org via Dropbox or another file-sharing service. View last year's showcase at bit.ly/2020DesignShowcase. For more information, email pmorehart@ala.org. ●

Photo: Kayla Hartzog

The Library Learning Center at Texas Southern University in Houston was featured in the 2020 Library Design Showcase.

TRENDS

Families attend a drive-in story-time at Cincinnati and Hamilton County (Ohio) Public Library's Monfort Heights branch in 2020.

Park and Read

Drive-in storytimes provide families with socially distanced programming

BY Jessica Cilella

The wipers on the bus—or rather, car—did indeed go *swish, swish, swish* at the drive-in storytimes hosted by Hoover (Ala.) Public Library (HPL) last summer.

Though its building was closed because of the pandemic, HPL staffers performed these innovative storytimes in parking lots where children watched the readers from the safety of their caregivers' cars and listened along on the radio.

The unusual format invited audience participation. With the song "Wheels on the Bus," for instance, the words were altered to "Wheels on the Cars," complete with car horns beeping and kids jumping up and down in their vehicles.

"Our patrons were so grateful to have something that wasn't on a screen," says Christine Wells, children's department library specialist at HPL. "We'd been doing virtual storytimes through Facebook and YouTube for a few months, but for it to actually be in person—I can't tell you how many patrons stopped on their way out, rolled their windows down, and thanked us profusely for doing this."

Drive-in storytimes—similar to drive-in movies—have gained traction among libraries looking to offer socially distanced outdoor programming while safety mandates remain in place or building capacities are limited. Though they might require more creativity and tech savvy than a traditional indoor storytime, the librarians who have hosted them say they're worth the effort.

"We really tried to think out of the box and think of ways that we could reach as many patrons as possible, and still keep them and our staff safe," says Wells. "It really felt vital to us."

Prepping the lot

The first consideration for hosting a drive-in storytime? Having a space where patrons can park.

HPL started its program last July in the parking lot of a local sports complex but moved to the library's lot when lugging equipment to another location became inconvenient. To serve as many people as possible, HPL hosted two back-to-back morning storytimes with 12–14 cars each. Because of the Alabama heat—and for additional safety—Wells asked patrons to stay in their cars with the air conditioning running. Programs continued through the fall.

At North Mankato (Minn.) Taylor Library, where crowds were smaller—a maximum of six cars per storytime—and temperatures were cooler, Children's Librarian Michelle Zimmermann says patrons sat on their vehicles' tailgates or brought chairs and blankets.

Further east, at Cincinnati and Hamilton County (Ohio) Public Library's (CHPL) Monfort Heights branch, Children's Librarian Alice Beresford hosted drive-in storytimes before the library opened and after it closed, to avoid interfering with other patrons visiting the building. To maintain distance between vehicles, she painted stars on the 21 spots where patrons could park. Some attendees also biked and brought blankets to view the performances from the lawn.

Not counting the time it takes to get vehicles into position, Beresford, Wells, and Zimmermann estimate their storytimes ran 20–30 minutes, which allowed for a few stories and songs. They recommend requiring preregistration for events and, if staffing allows, having two storytellers and at least one person to greet and direct attendees.

Sound advice

A high-quality audio setup to broadcast the storytimes was a priority for HPL. The library decided to use an FM transmitter so patrons could listen to storytellers via their car radios, and staffers posted signage throughout the lot to indicate the broadcast frequency. Scott Littleton, HPL's production technician, said the program also used two microphones for storytellers, an iPad to play music, and a digital audio mixer that connected to the transmitter.

"We're unique in that we have theater equipment," says Littleton. "You can definitely scale it down and use something more accessible. Just have the willingness to experiment with it a bit."

In North Mankato, the setup was simpler: a small speaker and two microphones, which worked well because audience members were seated outside their cars.

At CHPL, Beresford used a wireless headset, freeing her hands to play guitar. She also used an FM transmitter, which reached larger audiences of 60–70 people. She advises that libraries interested in doing drive-in storytimes should invest in inexpensive sound equipment, as rentals can get costly.

Going the distance

Zimmermann says it's important to select engaging books—and it helps if they're already popular with younger audiences. One series that fit the bill was Mo Willems's Elephant and Piggie, which lends itself to costume elements such as tutus, umbrellas, and cowboy hats.

"You're going to have to act it out," Zimmermann says, noting the audience cannot see the illustrations as they would at an indoor program. "Put your pride aside and just be silly."

Beresford used the library's storytime mascots—two large puppets named Bob and Sally—to help her tell stories. Her human colleagues handed out activities, such as coloring sheets and crafts, to give attendees something to do as cars pulled in or during the event. If the activity required art supplies, patrons were asked at the end of the program to drop them into a box, which Beresford quarantined for several days before sanitizing.

At HPL, storytimes stuck to a weekly theme. A program on insects, for example, included a telling of Tedd Arnold's book *Hi! Fly Guy* that had two storytellers chasing each other, as well as a finger play about bees and the song "Mosquito Burrito" by Roger Day.

No matter how high-tech or elaborate, drive-in storytimes are rewarding, say librarians—not just for patrons but also for staffers who sorely miss them.

"Storytime is more than just entertainment," Wells says. "It really provides scaffolding opportunities for parents to bridge learning between home and school."

Beresford, Wells, and Zimmermann say their storytimes were successful and hope to do more of them, though their libraries are still weighing programmatic priorities for the year.

"I want to make sure I'm interacting with my families, so they know I'm here for them," Beresford says. "I still want them to use their library, let me know if they need help, and keep the kids involved." AL

JESSICA CILELLA is a freelance writer based in Chicago.

National Bike Month

2008

Year that Gabriel Levinson, often described as the founding father of the present-day book bike, began riding his custom-built Haley book tricycle around Chicago's parks to hand out free materials. He later partnered with Chicago Public Library to continue distribution.

260

Pounds of cargo, the maximum that a standard-model Haley Book Bike can support.

25

Speed, in miles per hour, that San Francisco Public Library's Spoke & Word electric-assist bike can reach.

2,696

Miles pedaled by Pima County (Ariz.) Public Library's fleet of book bikes in its first six years of operation (2012–2018). In that time, staffers and volunteers gave away 76,997 books and attended 1,029 events.

2013

Year that one of the first major US public library bike-share programs was established at Athens County (Ohio) Public Libraries. That year, the library's 21 bikes were its most-circulated items. ●

Pottsboro (Tex.) Area Library converted a former junk room into a private telehealth space with its own outdoor entrance.

Healthy Distance

Telemedicine brings house calls to local libraries

BY Lara Ewen

In spring 2020, when the coronavirus pandemic hit the small town of Pottsboro, Texas, local doctors switched from in-person to telemedicine appointments with patients. But many of the town's 2,500 residents don't have internet access at home, or lack the bandwidth for video calls. So they went to Pottsboro Area Library, where Director Dianne Connery let patrons use her office—the only private space in the one-room building—for their telehealth visits.

The pandemic has thrown digital disparities into sharp relief. Between Zoom classrooms, working from home, and costly data plans, even people with reliable online access can be stretched thin. Now, as virtual doctor visits have become more common, inequitable online access has become a public health issue, too.

Pam DeGuzman, associate professor for the Department of Family, Community, and Mental Health Systems at University of Virginia School of Nursing, says access issues are only the beginning of a looming problem: "The digital health divide is just widening." That's why DeGuzman is working to help rural libraries provide telemedicine access. "The core of the library's mission today is information access," she says.

Library workers at Dayton (Ohio) Metro Library (DML) agreed. In July 2020, Diane Farrell, director of external relations and development, learned about the shift to telehealth from Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS), which works with several agencies to provide services. "A lot of their [partner agencies] were having problems connecting with their most vulnerable clients," she says, "so we began to work with them on a stopgap solution."

ADAMHS identified four agencies that had the staff to manage scheduling, and clients who needed help. Farrell designated a spare room at DML's main branch, and the IT department set up a computer and printed out instructions for using software such as Zoom. She says each agency gets to use the room one day a week. "For example, Goodwill Easter Seals has the room on Fridays, so all of their patients and schedulers know that and can set up appointments through the agency," Farrell says. Library staffers clear the laptop and sanitize the room after each appointment. The overall cost was minimal—including a new laptop and a dedicated landline for patients who didn't want to be on camera—and covered in part by funds repurposed from library programs put on hold because of the pandemic. Staff labor for the initial setup and printing costs added another $1,000.

Making space

Pottsboro Area Library, which stayed open during the pandemic, received a $20,000 COVID-19 outreach grant from the Network of the National Library of Medicine's South Central Region to develop programs designed to improve health literacy and information access related to the pandemic. To supplement the grant money and the library's limited budget, she also sent out a community appeal, which raised an additional $5,000.

With the funding, the library was able to convert a former junk room with its own outdoor entrance into the new private telehealth space, complete with ventilation, lighting, and a doorbell. "We have an outdoor iPad kiosk, so if they haven't completed their preregistration, they can complete that," Connery says. The grant also pays for health resources like books.

DeGuzman says that creating similar telemedicine programs is mainly a question of money and enthusiasm. "The biggest surprise I had speaking to rural libraries around the country was how receptive librarians are to this idea," she says. "It's just a matter of having the wherewithal to get it done."

Farrell says the program at DML provides more than internet access. "Some clients and patients, even if they do have a stable phone line, may not have space in their house to have a confidential conversation," she says. "Just having the space to say, 'I'm going to the library,' with no stigma, gives patients the freedom to get the counseling and therapy they need." Farrell says the location also makes it accessible for families: "When they come with children, the kids can hop on computers and check out their books."

In Pottsboro, feedback has been positive. One patient emailed Connery after an appointment to say, "I just had the Zoom meeting with [my doctor]. She is sending a new med to the drugstore. This makes me so happy. I did not think it would happen."

Increasing reach

Still, Connery says, despite outreach efforts about the new services, "I have not had much response so far. I think part of the issue is that many people don't understand what telehealth is."

Looking ahead, Farrell says she hopes the reach of DML's program will increase. "The staff is very proud of this," she says. "My only complaint is that we can't do this more."

For Connery, library telehealth is just one part of a larger push to bring wellness into her community. "Even before COVID-19, we started focusing more on health. We have a community garden, and we're teaching classes on how to cook and feed a family on a SNAP budget," she says, referring to the federal Supplemental Nutrition

As virtual doctor visits have become more common, inequitable online access has become a public health issue.

Assistance Program. She hopes to eventually expand the telehealth program and even make it mobile, assuming she can raise funding and support. "If we're able, I want to help people age in place," Connery says. "So I have to make the case that what I'm doing is as essential as police and fire." AL

LARA EWEN is a freelance writer based in Brooklyn, New York.

A health care worker from Schenectady County (N.Y.) Public Health Services (right) wheels in the vaccine while David Bradley (left), a member of Friends of the Schenectady County Public Library (SCPL) and spouse of SCPL Director Karen Bradley, checks in vaccine recipients.

A Shot in the Arm

Libraries serve as COVID-19 vaccination sites

BY Cass Balzer

When Karen Bradley, director of Schenectady County (N.Y.) Public Library (SCPL), learned in late October from the county manager that the Central library would become a distribution center for the COVID-19 vaccine, she wasn't sure what to expect. The library was used to receiving books and DVDs from "little delivery-type trucks," Bradley says, but things changed in December when shipments of medical supplies began arriving.

"Now, we're getting these big commercial vehicles—these long tractor-trailer things that pull in here," says Bradley. "It's quite the image."

In 2020, many libraries proved essential to their counties' coronavirus pandemic response by acting as testing sites, manufacturers of 3D-printed personal protective equipment, and donation centers for food pantries. In 2021, some are once again being called to assist in the fight against the virus—this time to serve as sites for vaccinations. Several factors may make libraries suitable in this regard: They're usually open seven days a week, are typically wheelchair-accessible, and often boast safety features such as security cameras.

Beginning January 4, health care workers from Schenectady County Public Health Services, along with volunteer doctors and nurses, have been vaccinating 100–150 people per day in a large room at SCPL that is usually used for programming. Bradley and another library worker are directly assisting the vaccination effort by providing technology and equipment support such as copying necessary forms, managing supply inventory, and sourcing equipment like clipboards and pens.

The library is also printing forms, information, and vaccine cards for recipients and providing laptops for health care workers to use. Library staffers have been tasked with receiving and unloading gowns, gloves, masks, syringes, syringe-disposal containers, and other equipment. (The vaccine itself is brought in a refrigerated case with a security escort each day.)

Noble County (Ind.) Public Library (NCPL) volunteered space in its Albion location in late December to county commissioners and the Noble County Emergency Management Agency. The library's lower level—which previously housed a media room and space for meetings and private events—has been turned into a vaccination clinic staffed by the Noble County Health Department and volunteer nurses. No library workers are involved in vaccine distribution, and the initiative has not disrupted library services.

NCPL Director Sandy Petrie, who brought the library to the county's attention during its search for vaccination sites, says that though the library has lost some space in the short term, she hopes that the vaccination drive will help speed a return to normal service.

"We have a lot of people in the county coming into the library that have probably never been here before," she says. "The faster we can get people vaccinated, the faster I can get back to providing those services that our community craves."

Full-service to pop-ups

In addition to providing space for vaccinations, NCPL has dedicated a computer station so staff can help residents sign up for vaccine appointments. Many older adults in Noble County, Petrie says, do not have internet access in their homes.

Rather than serving as ongoing vaccination sites, some libraries have hosted pop-up clinics while their counties organize other, larger venues. Two Lee County (Fla.) Library System locations— East County Regional and Lakes Regional—acted as distribution centers for one day each in December.

Photo: Karen Bradley

The effort was run by the Florida Department of Health in Lee County and Lee County Emergency Management, with vaccines available on a first-come, first-served basis for residents 65 and older. As the vaccinations took place, East County Regional remained open to the public with regular service, while Lakes Regional closed because of the large number of people who came hoping to get the vaccine.

Lee County has a process by which staffers from county departments can be reassigned to assist in emergency situations. As a result, a handful of library staff members were formally assigned to help in the effort, along with staff from the county's facilities, public safety, and other departments. "Everyone pitched in as needed," Library Director Mindi Simon says.

Those reassigned library workers, along with other county employees, greeted people waiting to receive the vaccine, distributed intake forms, answered questions, and managed the recovery area, where people were observed for side effects after getting their shots. Additionally, library staffers took the opportunity to register people for library cards, renew expired library cards, and show patrons how to use online resources while waiting in line for vaccines. More than 1,600 people were vaccinated during the two days the pop-up clinics were available.

Moving up in the line

Glad as they are to help, some staffers worry that having their libraries serve as vaccination sites means increased foot traffic—and increased potential exposure to COVID-19. At SCPL, staff have been permitted to work on the second floor of the building, away from the vaccination effort. Petrie of NCPL says there's a sense of pride among her staff members, but adds: "I haven't heard anything negative, and that doesn't mean it's not there."

> "The faster we can get people vaccinated, the faster I can get back to providing those services that our community craves."

SANDY PETRIE, director, Noble County (Ind.) Public Library

Providing space to distribute the vaccine can also help library workers access it faster themselves. At SCPL, both Bradley and the other staff member working in the vaccination clinic have been vaccinated, as have cleaning staff. Other library staffers have received vaccines after appointment no-shows.

While the American Library Association's (ALA) Vaccine Working Group stated in a March 12 report to ALA Council that it "strongly support[s] the importance of library workers being vaccinated," the group believes an ALA statement asking the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to include library workers in phase 1B of the vaccination schedule would have unintentional and adverse effects on state and local advocacy. The report notes that state chapters should decide whether to invoke 1C designation.

In a time when libraries around the country are being hit with severe budget cuts, vaccination efforts can raise awareness of their community value. Petrie says: "This is a really good opportunity for us to show people that almost anything can happen at your library, including this."

This article first appeared on americanlibraries.org on February 2. AL

CASS BALZER is a writer in Chicago.
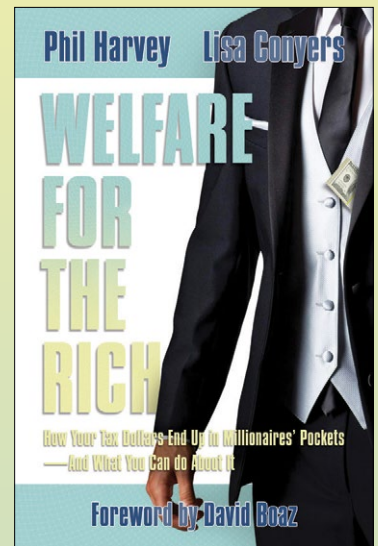
Employment Help? It's in the Bag

Transforming the traditional job fair

When in-person programming is unsafe, how do you help community members find much-needed employment? Tyler (Tex.) Public Library (TPL) came up with a novel way: creating a "job fair in a bag." Through a lot of community partnering and a little creativity, the library was able to reach 150 patrons in need. It all began with a question: "If a crafting event can be turned into a kit, why can't a job fair?"

BY T. J. Rankin

As we've seen during this pandemic, stay-at-home orders and a strained economy have led to one massive need in our communities: jobs. There's probably no better time to hold a job fair. Yet this same pandemic means that events at which large groups of people rotate in and out present a major health hazard.

This was the challenge Tyler (Tex.) Public Library faced last year. Pre-pandemic, our reference and youth departments had already planned to hold a job fair in May.

Then COVID-19 hit, and all library programs—including the fair—were canceled. At the same time, we watched the national unemployment rate spike from 4.5% in March to 14.7% in April. We needed to serve the unemployed, but we needed to do it safely.

We noticed that across the nation, libraries were converting programming into kits, such as take-and-make bags that allowed patrons to create crafts at home. If a crafting event can be turned into a kit, why can't a job fair?

After all, job fair attendees usually receive bags filled with brochures, pamphlets, coupons, and other resources. Why not eliminate the middleman and just distribute the bags? With that, our take-home job fair kits were born.

Knowing that lists of job openings would become out of date too quickly, my colleagues Stephen Hildalgo (TPL youth services assistant), Amy Skipper (TPL youth librarian), and I shifted away from featuring prospective employers, instead highlighting more general information, such as job-searching tips, hiring agencies that have perpetual demand, and degree- or certificate-conferring institutions. Some of the vendors we had planned to feature at the in-person fair fit that bill, so we requested and received informational fliers and brochures from them.

To make the kits more appealing, we solicited vendor donations of small, useful items such as stress balls, nail files, notepads, bookmarks, and pens (so many pens!). In addition, we asked several local restaurants to donate coupons, which they gladly did. We also added some of our own efforts, such as illustrations of appropriate job-interview attire and a step-by-step worksheet for creating a compelling, eye-catching résumé. Except for those handouts, all the items that went into the bags— about 3,000 pieces—were donated.

In the end, we connected with at least 20 restaurants, temp agencies, colleges, and other organizations, such as the Texas Workforce Commission. One donated item I'm particularly fond of: coupons

for the local Salvation Army Family Store allowing anyone buying job-interview clothes to receive 25% off their purchase.

These efforts provided us with many new contacts and collaborations. We took things a step further by asking the Salvation Army, along with local food pantry People Attempting to Help (PATH), to hand out some job-fair bags, too. To reach as many people as possible, we gave 50 bags to each organization and kept 50 to distribute ourselves.

When distribution time came in October, we set the bags on a table in the library lobby for patrons to take as they liked. To monitor our pandemic-induced patron capacity limit, our library stationed a staff member or volunteer in the lobby; that person was there to explain what the bags were and answer questions about them.

Because this was our first kit aimed at adult patrons, I was nervous about the response. Turns out there was not much to be concerned about. Bags at the library were gone before the week was over. We heard patrons give positive comments and praise for the kits; one person in particular happily reported that the information in them helped him net a better-paying job. Our partners at Salvation Army and PATH reported that the bags they distributed were equally well received and appreciated.

What with arranging the tables, corralling exhibitors, and dealing with inevitable last-minute cancellations, job fairs are stressful to pull off. But if you help just one person to get a job, it's all worth it. The same is true with our kits—especially during an economic crisis like a pandemic. AL

T. J. RANKIN is reference desk associate at Tyler (Tex.) Public Library.

Libraries Honor Women

AFGHANISTAN After two women were killed by the Islamic State in 2018, their loved ones were inspired to build public libraries in their honor. Today, those libraries—one in Kabul, the capital, and the other in the central Daikundi Province—stand as symbols of the progress made toward gender equality and access to education

Girls studying at Rahila Library in Kabul, Afghanistan

in Afghanistan, where as many as 3.5 million girls are enrolled in school, and where, as of 2018, one-third of the nation's teachers were women. "Establishing a library was a strong slap in the face to all the terrorist groups in Afghanistan," said Hamid Omer, the brother of Rahila Monji, who was killed when the Mawoud Academy, where she was studying for college entrance exams, was destroyed by a suicide bomber.—*The New York Times,* Feb. 21.

FINLAND Starting this year, libraries in the Helmet (Helsinki Metropolitan Area) network are ditching plastic book covers in favor of a new plant-based coating. Finnish company Pelloplast makes the protective film from sugar cane ethanol. All 64 libraries in Espoo, Helsinki, Kauniainen, and Vantaa will use the new covers, although a pilot project is under way to determine if some materials—such as magazines, inexpensive paperbacks, and reference books—could be left uncoated.—**The Mayor, Feb. 12.**

IRAQ British artist and author Edmund de Waal will donate almost 2,000 books from his acclaimed *library of exile* installation to the University of Mosul. The books will help rebuild the school's library, which was almost destroyed in 2015 by the Islamic State. The collection features works from antiquity to the present day in dozens of languages, representing writers from more than 100 countries who have experienced exile, loss, and displacement.—**Art Daily, Jan. 26.**

SINGAPORE In August 2020, the National Library Board (NLB) launched SoundscapeSG, a crowdsourcing initiative to capture the sounds of everyday life unique to Singapore and Singaporeans and build a sound map of the country. NLB is seeking recorded contributions in five areas: local accents and dialects, wildlife and nature, sounds of the heartlands (such as at home, wet markets, and hawker centers), workplaces, and festivals and celebrations. Accepted sound recordings will be uploaded to the National Archives of Singapore's Citizen Archivist Project portal as part of its aural repository.—**The Straits Times, Mar. 3.** ●

Isabel Allende

Chilean-American author talks feminism, censorship, and representation

Since her first novel, *The House of the Spirits,* was published in 1982, Isabel Allende has written frequently about the interior lives of women. Her latest book, *The Soul of a Woman* (Ballantine Books, March), is a collection of essays that follows the trajectory of Allende's life and evolving approach to feminism—as the daughter of a single mother in Chile, as a journalist covering women's issues in the 1960s and 1970s, as a mother herself, and now as a US citizen and internationally acclaimed author of fiction and nonfiction. She spoke with *American Libraries* about her influences, challenges to her books, and fighting the patriarchy.

BY Sallyann Price

What do you to hope to add to the conversation around feminism? The book tells my story, which is a very long story, so young women who read it will see what happened before them, and people my age will be able to see what's happening now, which I think is important: to be open to everything new.

But what is the ultimate goal of feminism, of the movement? To defeat the patriarchy, and we are far from that. We have a lot of work to do. In the book I try to explain why defeating the patriarchy is so important, because patriarchy is like the air we breathe, which we don't notice, until we do.

When we read something, we realize we're not alone, we realize there are other women and other people who are thinking as we think, are feeling what we feel. That interconnection that literature—fiction or nonfiction—creates is very important.

Your books have been challenged in schools and libraries because they discuss sexuality. What is it like to have your work challenged? It's a badge of honor. Because as soon as a book is banned, everybody's reading it. I've always said that if you want kids to read, then forbid the book and they will read it. And also, I had a couple of very passionate teachers who fought back against their boards of education and got my books reinstated.

I love librarians. I think the whole idea of being a librarian is extraordinary. Not only that you live your life with books and for books but that you can guide a young reader. That's so important.

What authors or books have influenced you? When I was a child, I read young adult books, but they were not called young adult books then—Jack London, Mark Twain, [Charles] Dickens. Very young I started reading the great Russian novelists, and I was fascinated by these long, long stories.

I belonged to the first generation of Latin American writers who grew up reading the great writers of the boom of Latin American literature. They were all men, there was not one female voice in that boom, but they were all great writers. They were a big influence in the way I saw Latin America. They were a choir of multiple voices, very different but harmonious, that presented Latin America to the world but also to us. They gave us a broad vision of our continent. They were a huge influence later for me in my writing.

A book that influenced me a lot was one I read when I was about 13. My stepfather had a locked armoire, and inside were cigarettes, whiskey, and *Playboy.* So of course every time he went out, we would pick the lock and my brothers would drink the whiskey, smoke the cigarettes, and look at the *Playboy.* I would go directly to the four beautiful leather volumes of *One Thousand and One Nights,* reading with a flashlight and skipping pages. So the stories were blending into one another, and all this was about harems and magical carpets and thieves that would climb onto balconies. It was the awakening of eroticism and fantasy, and both have marked my writing.

What are you reading? *Untamed* (by Glennon Doyle) and *Fantasyland* by Kurt Andersen. I'm also doing some research for the novel I'm writing. I'm always writing something because if I don't write, I go crazy. **AL**

Photo: Lori Barra
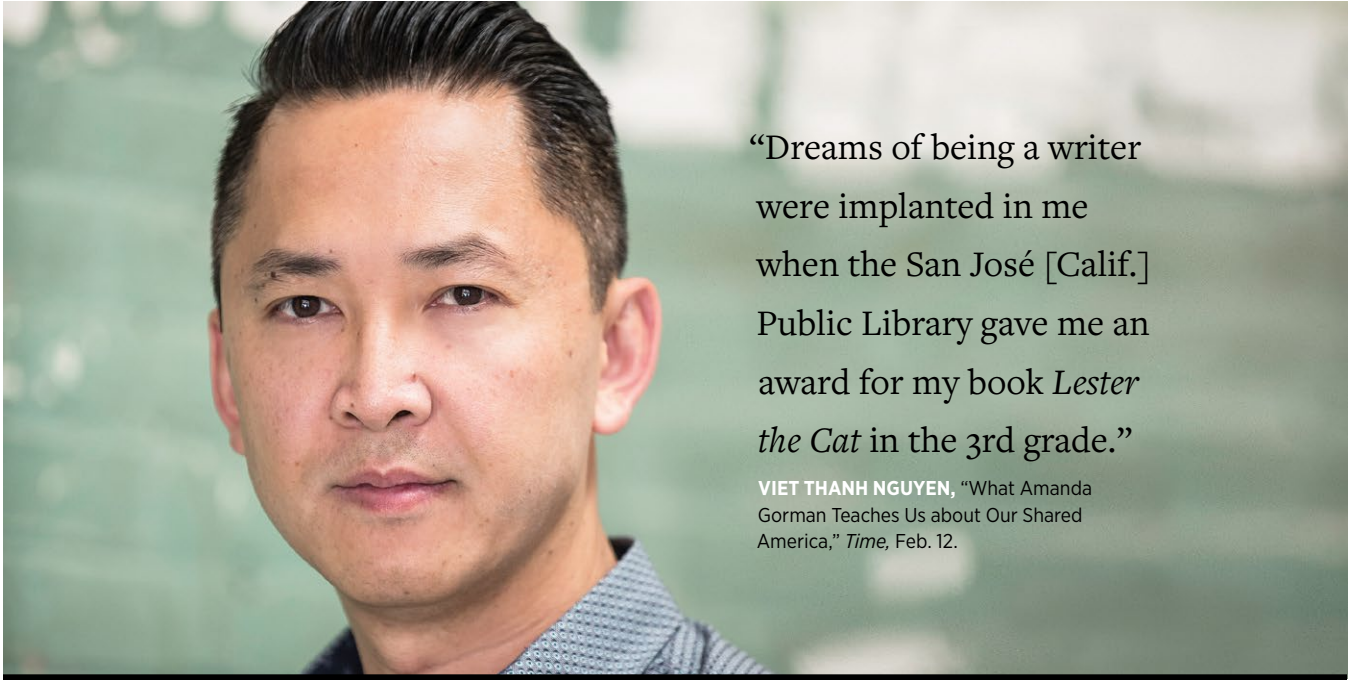
"Dreams of being a writer were implanted in me when the San José [Calif.] Public Library gave me an award for my book *Lester the Cat* in the 3rd grade."

VIET THANH NGUYEN, "What Amanda Gorman Teaches Us about Our Shared America," *Time,* Feb. 12.

"[**US Sen. Patrick Leahy** (**D-Vt.**)] **donates every fee from his** [**film**] **appearances and royalty checks from residual showings to his beloved Kellogg-Hubbard Library** [**in Montpelier**], **where he helped finance a children's wing named for him. From his roles in The Dark Knight trilogy alone, Leahy has donated more than $150,000 back to his hometown library, said Carolyn Brennan, codirector of the library.**"

SCOTTIE ANDREW, "The Man Third in the Line of Presidential Succession Has Been in Five Batman Movies," CNN, Jan. 23.

"I recently discovered that you can buy library-scented candles. They have evocative names such as New England Bookshop and Vintage Bookstore. (Working in a library has led me to discover the smell is actually cellulose decay, which makes for a much harder sell.)"

CHRIS WHITAKER, "What's the Key to Finishing That Novel of Yours? Try Working at the Library," Crime Reads, Mar. 4.

"I find comfort in reminding myself that libraries are not going anywhere; that they have existed for a long time, across many centuries, and other pandemics. For me, having the opportunity to use the library has been an amazing, lifelong journey, one that is still unfolding. They are without a doubt what guided me to be the writer I am today, even if I am at heart, still just a kid from East Oakland."

MARABET MORALES SIKAHALL, "'The Sweetest Escape': A Love Letter to Oakland's [Calif.] Libraries," The Oaklandside, Feb. 17.

"WHEN I WAS A YOUNG BOY I HID IN THE LIBRARY. I WAS HIDING FROM A TROUBLED HOME, FROM THE TROUBLED STREETS OF BELFAST, BUT MOSTLY FROM THE KIND OF TROUBLE BEING AN EFFEMINATE BOY GOT YOU. I WAS MORE FRIGHTENED OF THAT CONSTANT ABUSE AND HATRED THAN I WAS OF BOMBS AND BULLETS."

PAUL MCVEIGH, author and editor of *Queer Love: An Anthology of Irish Fiction,* "I Was Safe in the Library. I Was Protected by Books," *The Irish Times,* Feb. 15.
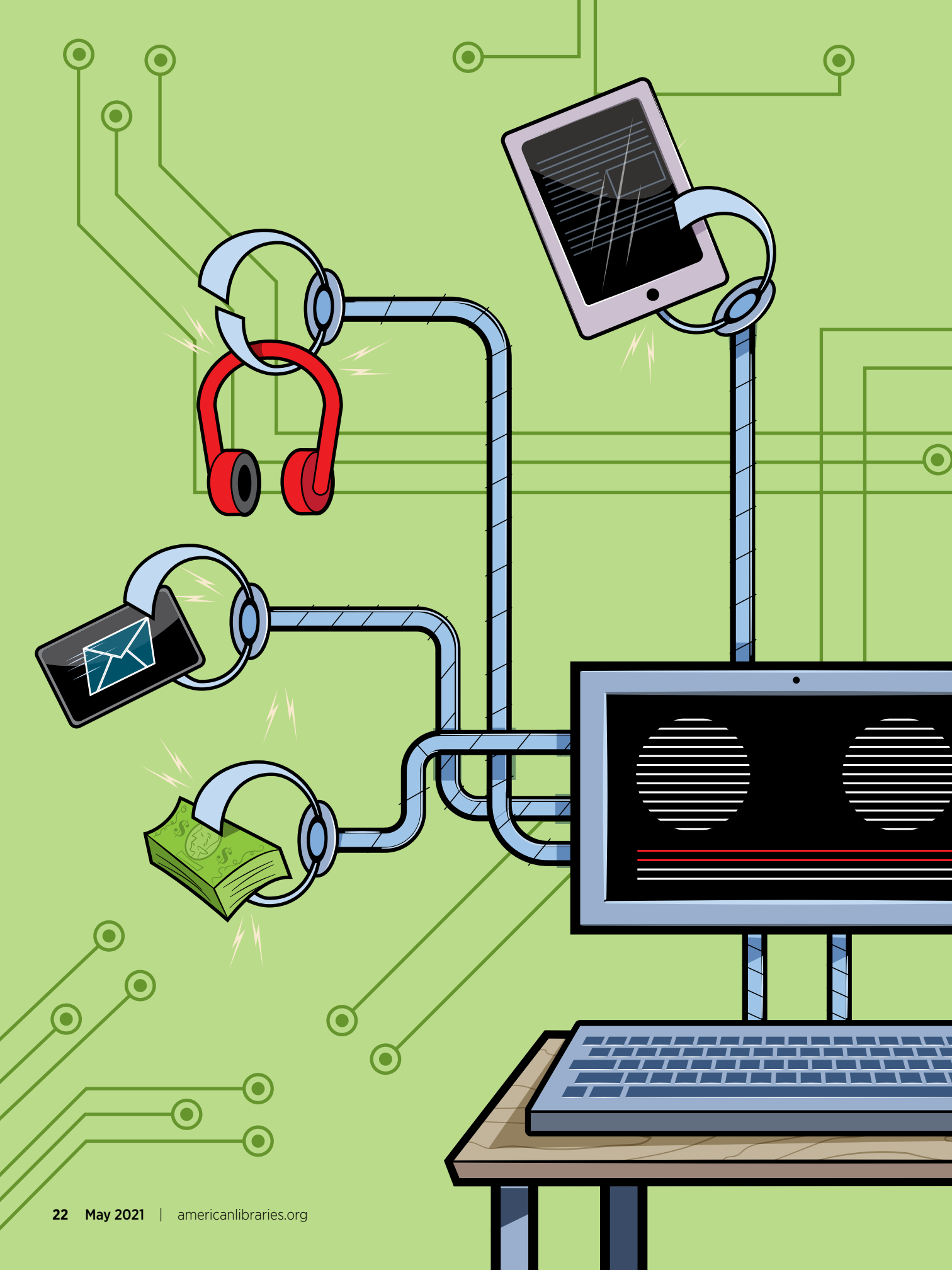
2021 LIBRARY SYSTEMS REPORT

Advancing library technologies in challenging times

BY Marshall Breeding

I n a year complicated by a global pandemic, the community of vendors providing technologies to libraries made important strides to meet pressing needs and make ongoing progress in their longer-term initiatives. Though the pandemic disrupted library services—as well as funding—in 2020, concerted efforts were made to fulfill the demands of users to the extent possible. Almost all vendors made sharp turns to expand access to digital collections and services in order to compensate for diminished access to physical materials.

Only a few minor acquisitions took place in this deeply consolidated industry last year. Unlike in 2019, none of these transactions altered the overall balance of power among competitors. Vendors made extraordinary efforts to help customer libraries cope with changed services while they continued product development agendas looking beyond current circumstances.
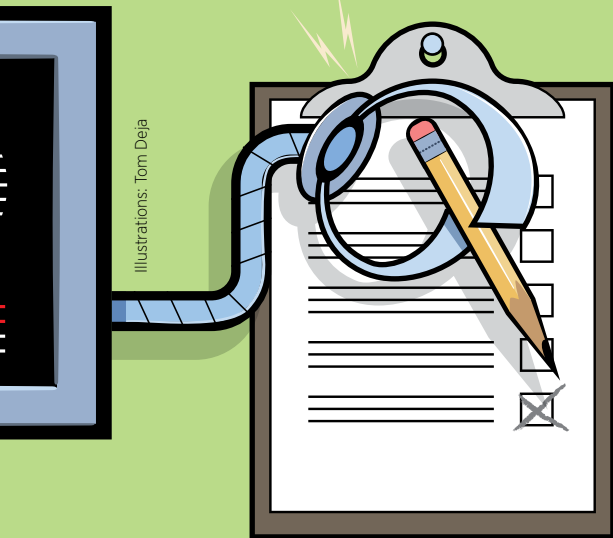
Responses to the crisis

Library vendors readily provided support during the pandemic, especially through rapid development or implementation of functionality that supported newly instituted workflows, such as online selection and checkout of materials and touchless curbside pickup. Abrupt building closures prompted a need to update policy calendars controlling due dates and notices, along with other operational changes. Almost all vendors described delivering system interventions or functional enhancements to assist their customers during this challenging period. Many of these changes will have enduring value. For some libraries, the crisis accelerated transitions to increased digital operations already under way.

In addition to changes in system policies and operations, some vendors mentioned other specific—and unprecedented—measures offered in support of their clients during the pandemic. Biblionix not only implemented 16 features designed to help libraries adapt to changes in lending and workflow but also offered financial relief to its clients. Since many experienced reduced lending during the pandemic, Biblionix lowered the fees for Apollo ILS according to use levels, an unusual practice in the library technology industry. Innovative Interfaces made its Circa Sierra mobile app free to libraries for a year to assist with curbside services. Ex Libris launched the "Best Practices for the Ex Libris Community during COVID-19" initiative to provide guidance on building closures and reopenings. Soutron Global developed a Pandemic Recovery Program, providing customers with an extended support package, and donated 10% of its revenue to a financial assistance fund designated for Soutron clients. OCLC supported libraries implementing curbside pickup services through specialized workflows provided through its CapiraCurbside mobile app.

Solidifying a consolidated industry

Business acquisitions spanning multiple decades have consolidated the library technology industry into one dominated by a handful of large companies. Organizations such as EBSCO Information Services, Follett, OCLC, and ProQuest have assembled diverse portfolios of products, some of which complement other content offerings and services not covered in this report. These organizations are massive: EBSCO Information Services employs 2,852 globally. Across its businesses, ProQuest has a workforce of 2,740—including 1,461 employed at the parent company and the rest via subsidiaries including Bowker, Ex Libris, and Innovative. Follett, with $3 billion in revenue in 2020, employs 1,758 (including its subsidiaries). OCLC reports 1,238 total personnel. The remaining organizations that participated in this report employ a combined total of 1,316 people, reflecting the economic clout of the top tier.

Events of the last year furthered the industry's consolidation. The acquisition of Innovative Interfaces by ProQuest at the beginning of 2020 triggered a review by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the key US governmental regulator that challenges anticompetitive mergers and acquisitions. The FTC initiated its review in February and concluded it in November without imposing any restrictions.

While under active review, ProQuest agreed to operate Innovative as an independent company and separate its business and product activities. Going forward, ProQuest will operate Innovative as an individual business unit, parallel to Ex Libris. Each company will develop and support its own products, though they are no longer restricted from exploring synergies.

The FTC not imposing divestments suggests that company mergers within the industry have so far not crossed legal anticompetitive thresholds. Though product and vendor choices are narrow, libraries continue to have alternatives when procuring major technology systems. Even in the academic and school sectors mostly dominated by large companies, smaller and niche players—as well as open source alternatives—represent viable competition. The outcome of ProQuest's FTC review validates the reality of a consolidated industry and may signal tolerance of other bold moves.

Although industry giants get much attention, small and midsized companies play a vital role in the industry, providing competition and well-appreciated products and services. Smaller companies can offer specialized products and boutique services not addressed by the big names. Their nimble processes also have the potential to drive innovation.

But this tier of smaller organizations faces the harsh reality of limited resources and development capacity. Almost all the small and midsized companies in the industry have experienced static or reduced numbers of employees over the last decade:

- The Library Corporation: 199 in 2010, 116 in 2020
- SirsiDynix: 385 in 2010, 387 in 2020
- Book Systems: 60 in 2010, 62 in 2020
- Keystone Systems: 17 in 2010, 16 in 2020
- Equinox: 22 in 2010, 20 in 2020
- Auto-Graphics: 32 in 2010, 28 in 2020
- Infor: 71 in 2010, 35 in 2020

Only ByWater Solutions, with 15 employees in 2010 and 30 in 2020, has shown substantial personnel growth.

ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Libraries serving higher education institutions require specialized products responsive to the dynamics of collection profiles and the evolving nature of their services. These libraries offer collections comprising mostly electronic resources, though they still acquire print materials as needed.

Most have extensive print inventories, often stored offsite, as well as valuable special collections. Ever-increasing costs of scholarly journals exert tremendous pressure on collection budgets, leading to steeply curtailed acquisitions of monographs, which in turn amplifies interest in resource-sharing partnerships and supporting technologies. The trend in scholarly publishing toward open access adds a new layer of complexity to electronic resource management. New broad-based transformational agreements between publishers and libraries—or their educational institutions and parent organizations—add further complications, with some libraries being forced to track article-processing charges and content beyond the organization's subscriptions, for example. These issues need to be addressed by the tools libraries use for acquisitions, access, and analytics.

University libraries, following the decline of print and electronic course reserves, have shifted to supporting teaching in other ways—for instance, using applications that integrate with the institution's learning management system to provide access to course and supplemental reading materials.

Libraries supporting universities involved with primary research see new opportunities in lending their expertise with institutional repositories, metadata, and the management of digital information. Research information management systems have traditionally been acquired through institutions' research offices, from vendors such as Elsevier. Libraries can strengthen their strategic involvement in research by acquiring new products (like Esploro) independent of research offices and partnerships with other institutional stakeholders.

Multiple vendors strive to provide products that support the complex dynamics playing out in academic libraries. In recent years, academic libraries have seismically shifted away from integrated library systems (ILSes) oriented to print collections, adopting instead library services platforms (LSPs) designed to manage all collection formats. Installations of ILS products like Aleph and Voyager, geared toward academic libraries, are falling rapidly. Vendors offering ILS products adopted by multiple types of libraries are seeing defections among colleges and universities. We can anticipate further drift of implementations of ILS products such as Symphony and Sierra, that have traditionally

served all types of libraries, among academic libraries. In 2020, 559 out of 2,423 Symphony implementations were in academic libraries.

Discovery services play a diminished role in the academic library market. Bundled solutions avoid some of the complications of separate implementation and integration and are promoted by their respective vendors. Relatively small numbers of researchers and students consider the library-provided discovery service as their starting point, preferring Google Scholar, services provided through scholarly publishers (such as Scopus), or disciplinary services (such as PubMed). Though their popularity is dwindling, discovery products, which contain discovery services and discovery interfaces, are still essential for academic libraries. Vendors must strive to strengthen their capabilities, improve user interfaces, and increase their strategic importance.

Vendors routinely bundle a discovery product with deals for LSPs. Few academic libraries enter separate procurement projects for discovery services as was often the case a decade ago. It's more typical now for a library to accept the discovery product bundled with its LSP, such as Primo with Alma or WorldCat Discovery Service with WorldShare Management Services, or to take advantage of a partnership between its ILS vendor and one of the discovery service providers, usually EBSCO Information Services.

ProQuest

As one of the largest businesses offering products and services to libraries, ProQuest has become increasingly involved in the technology sector through acquisitions and product development, while maintaining its foundation in content, databases, and metadata. Its 2004 acquisition of Serials Solutions led to products such as the 360 Suite for electronic resource management and the Summon index-based discovery service. Its acquisitions of Ex Libris in 2015 and Innovative Interfaces in 2020 dramatically expanded its presence in the library technology sector.

Ex Libris is the leading provider of strategic technology products for academic and research libraries. Its focus on technologies for this sector, as well as generous allocation of resources for product design and development, has driven steady growth through multiple product cycles—beginning with the ILS through its current portfolio of diverse products. Ex Libris reported a total workforce of 973 in 2020, down slightly from the previous year but almost twice as big as a decade ago.

Ex Libris's Alma LSP continues its surge with another year of strong sales. Its 114 new contracts have expanded installations to 2,037, almost double the 1,095 in place only three years ago. Alma is now used by libraries in 41 countries. This impressive number of
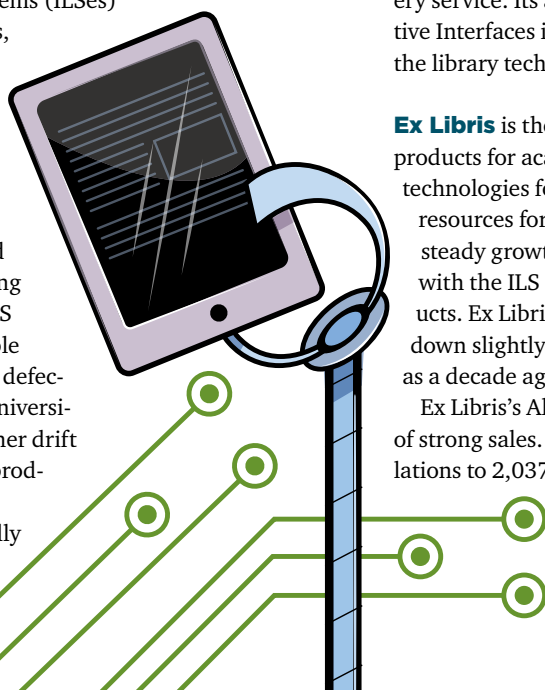
sales can be attributed to libraries with large collections that serve many sites or institutions.

In addition to Alma as its strategic LSP, Ex Libris continues to support its legacy ILS products. Few Aleph sales were reported, usually to new sites joining existing installations. Aleph installations peaked in 2015 and have since declined as these libraries move to Alma and other products. There were no new sales for Voyager in 2020, with 188 installations remaining. Voyager peaked in 2011 with 1,255 installations. Yet with important institutions, such as the Library of Congress, continuing to use its legacy products, Ex Libris remains motivated to continue support.

Ex Libris continues an ambitious development agenda to enhance Alma. Recent improvements include a transition to Oracle Analytics Server from Oracle Business Intelligence for its underlying analytics engine and a new metadata-editing interface. Consistent with the modern software-as-a-service (SaaS) model, Ex Libris delivers incremental updates to Alma monthly rather than deploying major release packages.

Additionally, a new framework that enables library and third-party developers to create Cloud Apps, applications that run natively in the Ex Libris Cloud, was released in 2020. This approach differs from the creation of separate apps that interoperate with Alma via APIs. Cloud Apps provide new functions that can appear as menu items within the Alma interface.

Alma also serves as a foundation for other academic and research products of interest. Leganto, which integrates with an institution's learning management system to manage course reading lists, saw 69 new sales and is now installed in 230 libraries. The Esploro platform for institutional research support was selected by six new organizations and is now used at 27 total institutions. Leganto has been available since 2016; Esploro was released in 2019. Ex Libris launched Pivot-RP, a new product that combines content from research-funding opportunity resources Pivot and Research Professional, in January 2021.

Ex Libris has also expanded its involvement with resource sharing. The RapidILL service it acquired in 2019 gained 104 customers, expanding its use to 430 libraries. Ex Libris has integrated the RapidILL service into the Alma interface for libraries subscribing to both products. RapidILL also fully supports libraries that use other systems.

The Rapido product for managing resource sharing workflows in Alma, introduced in 2020, saw 66 sales in its first year of availability.

Ex Libris also continues to improve its resource discovery. Primo and Summon were developed independently with separate indexes. To improve efficiency, the company recently undertook the task of creating a single index, while maintaining Primo and Summon as distinct products. The Central

OTHER INDUSTRY NEWS

McGraw-Hill and Cengage terminated a planned merger in May 2020, after a year-long review by the US Justice Department's Antitrust Division. The move would have combined the second (McGraw-Hill) and third (Cengage) largest publishers of textbooks in the US. According to both companies, the merger ended because they couldn't agree with the government on which assets should be divested. ●

Discovery Index (CDI) of more than 4.5 billion records now powers both products. More than 2,100 library systems using Primo transitioned to the CDI last year.

Ex Libris continues to develop and support Primo as an independent discovery service that can be used with Alma or any other major resource management system. Many libraries that originally implemented Primo with other ILS products have subsequently migrated to Alma. Ex Libris also offers PrimoVE, a discovery service that is more tightly integrated with Alma and managed through its back-office console. Last year more than 208 library systems implemented Primo and PrimoVE, increasing total installations to 2,735; Summon saw 38 sales and now has 808 total installations, a slight decrease from last year.

Innovative Interfaces began 2020—the first year in which it operated under the ownership of ProQuest and new executive leadership—with fresh strategies for product development, partnerships with customer libraries, and revived sales. For most of 2020, Innovative was required to operate in complete isolation from ProQuest. This restriction was lifted once the FTC review was concluded, but the company continues to operate as an independent business despite ownership by ProQuest. Innovative reported 254 employees, down from about 350 prior to the acquisition. Though painful, staff reductions are common during acquisitions, especially in administrative areas subsumed by the parent company.

Innovative states full commitment to serving all types of libraries currently represented within its customer base, particularly public libraries served by its ILS product Polaris. Academic libraries are another focus, as they make up a sizable portion of its Sierra implementations. Higher education institutions will remain a significant portion of Innovative's customer base going forward, so the company must execute strategies to fulfill users' expectations. An early example of this mandate is the company's partnership with Ex Libris, which involves integrating the Summon discovery service with Sierra. Innovative had previously partnered with EBSCO

for an integration between Encore and EBSCO Discovery Service, branded as Encore Duet. The partnership with EBSCO collapsed in 2019, prior to Innovative's acquisition by ProQuest. The integration between Summon and Sierra will be an important element in the company's strategy; Innovative reported that 30 of its academic libraries have started using Summon.

Prior private equity ownership devalued investments in development at Innovative. Under new ownership, Innovative has begun an ambitious development agenda. The first major initiative has produced a discovery environment based on a new technology platform. Branded as Vega, this brand-new service has a clean, intuitive user interface that pairs content from the library's collection with external sources. Key features include automatically generated author and topic pages, resource recommendations, and groupings of similar items and formats.

Though early in its product cycle, Vega has attracted the attention of libraries that want to deliver a contemporary user experience and build patron engagement. New York Public Library, one of the largest systems using Sierra, is a development partner for Vega. Innovative reported that 19 libraries signed agreements in 2020 to implement Vega. Though the product initially focuses on discovery, the platform will be expanded to include additional services.

Overall, Innovative's sales of Polaris and Sierra were consistent with recent years. The 16 new contracts for Polaris resulted in 430 total installations; 18 new Sierra contracts led to a total of 806 installations. On top of that, 22 libraries purchased the Innovative Mobile app. Innovative also reported 146 additional libraries participating in INN-Reach resource sharing networks.

EBSCO Information Services

EBSCO Information Services provides an array of library products and is part of EBSCO Industries, a family-owned diversified business. EBSCO has a well-established portfolio of database products and content services for processing print and electronic subscriptions. Products such as EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS), Full Text Finder, and other electronic resource management tools are used widely (though specific sales and implementation statistics are not available this year). In recent years EBSCO has expanded its involvement in technology through the acquisition of Stacks, a web-based content management product, and its leadership in the development of FOLIO.

EBSCO FOLIO Services was launched in 2020. EBSCO has been one of the key organizations involved in advancing the open source FOLIO LSP, backing the platform through large financial investments and resource development. (Company representatives serve on the board of the Open Library Foundation, which governs the project and holds its intellectual property.) Following a four-year development effort, including participation from a variety of organizations, the initial round of implementations has begun.

As with other open source library automation products, multiple companies will provide support and hosting services, though no license fees can be collected for the software itself. Multiple commercial arrangements have converged surrounding FOLIO. EBSCO will host instances of the software, branded as EBSCO FOLIO, for which libraries will contract directly with EBSCO for support. ByWater Solutions will provide support services for instances of FOLIO that are hosted by EBSCO but not supported by the company. Other companies, such as Index Data, will provide their own hosting services. Some libraries may opt to manage their own instances of FOLIO.

Some of EBSCO's early customers for its FOLIO hosting and support include Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden, the Five College Consortium in Massachusetts, Michigan State University, Missouri State University, National Central Library of Florence in Italy, and University of Alabama. Some libraries have opted to initially implement the electronic resource management components of FOLIO in advance of full migrations from legacy systems.

FOLIO does not include a patron-facing catalog or discovery interface, though many libraries implementing FOLIO on their own are expected to use EDS. EBSCO continues to advance EDS, and the deployment of a new version is under way. This version offers a revamped user interface with options for a more personalized experience. Other improvements include an EDS Knowledge Graph to improve relevance of search results and a Concept Map that offers a visual representation of subjects and concepts, enabling users to explore results in a new way. Through a partnership with Google CASA (Campus Activated Subscriber Access), researchers using Google Scholar can view the full text of subscription-based resources transparently via EBSCOhost. Implementation of the Universal CASA framework enables a similar experience for those starting with other search engines and tools such as PubMed.

OCLC

OCLC's contributions to libraries cannot be measured solely by the sales performance of its products and services. A nonprofit with a mission to benefit libraries, many of the company's resources are channeled outside this commercial sector and into other activities

that promote and support libraries. Examples include the educational programming of WebJunction, the documents and analysis developed by OCLC Research, and initiatives such as the REALM project (see "REALM Test Results," Jan./Feb., p. 32).

OCLC navigates a complex path as a nonprofit that competes commerically in some product sectors. Its impact is illustrated by comparing its workforce of 1,238 and revenue of about $215 million in 2020 with for-profit Follett's 1,758 employees and revenue of about $3 billion. These statistics suggest that OCLC directs a much larger portion of its efforts to programs than to revenue-generating services. In 2020, for example, OCLC received a $2.4 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for "shared entity management infrastructure."

The technology products and services mentioned in this report represent only a portion of OCLC's diverse offerings, such as resource-sharing products and strategic technology for academic and public libraries.

OCLC's WorldShare Management Services (WMS) continues to make gains in academic libraries. This LSP leverages the massive WorldCat bibliographic database to provide streamlined workflows by eliminating the duplicate efforts that may be involved with other systems—for example, the synchronization of local collection holdings.

In recent years WMS made considerable gains, including its ability to serve larger academic libraries and consortia. The 44 new sites that signed in 2020 increase the total number of libraries using WMS to 632. WMS recently received FedRAMP approval, making it eligible as a hosted service for US government libraries.

On the development front, OCLC is revamping its products, phasing in an API-based cloud infrastructure. This approach gives priority to the creation and exposure of APIs to enable new opportunities for the consumption of its services through its own applications and those of external partners. In this vein, OCLC released a WorldCat Search API, and a new WorldCat Discovery API is forthcoming.

TIND

TIND provides support services for Invenio open source software, originally developed for the library at the CERN research facility in Switzerland. TIND was founded in 2013 and has brought different products to market: TIND ILS for general library management, TIND IR for institutional repositories, TIND RDM for research data management, and TIND DA for digital archives. The TIND ILS was selected by two new libraries last year, increasing installations to 17. Two sales of TIND IR increased installations to 26, and four sales of TIND DA increased installations to 19.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

ILS capabilities have long met the operational needs of public libraries, although enhancements continue. Libraries are increasingly looking beyond the transactional support delivered through traditional ILS models and seeking technologies that enable more direct engagement with their communities. Patron-facing interfaces must be continually improved to meet the rapidly evolving expectations set by consumer destinations and social networks, both in presentational style and personalization. Public libraries have borrowed some concepts from the business marketing sector, but with greater concerns for privacy. These capabilities include automated solutions that can support marketing campaigns using targeted multichannel messaging, integrated tools for managing and promoting programs or events, and other technologies to strengthen connections between libraries and their communities.

These services are now offered to libraries through fully integrated platforms like community engagement tool OCLC Wise and patron services like the BiblioCommons Product Suite, as well as optional add-ins such as the new Community Engagement Platform from SirsiDynix and the forthcoming Vega from Innovative. Specialized products that can be integrated into a library's existing environment are also available, such as Patron Point's marketing automation portal.

One of the pervasive trends in software development in this sector involves the transition from Windows-based ILS clients to fully web-based interfaces. This process has proven to be challenging, as developers strive to close the gap between functionality and ergonomics. Several vendors have met the expectations of libraries looking to replace Windows-based software clients with web interfaces. This trend can be seen in Innovative creating its LEAP client for Polaris; SirsiDynix's development of its BLUEcloud Suite and SymphonyWeb interfaces; and The Library Corporation (TLC) completing its LS2 web-based client for Library•Solution and improving CARL•Connect for its CARL•X ILS. This transition to web interfaces not only represents a change in technology but in most cases also enables new workflow concepts and modernization.

The public library technology industry differs substantially from the academic library business environment. No single
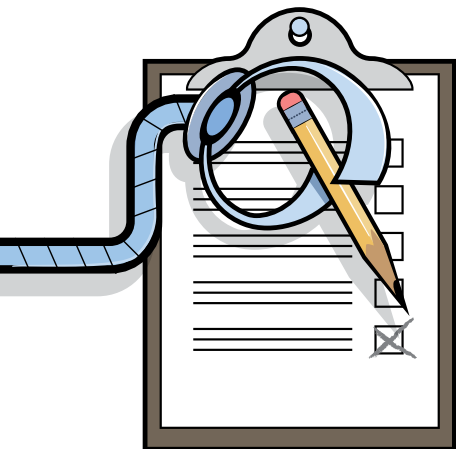
vendor dominates and there is a more diverse mix of products, including strong open source alternatives. The vendors listed below report public libraries as the largest share of their customer bases but also cater to other types of libraries.

SirsiDynix

SirsiDynix ranks as the largest of the standalone technology companies that have not been acquired by one of the industry giants. Although it has its own history of mergers and acquisitions, it has maintained its current form since 2013; ICV Partners has held primary ownership of SirsiDynix since December 2014. The company reported 387 employees, unchanged since 2019 and about the same as when it acquired EOS.Web in 2013.

SirsiDynix had a strong sales year for Symphony, with 95 new contracts. The total number of installations stands at 2,423—a figure that has diminished slightly since 2016. New sales, mostly to public libraries, outpace academic libraries that are moving to specialized products. Horizon saw seven sales, mostly to new libraries associated with existing implementations. Installations of Horizon continue to decrease from the apex of 1,612 in 2007 to the 813 reported for 2020.

Most Symphony and Horizon sales include multiple free BLUEcloud modules, but many libraries already using Symphony have purchased BLUEcloud products for brand-new capabilities. Libraries using either SirsiDynix ILS can operate native clients and BLUEcloud modules simultaneously, easing the transition toward fully web-based interfaces. BLUEcloud MobileCirc was redesigned and renamed BLUEcloud Staff.

June 2020 saw the release of the Community Engagement Platform, which provides marketing automation capabilities integrated with SirsiDynix ILS products. This application manages event scheduling and room bookings, supports marketing initiatives via targeted email campaigns, and provides analytics to measure customer engagement efforts.

SirsiDynix also launched Cloud Source Open Access (CSOA), an interface for large collections of open access content not dependent on library subscriptions. It was designed to appeal to both public and academic libraries and can be implemented by those not using other SirsiDynix products. More than 20 library systems participated in a pilot of CSOA, which is expected to be released in 2021.

EOS.Web adds an element of diversity to the SirsiDynix customer base, bringing in 789 special libraries and 110 smaller academic libraries as part of its total 911 installations.

The development of the BLUEcloud Suite of web-based applications continues. SirsiDynix proceeds to strengthen the

> Library vendors readily provided support during the pandemic, especially through rapid development or implementation of functionality that supported newly instituted workflows.

functionality of each of its BLUEcloud modules, relative to the capabilities of the native clients of Symphony and Horizon.

SirsiDynix enhanced its BLUEcloud Mobile app with self-checkout and curbside delivery capabilities. While these features were previously planned, they became especially appreciated as libraries responded to the pandemic.

OCLC

OCLC positions Wise as its strategic public library offering. In addition to standard ILS capabilities, OCLC Wise delivers features that strengthen engagement with patrons, including built-in targeted messaging for marketing automation, event organization, and integrated website management. OCLC began marketing Wise to public libraries in 2018.

OCLC Wise has seen moderate success following its introduction to US libraries. It made four new sales in 2020, and its global installations have increased to 420 libraries. Allen County (Ind.) Public Library was an early adopter and has fully implemented the product, and Chesapeake (Va.) Public Library, Greensboro (N.C.) Public Library, Gwinnett County (Ga.) Public Library, Kokomo–Howard County (Ind.) Public Library, and Orange County (Fla.) Library System signed contracts last year after making unofficial commitments in 2019.

The tech acquired from Capira Technologies also strengthens OCLC's offerings to public libraries. It had expanded OCLC's portfolio to include much-needed mobile apps, but the Capira Curbside app has been especially important during this year of pandemic-related disruptions.

BiblioCommons

BiblioCommons specializes in patron interfaces for libraries. Its products can be integrated with most of the major ILS products used by public libraries in the US and Canada. BiblioCore provides a comprehensive discovery service, replacing a library's online catalog for search interactions. BiblioWeb replaces the entire website, enabling management of all content and components via a console that does not require technical expertise. BiblioEvents manages the scheduling, content, and promotion of library programs, and fully integrates with BiblioWeb.

In its first year following its 2020 acquisition by Volaris Group, BiblioCommons continued its established development strategies and expanded its customer base. The company also saw a change in leadership as Sebastien Lopes was named general manager, replacing Matt Goddard, who was

appointed by Volaris Group to manage the initial transition. BiblioCore saw implementations in 11 public library systems and three consortia of public libraries.

A new BiblioEmail product was developed in 2020 to provide multichannel marketing automation for libraries, leveraging content components from BiblioCore, BiblioWeb, and BiblioEvents. Arapahoe (Colo.) Libraries and Chicago Public Library participated as development partners for this product, which is anticipated for general availability in 2021.

TLC

Under continuous ownership and management by its founder since 1974, TLC continues to provide technology products and services primarily to public and school libraries. The company employs 116 people, similar to the number reported in 2019 but many fewer than the 199 employees reported in 2010. In the midsized public library sector, TLC faces challenges in losing libraries to consortial open source projects. In addition to its two ILSes, TLC also offers bibliographic data services, including eBiblioFile, ITS•MARC, and RDAExpress, as well as a wide assortment of items for library makerspaces and other supplies via its TLC•SmartTECH marketplace, which includes an online store, training, and support.

Library•Solution saw seven new sales, totaling 682 installations—fewer than the peak 773 reported in 2011. Libraries choosing Library•Solution this year migrated from Polaris, Sierra, Symphony, and Virtua. Major technology initiatives include a push to migrate customers to its new TLC•Cloud Services hosting model, consistent with industry trends to offer alternatives to onsite management of systems. This industrial-strength hosting environment is based on Oracle Cloud Infrastructure and is available to clients using either CARL•X or Library•Solution. This environment offers rigorous security and data protection, including the encryption of stored library data.

TLC reports that 49 libraries migrated from the Windows-based Library•Solution client to the fully web-based LS2 staff interface. In partnership with its Tech Logic business, TLC developed new RFID inventory capabilities for Library•Solution.

CARL•X, used by large public libraries, saw ongoing improvements, especially in its web-based CARL•Connect discovery and staff interfaces. TLC signed one contract for CARL•X and reports a total of 16 installations. Since all the installations are consortia or large public library systems, CARL•X represents an important business activity for TLC.

Auto-Graphics

One of a few publicly traded companies in the industry, Auto-Graphics was founded in 1950 and continues to be led by the family of its founder. This midsized company specializes in SaaS technologies for US public libraries. Auto-Graphics

reported 28 employees, the same as in 2019. The company has gradually reduced in size from the 45 staffers employed in 2002.

Auto-Graphics offers the VERSO ILS used mostly by small to midsized public libraries. SHAREit provides large-scale resource sharing and has been implemented by multiple statewide interlibrary loan initiatives. Auto-Graphics reported only one sale of VERSO, which now has an installed base of 538 libraries. One new sale of SHAREit adds interlibrary loan services to 750 libraries. A total of 6,200 libraries currently participate in resource sharing services based on SHAREit.

The company reported its development of streamlined workflows across its product line to help libraries adjust to challenges brought on by the pandemic.

Biblionix

Based in Austin, Texas, Biblionix develops and supports the Apollo ILS designed for small and midsized public libraries. Apollo is web-based, including all staff functions and the patron catalog.

The 49 sales of Apollo increase its total installations to 830. Libraries implementing Apollo last year migrated from larger systems such as Horizon, Library•Solution, Millennium, Polaris, Symphony, and VERSO—or from products designed for school libraries, such as Destiny or Alexandria. Many of these new Apollo installations represent first-time automation.

This year Biblionix introduced a new dashboard as the staff interface for Apollo, delivering a more modern and efficient look. The dashboard is available to all clients using Apollo at no additional cost and can be optionally deployed when the library is ready to upgrade.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Over the years, vendors serving K–12 schools have become less focused on the libraries themselves, evolving into the broader realm of educational technologies for schools and districts. The ILS continues as an essential application for the library, though increasingly as an integrated component of the district's business and technical infrastructure. This sector has seen an increased emphasis on interoperability frameworks. These technology providers not only manage inventory but also are conduits for the acquisition of digital and print classroom content, often including open educational resources (OERs).

Vendors involved in this sector face headwinds such as declining funding and the shifting focus of control from school libraries to district-wide IT or educational technology centers.

A narrow slate of vendors addresses the K–12 library sector, with Follett taking the dominant position. While holding a smaller portion of the market, companies such as

COMPanion, TLC, LibraryWorld, and the open source OPALS product developed by Media Flex offer distinctive alternatives. SirsiDynix participates through the statewide INFOhio initiative; it provides library automation via multiple Symphony clusters, used across 37 districts.

Follett Corporation

Follett Corporation ranks as one of the largest companies offering services to libraries. Its Baker & Taylor division is a major supplier of books and digital content to public libraries. Another division operates online and onsite bookstores for colleges and universities. Follett School Solutions focuses on educational technology and content solutions, primarily for pre-K–12 schools.

Follett's Destiny ILS is well established as the leading product used in school libraries. Destiny has been implemented in 75,200 schools, mostly in the US and American schools abroad. In 2020 alone, 3,225 sales were made.

The new Destiny Discovery app improves the experience for students accessing Follett's digital content resources. Students can search and select print materials in their school library, and the app delivers important capabilities for remote students as well.

Follett enhanced the Destiny Discovery portal to enable school librarians to customize the content presented. New capabilities also include the implementation of the LTI (Learning Tools Interoperability) Thin Common Cartridge framework to integrate library-provided content into the institutional learning management system (see bit.ly/commoncartridge).

Follett took a number of measures to help its customers respond to COVID-19. When schools faced challenges to rapidly shift to remote or hybrid teaching, Follett created web pages to guide teachers and librarians to selected products or services. For existing customers, Follett provided free access to its Classroom Ready Collections, which include OERs such as lesson plans, worksheets, and videos.
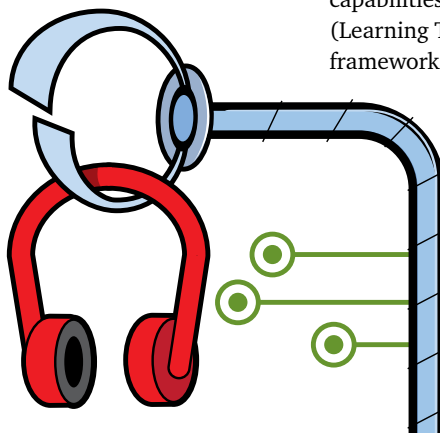
COMPanion Corporation

COMPanion Corporation develops and supports the Alexandria ILS, used mostly in K–12 schools. Although it has a relatively small market share, it represents important competition and provides distinctive capabilities. In 2020 it was selected by 134 schools, increasing total installations to 10,378 (of which 248 are in small public libraries).

Last year COMPanion completed several major enhancements to Alexandria, including a fully responsive interface and compliance with national standards for accessibility. Libraries using Alexandria can now take advantage of streamlined cataloging workflows through integration with Mitinet's BestMARC metadata management service. COMPanion also launched an Activities module providing advanced reporting and exporting of data. The implementation of the Global Grid for Learning framework enables integration with institutional student information systems and single sign-ons.

Book Systems

Book Systems is a midsized company that develops and supports the Atriuum ILS. The company has been owned and managed by its founders for 31 years and has 62 employees.

Atriuum has been implemented mostly by K–12 schools (3,357 out of 4,273 installations) and by small and midsized public libraries, small academic libraries, and church or other special libraries. In 2020 Atriuum was selected by 229 additional libraries, its most successful year since it was introduced in 2004.

Book Systems continues to enhance Atriuum with features and APIs. The company plans to focus on further expanding its presence in public libraries and entering new partnerships for better integration of its products.

Mandarin Library Automation

Mandarin Library Automation develops and supports automation products for K–12 schools and small libraries. The company is privately owned and employs 23 people. Its current product, Mandarin M5, is available both for local installation (used in 699 libraries) and as a hosted service (1,690 libraries). Mandarin M5 saw 95 installations in 2020, with almost all opting for the hosted version. Support continues for the previous product, Mandarin M3, with 1,475 installations remaining. New product developments for Mandarin M5 include improvements to circulation and cataloging modules as well as new custom reports.

LibraryWorld

LibraryWorld provides a fully web-based library service. The product has been implemented in K–12 school libraries (1,937 out of 3,011 installations), special libraries, small public libraries, and small academic libraries. The company

made 37 new sales in 2020. Although well known for its use in smaller libraries, LibraryWorld has also been successful in more complex organizations with larger collections. Jefferson County (Ky.) Public Schools, which comprises 167 individual schools, is a major client.

Last year LibraryWorld completed the implementation of an installation that comprises 115 Veterans Health Administration hospitals, supporting the automation of each library and a catalog for shared cataloging and interlibrary loan. LibraryWorld emphasizes the value of its service, which on average costs $470 per year per library—one of the lowest such costs in the industry.

Media Flex

Media Flex's open source OPALS ILS provides a fully web-based public catalog and staff interface. The software is released via an open source license; though the license allows others to modify and redistribute new versions, all development continues to be performed by Media Flex. The company partners with many of the BOCES (Boards of Cooperative Educational Services) organizations in New York for support and implementation services, supplementing its own services for libraries using the software. OPALS finds use among school libraries throughout the US and Canada as well as other small libraries, including those in churches, synagogues, and philanthropic nonprofit organizations.

BEYOND THE CRISIS

The COVID-19 pandemic brought considerable disruption to the library technology industry. Budget reductions in libraries naturally have an impact on their technology providers. So far, few libraries have cut back on their technology investments; some have even made new investments in digital content and related support technologies. The longer-term impact for the industry will naturally be tied to the recovery of budgets. We should anticipate slowdowns in product sales as a few libraries may need to defer planned procurements.

Further consolidation of the industry is all but inevitable within the next several years. Financial pressures could also have an impact on condensing the industry should reduced sales weaken companies or soften their valuations. Investors and large players seeking strategic acquisitions may see some library technology companies as interesting additions to their portfolios. None of these library technology companies are reporting financial difficulties, though few below the top tier have been able to achieve sustained growth.

Sales of ILSes and LSPs may also slow because of short-term budget scenarios and saturation, as the number of libraries already using newer products increases. Interest currently abounds for supplemental products that build on the core automation systems aligned with key library strategies. Current areas of interest include technologies for resource sharing, course list management and research support in the academic sector, and patron engagement technologies for public libraries. Developers and vendors may find new opportunities in creating technologies aligned with other activities as library strategies continue to evolve. Some of these technologies may be integrated with existing platforms or emerge as new product categories.

In broad terms, the library technology industry remains strong and multifaceted. Though the number of vendors has contracted, the field encompasses diverse options: nonprofit and for-profit businesses, proprietary and open source software products, ILSes and LSPs, multiple approaches to resource discovery, and a proliferation of new product categories. AL

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Illustrations: Shane Tolentino

The Library Employment Landscape

Job seekers navigate uncertain terrain

BY Anne Ford

Mindy Moran* planned on a career as an academic librarian. Since graduating with her MLS in 2016, however, she has not found a permanent position in a university or college library. She also has realized: "I may or may not actually end up working in a library" at all.

Even before COVID-19 struck early last year, the LIS job market was a competitive one. Now, with the pandemic's one-year anniversary behind us, the employment landscape for librarians has become even rockier and more unstable for entry-level candidates.

*Name changed at source request

At Syracuse (N.Y.) University School of Information Studies, for instance, the job placement rate for graduating LIS students was 89% in 2017 and 92% in 2018. "It was 2019 where we started to see a dip," when the rate dropped to 80%, says Jeffrey Fouts, assistant director of career services at Syracuse. "But man, the pandemic has really taken a toll on job placement, especially for LIS students," he says, noting that numbers dipped into the low 60% range in 2020. "That was very disheartening."

"Anecdotally, since the pandemic, it's like academic and public [library] jobs have almost been cut in half," agrees Rebecca Hodson, assistant director of career services at University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign (UIUC) School of Information Sciences. Though her school's graduates are finding jobs, she says, "it has been a hard hit. We are definitely in a challenging place."

David Connolly, who oversees the American Library Association's (ALA) JobLIST website as recruitment ad sales manager, expected the pandemic to affect the LIS employment market the same way the Great Recession of 2007–2009 did. He was wrong. It was worse.

"[The number of job listings] really choked off in March 2020. From that point through the summer, we saw things contract much faster and deeper than recessions of the past, to where we had about a quarter of the job postings we'd usually have," he says. "Entry-level and mid-level positions contracted the most."

The good news, he continues, is that "things turned around and improved each month as the winter went on. We're now running more like about 60%, maybe even 70%, of what we'd normally see at this time of year. So it's not back to what we'd think of as normal, but

it's headed in the right direction, and fairly quickly."

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE HUNT

Naomi House was completing her MLIS at Rutgers University in 2010 when she founded the I Need a Library Job email list, a compilation of LIS job postings from JobLIST, the Special Libraries Association Career Center, Archives Gig, and American Association of Law Libraries websites, and others, as well as jobs submitted by individuals and organizations. In 2013, she converted the email list into a website (inalj.com).

Starting in late February 2020, "what I saw happening [on the site] wasn't just a lack of new jobs being advertised but also mass layoffs—mostly, though not always, for staff who work most directly in person at locations and with patrons," House says. "Many public and university libraries drastically cut their staff. So not only were there fewer jobs, but dramatically higher numbers of job hunters all of a sudden."

Some of those job hunters have new geographic considerations. Moran, 29, was living in a large East Coast city when she began looking for an academic library position. Though able to find a temporary job processing materials and binding journals as a public library assistant, she had no luck locating permanent, full-time work in an academic setting, though she did have "some final-round interviews," she says.

Once COVID-19 came along, she found herself longing to live closer to family, so she moved to a smaller city in the Southeast with less competition for jobs in her field—but also fewer colleges and universities. As a result, she says, "I'm looking [for jobs at] public libraries, and there

are more of those, but they're hiring even less."

Things are no easier across the border in Canada, says job seeker Graham MacLean, 47, who received his MLIS from University of Western Ontario in 2006. After graduation, he worked as a cataloger in an antiquarian bookstore, then as a university archivist, before health issues took him out of the labor force for a while. Since 2016, he has been applying for positions in both public and academic libraries while he supports himself by working at a hobby shop.

> "I think for students who can envision themselves in nontraditional LIS roles, they're going to do a lot better."
>
> **REBECCA HODSON,** assistant director of career services at University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign School of Information Sciences

One obstacle to employment in a public library, he says, is that in his experience, those jobs are often held by people who worked there even before earning a library degree and whose tuition may have been at least partially financed by their library employers. "If anyone is looking for a job in the public library field, tell them, before they take their master's degree, be a page for several years," MacLean says. "You can start while you're still in high school, then go through university and get your master's."

ALTERNATE PATHS

"I don't have regrets [about obtaining an MLS]," says Moran, who adds that she has "made peace" with the possibility of not ending up in the library field. "I think the degree will help me. I had an interview for a job as a technology quality assistant, and they

were very interested in the fact that I had trained as a librarian."

In fact, nonlibrary opportunities for people with LIS degrees are booming, says Christopher Perrello, Syracuse iSchool's director of career services. "They really could go to any consulting firm and get hired for tech analysis, probably making I'm not going to say how much more than the average librarian," he says. "But I have to say, 99% of students I meet from the library information science program got into it because they want to be the legit stereotypical librarian, really being there for the community. You mention, 'You can go to McKinsey or Deloitte,' and they're just disgusted," he says, referring to two large consulting companies.

"It takes a little bit of an open mind on the students' part," says UIUC's Hodson. "I think for students who can envision themselves in nontraditional LIS roles, they're going to do a lot better. I see a lot of opportunity by thinking about transferrable skills."

One job-related challenge of the pandemic that's cropping up even pre-graduation: getting relevant library experience while still in school. "The students who graduated in May, for the most part, had a pretty normal program till the very end," Hodson says. "It's the ones starting now I'm concerned about." With so many internships, assistantships, practicums, and volunteer opportunities in jeopardy, "how are they going to get meaningful experience?

"Some work obviously can be done remotely, like a lot of metadata work," she continues. "There's virtual reference; there's database stuff. But when it comes to getting experience with kids in a reading program, all those students [were out of luck] last summer."

Though not quite all. Because UIUC's iSchool offers an online

learning option, students participate from many states—which, of course, vary widely in their pandemic-related restrictions. "I had a student in West Virginia, and she had a totally normal, in-person practicum," Hodson concedes. "Meanwhile, in other states, no one is accepting volunteers or interns."

The level of uncertainty surrounding employment prospects for new graduates raises the question: Should library programs reduce the number of students they accept? MacLean thinks so. "Canada is really overloaded with LIS graduates, especially

Ontario," he says. "There's not enough jobs for everyone."

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

Ohio-based Bradbury Miller Associates has conducted executive searches for libraries since 1983. In the past year, "every library I've talked to, it's really rare to hear that they didn't lay anybody off," says president and owner Karen Miller. Yet she reports that during the pandemic, her firm has been just as busy as ever, for one inarguable reason: "When they're doing layoffs, it's the director who stays."
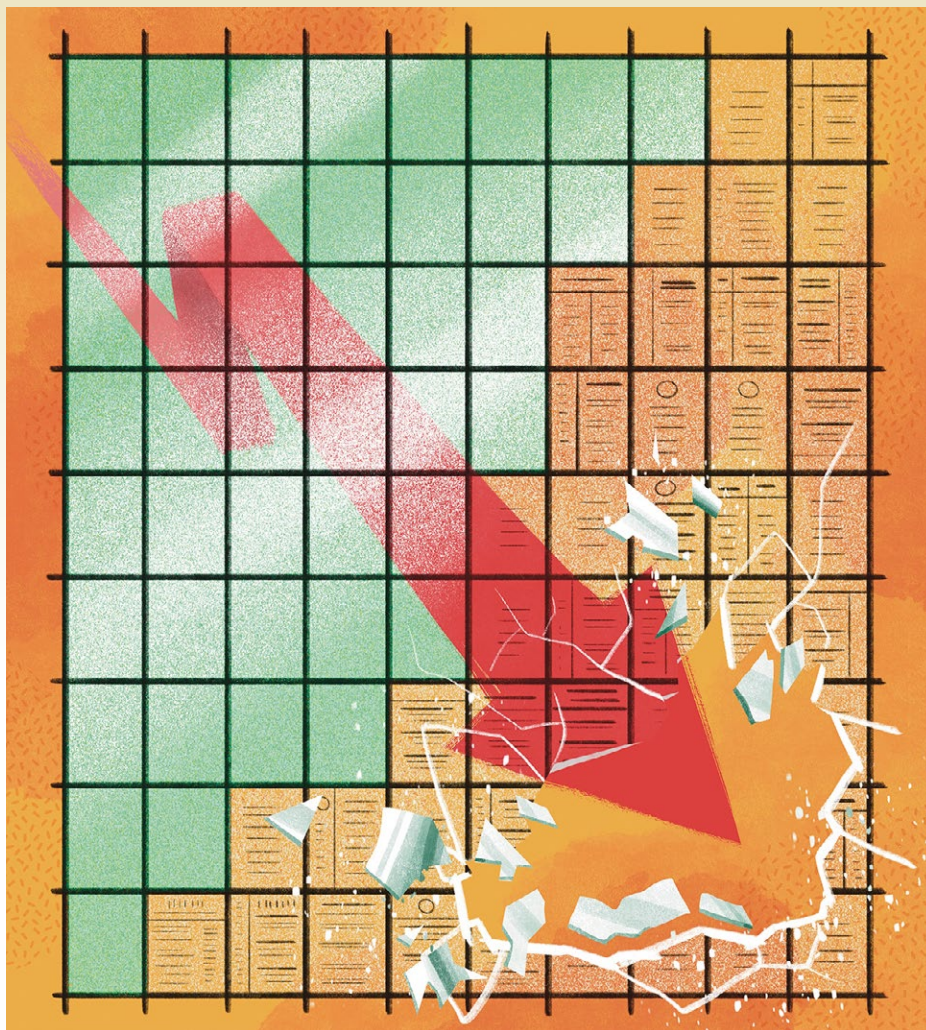
During the economic crisis of 2008, she says, library directors and other high-level administrators were less likely to retire; instead they wanted to weather the storm because of financial issues. Now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, "we're seeing more retirements, [and they are] for health reasons," Miller says. "When you're older, typically you're at the peak of your career. If you've been working for 30 years, you may be more likely to have health concerns"—particularly when a highly infectious disease is plaguing most of the globe.

Those seeking directorship positions may find themselves (relatively) spoiled for choice for an additional reason. Changing expectations of the director's role are making it "more difficult to attract and hire top-notch library leaders," says John Keister, who with his wife Beth owns library and nonprofit executive search firm John Keister and Associates in Vernon Hills, Illinois. "I have definitely seen the demand increase." In his view, "the pandemic has served as a disruptor—not only in the roles libraries play but also in terms of the skills you need to be successful as a library leader, the expectations library boards have for a library leader, and our perception of the role of the public library in the community."

He's thinking specifically of public libraries, where, he says, the expectations for directors have changed dramatically in the last year alone. "It used to be that to become a library director, it was also a role of keeping the lights on and books on the shelf," Keister says. "Now the public library director is an ambassador of the library to a community. This is not a happy thought, but when you're looking at a candidate for a director, if there was a tragedy at your library and CNN was parked outside, will that person be able to

keep their composure and speak on behalf of the library in a crisis? You have to be politically savvy now to be an effective library leader. I tell library boards: Everybody wants to be assistant director, but nobody wants to be director."

To help address this gap, Keister is encouraging library boards to consider a different type of applicant. "Most boards are like, 'We need someone who's got all this experience,' and I'm saying, 'No, look at the younger generation,'" he says. "They have passion. They have vision. And they know the expectations and the desires that their generation and young families need out of the public library."

He points to an analysis of Pew Research Center survey data from fall 2016 finding that 53% of millennials reported using a public library or bookmobile in the previous 12 months, compared with 45% of Gen Xers, 43% of baby boomers, and 36% of people over 70 (bit.ly/millslib). "Millennials are the most ardent library fans," he says.

THE MONTHS AHEAD

For lower-level library job seekers, is there any relief in sight? "From just an anecdotal perspective, I'm maintaining a positive perception," Perrello says. "As fiscal budgets are being renewed across the country after January 1, we're starting to see more and more entry-level professional LIS job postings suddenly starting to come back."

House's experience at INALJ bears that out. "The biggest thing I noticed right away when jobs started coming more regularly in the early autumn was that managerial and director-level positions were the first to come back at volume, followed by organizations cluster-hiring librarians—this may be due to previously suspended searches—followed very recently by

> ## "The pandemic has served as a disruptor—not only in the roles libraries play but also in terms of the skills you need to be successful as a library leader."

JOHN KEISTER, owner of library and nonprofit executive search firm John Keister and Associates in Vernon Hills, Illinois

seeing more staff positions that do not require an MLIS," she says.

The job market's current recovery is being fueled, Connolly says, by the ongoing rollout of COVID-19 vaccines as well as by the realization that funding has not plunged as drastically as many feared it would. "Last year, the contraction [in available jobs] was caused more by uncertainty about where we were and what would happen than it was by anything that had actually happened to budgets yet," he says. Now, in his view, "municipal governments and higher education institutions have not seen tax revenues fall as significantly as they worried they might. That's encouraging libraries to fill positions."

That said, he expects the job market recovery to level off at some point. "Obviously there's still going to be some caution [in hiring] for a while," he says. "I don't know quite at what point we're going to plateau. I've estimated that next year might run about 80% of normal."

Adds House: "It still feels like we are far from a true recovery or a pre-pandemic jobs level, but slowly getting there." AL
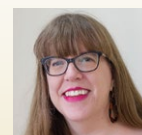
ANNE FORD is editor-at-large for *American Libraries.*

The Virtual Job Hunt

Here's how to stand out, both as
an applicant and an employer

BY Claire Zulkey

Gloria Vela, fresh from receiving her MLIS and earning her Texas school librarian certification, did all the right things when she applied for school librarian jobs. She set up a tidy workspace well-lit for Zoom interviews. She applied makeup, styled her hair, and made sure her 6-month-old miniature Australian shepherd, Olive, was out of audio range. She rehearsed and smiled and made eye contact and sent thank-you notes. But after 34 job applications, six interviews, some close calls but no bites—plus "some good cries"—Vela was burned out.

After a particularly tough rejection, she reached out to a librarian friend for moral support. "She said, 'You have it, but, by the way, there's this job that opened up at the last minute in my district,' which I didn't know about," Vela says. "So she put my name in."

It was Vela's 35th job application, and she knew she had to change something about her approach. Faced with a committee meeting, which tended to stress her out, Vela decided to create a 15-slide deck to lay out her communication style, plans to instill students with a love of reading, and ideas for library events and initiatives—all presentable in five minutes.

It worked. "This is my dream job," says Vela, now librarian and media specialist at Good Elementary School in Carrollton, Texas. "I'm so happy. I love what I do, every day."

As Vela experienced, it's a tough job market for applicants: "It is well documented that job losses have been staggering in 2020," Gretchen Kaser Corsillo, director of Rutherford (N.J.) Public Library, wrote in a December 29 article for Public Libraries Online. Corsillo, who was on both sides of the job market in 2020, noted that she had not seen so many part-time applicants since the 2008 recession.

Here are tips for both job hunters and recruiters on how to make the most of a job market that has been forever changed by COVID-19.

FOR APPLICANTS

Clean up your social media. Catherine Hakala-Ausperk, an Ohio-based writer, library trainer, and consultant, says you should assume that hiring supervisors will look you up on social media. "It's a window to the kind of person you are. If I look at your Facebook page and you're supporting one [political] party or another, fine,

that's America. But if you're calling one side names or are being vile? Next." Hakala-Ausperk advises job applicants to review at minimum the last 100 posts on their social media profile, if it's publicly viewable.

Use your network. Lean heavily on your library network throughout your job search. Former classmates, colleagues, and online buddies can help commiserate over the discouraging days, provide job-hunt or interview ideas, or, as in Vela's case, share news about openings. "I wouldn't have known unless I had reached out," she says.

Do your pre-interview research. With COVID-19, you can no longer spend hours in a library doing field research before an interview, so bone up on the library's website, social media channels, and press coverage. Does someone from your network know someone who has worked in this district? If so, says Hakala-Ausperk, "you can get an honest description. Is it stuffy? Is it rules-oriented? Do they appreciate the staff?" Hakala-Ausperk says that reviewing board minutes is another way to get details on the library's culture. "What is it focused on? What are the goals of the library?"

Niemah Verdun, HR coordinator at University of Michigan Library, says that smart job applicants review an institution's strategic frameworks and narratives, which are often posted in job descriptions. "Prepare ideas on what you can bring to the role that provide solutions to issues related to the mission goal," Verdun says. "If you can place yourself within our strategic framework and let us know you come with solutions and ideas that are in alignment with our goal, that can make you a standout candidate."

Prepare for a committee meeting. The stress of virtual group interviews made Vela feel like she wasn't presenting her authentic, friendly self. The slideshow helped her focus and felt less like "all eyes were on me," she says. Vela also found that sharing the well-rehearsed presentation cut down on instances of her saying "um" when nervous.

> "If I look at your Facebook page and you're supporting one [political] party or another, fine, that's America. But if you're calling one side names or are being vile? Next."
>
> **CATHERINE HAKALA-AUSPERK,** writer, library trainer, and consultant

Another way to prepare (and demonstrate preparation) for a group interview is to request the names of those who will be sitting in on the interview, says Verdun. Then, she advises, research what they do and who they are within the organization. "Get the best sense of how the people on that committee are going to interact with the job you applied for," she says. "They're on the committee for a reason."

Next, prepare questions for those particular people related to how you'll interact with them on the job. Verdun says that approach is "a hallmark of a really great committee interview."

Do a test run and show up early. Before an interview, run through a tech rehearsal with a friend or bored family member to make sure you are well-lit, audible, and familiar with the virtual platform. "If someone logs onto an interview 10 minutes

late because they couldn't figure out how to start Zoom, that doesn't tell me that they'll be super prepared in a library setting helping patrons with technology if that's part of the role," says Corsillo. She likes seeing someone's name show up indicating they're early for their meeting. "I knew they were prepared, and I didn't have to sit there worrying, 'Are they going to have a connection issue and put the whole thing behind schedule?'"
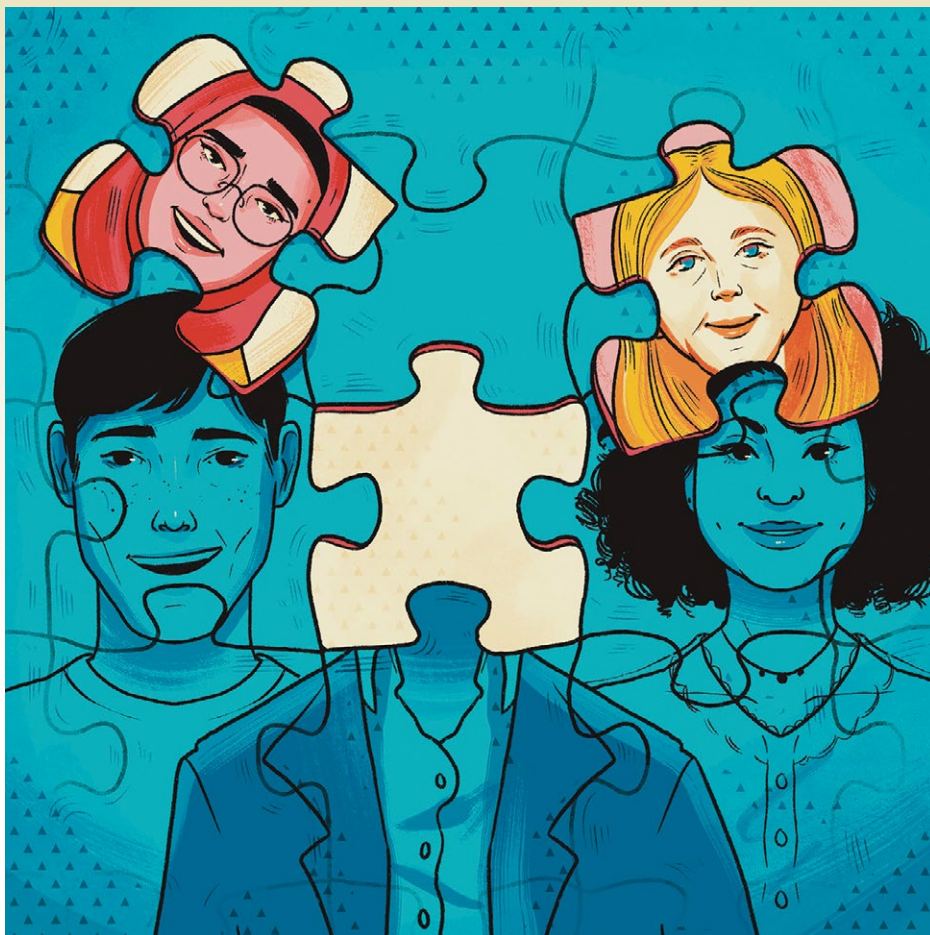
Corsillo has seen some applicants so dimly lit that she couldn't tell what they looked like. Also, the world is a stressful place, but you should still dress up for the job interview. "Candidates dressed the way they would for an in-person interview seemed a little more confident and comfortable," Corsillo says, adding that she has seen—and has questioned the judgment of—applicants who showed up in loungewear. "Even though this is virtual, it is still a professional situation."

Sell yourself in the interview.

Practice reiterating your real-life achievements at work. "You have to go overboard more than you would face to face," Hakala-Ausperk says of discussing how your achievements match the job's requirements.

Prepare examples of how you can be flexible during a pandemic—and beyond. "This last year was one of the first times where things were changing on a daily basis," says Corsillo. "I would look for employees who can roll with the punches." Corsillo became director of Rutherford Public Library at the end of 2020, when the library had pivoted to virtual programming, debuted curbside service, reopened, and gone fine-free.

Hakala-Ausperk agrees, saying job applicants should display an attitude of "Whatever you need me to do, I'm here." She says: "Be part of the flexible solution. When this is over and hiring supervisors are looking at internal promotions, they will remember the people who said, 'Don't apologize; just tell me what to do, and I'll do it.'"

Verdun suggests raising questions about the softer aspects of work, like parking, commuting, and the post-pandemic environment. "Ask about the fun things that the team does together. Try to get a feel for whether this is going to be a good place where you're going to feel comfortable. Is this something that's going to work for you?"

It's also fine, says Corsillo, to inquire about COVID-19 safety. "If the library is handling things in a good way, they should be pretty forthcoming with that information. If the interviewer was not forthcoming, that'd be a red flag."

Corsillo says that one way to stand out from other applicants is to show your enthusiasm. In the hiring she has done since the pandemic began, "everyone who was able to show that they're still excited about this—even though maybe there isn't that much to be excited about in the world right now—really showed that they wanted the position and they were willing to learn." Additionally, Corsillo says, if you're a humorous person, let it show. "Within reason, injecting some levity into an interview is good. Not necessarily telling a

stand-up routine, but little jokes here and there," she says.

Take a breath. Vela would sometimes find herself flustered on the committee calls, in which case she tried to remember to take deep breaths, even if it felt like it was taking up time. "It feels like an infinite amount of time sometimes, but … the committee realizes that this is technology and that gaps like that are okay."

Corsillo agrees: "If you encounter a question you need to think over, it's perfectly fine to say, 'I need a moment to think about that,' or 'Let me gather my thoughts for a moment.'"

And even if the dog barks or the screen freezes, take heart. "These days everybody knows that everybody's going through crazy things," says Hakala-Ausperk. "It's not going to deter anyone from hiring you if all of a sudden your doorbell rings or your child's there, as long as it's not overwhelming."

FOR HIRING MANAGERS

The subtle signs from body language, eye contact, and style choices are now less apparent in the interview process. Here's how to make the most of your hiring search.

Cut through the wave of applicants. Before you post a job description, create a profile of your perfect candidate, advises Hakala-Ausperk. "With your hiring team, go over what characteristics, skills, experiences you're looking for. Make a clear picture in your mind of what your ideal candidate is." You should create a profile that is at least half informed by community needs, she says. "What kind of puzzle piece is missing from your team? Then, stick to that," says Hakala-Ausperk. "Use that profile to create

"It's okay to acknowledge that everyone is feeling very stressed and it's taking a toll on everyone's mental health."

GRETCHEN KASER CORSILLO, director of Rutherford (N.J.) Public Library

your advertisement, to create your interview questions, to create your scoring grid, and to guide your final decision." This type of distinct profile, she says, can keep you focused on what you really need rather than being distracted by attractive traits that are not must-haves.

Drill down in interviews. Ask candidates to provide examples of how they can meet your particular needs. "Some places will begin a very generic, wide-ranging interview," Hakala-Ausperk says. "Like, 'Tell me about yourself.' But if I'm looking for somebody who can pivot, who can run this department and maybe that department, if someone else calls in sick, I need to ask my questions so they're pointed enough to determine the skills I'm looking for." Ask how the interviewee prepared for the interview. Pointed questions, she says, will save time. "I don't want the applicant to end up in a job that makes them unhappy any more than I want the library to end up with someone who's unhappy with the job."

Lead with empathy. Vela says that interviewers who smiled and bantered helped put her at ease. From the recruiter's perspective, it's a good idea to ask applicants "something to take their mind off the interview for a second," says Verdun, who recommends beginning an interview with an icebreaker. "What are they going to do to blow off steam after the interview? There's so much tension sometimes.

I remember when I was interviewing, and I'd think, 'I can't wait to get some good food after this.'"

Mentioning the extraordinary times we're currently facing can be a clue to your library's culture, says Corsillo. "It's okay to acknowledge that everyone is feeling very stressed and it's taking a toll on everyone's mental health. It'd be helpful [for interviewees to know] that they'd be working in a compassionate environment and they're not going to be left to fend for themselves."

POST-PANDEMIC LESSONS

Virtual job interviews are not going away, predict Corsillo and Verdun, who see them being used at least as a screening tool even after the pandemic. This has prompted Verdun's office at University of Michigan Library to research, review, and revise its recruiting practices, particularly with regard to how diversity, equity, and inclusion are considered in its hiring. Not everyone has easy access to a quality computer camera or a quiet, well-lit room, for instance. "We are really into finding the best practices to make recruiting more inclusive and making sure we're reaching out to everyone we can," says Verdun.

Corsillo says that librarians' natural ability to manage change makes them "uniquely equipped" to adapt to the altered job landscape and to make the best of it. "Librarians have a pretty long history of doing more with less and figuring out creative ways to offer the services we need to offer with fewer resources. I think that makes us predisposed to being flexible." **AL**

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

Serving the Community at All Times

Cultural inclusivity programming during a pandemic

BY Nicanor Diaz, Virginia Vassar Aggrey, and Naghem Swade

I n early March 2020—before the COVID-19 pandemic struck the US in full—a typical Tuesday evening at the Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales branch of Denver Public Library (DPL) would bustle with activity, the smell of coffee brewing, and the murmurs of many voices.

Some people would practice English together, while others worked on homework assignments or drilled civics flashcards to prepare for their US citizenship exams. This was the Plaza program in action—weekly programming designed to build community and make immigrant and refugee newcomers feel welcome at DPL.

DPL's Cultural Inclusivity Department is tasked with developing programs that help connect the library with its immigrant community. The department's mission is to "collaborat[e] with Denver's multicultural community to create equitable opportunities for learning, discovery, and connection." This is done through Plaza and other intentional multicultural programming.

DPL's Plaza program has existed for more than a decade. Its initial aim was to help Spanish speakers find the resources they needed. Over the years, the program has expanded, now representing more than 15 languages spoken in Denver.

Before COVID-19, the 11 branches supporting Plaza provided 48 total hours of programming each week: English conversation tables, naturalization support, immigration legal help, job search assistance, and computer help, as well as activities for kids that allowed families to work and play in the same space. The Plaza program served approximately 25,000 participants a year; people from different parts of the world engaged with one another, learning things and building relationships. Then, the entire program shut down overnight because of the pandemic.

Knowing the importance of this programming and the community it cultivated, Plaza's 40 staffers quickly pivoted and learned to facilitate online. Within six weeks, staff members were leading six online conversation tables each week, as well as a citizenship study group and appointment services.

Pandemic programming opportunities

COVID-19 created many new barriers, but as some obstacles sprung up, others disappeared. Some participants in the now-online groups could never make it to a library because of prohibitively long bus journeys or unforgiving work schedules that are day-to-day realities for many in our immigrant and refugee communities. Many older adults faced health concerns or mobility issues that prevented
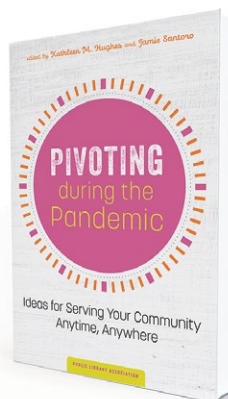
This is an excerpt from *Pivoting during the Pandemic: Ideas for Serving Your Community Anytime, Anywhere,* edited by Kathleen M. Hughes and Jamie Santoro (ALA Editions, 2021).

their attendance. Suddenly, these patrons were able to participate from the comfort and safety of home. Online groups are also attractive for those who are shy or introverted. A surprising number of new faces began participating in the Plaza program since the pandemic closed in-person gatherings. Staff members have also found creative ways to facilitate engaging conversations online. Adult Education Lead Kalid Al-Rajhi has taken his group on virtual museum tours. Together, they have explored the Louvre and the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, zooming in to read plaques and discuss what they observed.

Staffers have helped customers use their digital devices for new purposes. Now, when a new participant joins a group, others often step in to help them get connected. Each time it gets a little easier.

The training around resources helps staffers connect the program's participants with other organizations. When the quarantine began, DPL worked with organizations across the city to create and maintain a list of service interruptions caused by COVID-19; that list is now used by more than 1,200 immigrant and refugee service providers in the metro area.

Online obstacles

Despite the connections these groups have fostered, staffers are still aware that for each person engaged, many more are left isolated and alone without computers, internet access, or the tech skills needed to join an online class.

To fill the gaps, DPL staff improvised a new appointment system to reach people weekly, mostly over the phone, to help with English-language skills, citizenship, technology access, unemployment insurance, and more.

"It's a big challenge to start from square one by phone with a new English speaker," says Amy Van Vranken, an

activities leader at DPL who hosts weekly calls with newly settled refugees. Every Plaza staffer speaks at least two languages, and Van Vranken uses French to aid in her communication. "Being able to have class by phone has filled a tech gap for a customer who doesn't have a computer," she says. "I'm grateful for his patience and determination."

Amanda Savasky, head of Plaza's citizenship programs, described what she has learned about online teaching: "There are fewer social cues—facial and body cues—to guide the flow of conversation." DPL staffers have learned how much work it can take to create a natural feeling of spontaneity online or over the phone, but they remain committed to providing this access for immigrant and refugee patrons.

Cultural inclusivity programming

Naghem Swade is cultural inclusivity services coordinator at DPL. She collaborates with many community organizations and partners to create and implement mindful programs that serve Denver's multicultural communities. Programs such as Lunar New Year, Stories of Light, Día del Niño, Día del Libro, and Día de los Muertos aim to establish trusting and authentic relationships with underrepresented community members in the city. But transitioning to virtual programming has been a challenge.

Virtual spaces are not always equitable, nor are they always accessible given technological barriers. Another challenge of virtual programming has been engaging with the audiences that would benefit from them. Traditional public library engagement with immigrant and refugee communities has been mostly through English-acquisition programs and naturalization efforts. DPL's aim is to create a foundation where library spaces can cater to the individual and collective needs of community members without enforcing our personal biases and assumptions of what some of those members might need.

Our initial efforts were focused on transitioning the Plaza program to an online model, while continuing to explore how to provide multicultural programming to community members. One such program that Swade

> ### Even with freezing screens, audio glitches, and faulty microphones, a moment of connection is a truly worthwhile endeavor.

Denver Public Library Program Associate Amanda Savasky (left) and Activity Leader Johana Blatherwick (center) give a free book to a family at Denver Public Schools' Montbello campus in November 2020.

developed was Satrangi: Seven Stories of Light, a virtual dance series that features global narratives celebrating joy and resilience.

Outreach during the pandemic

After a couple of months of virtual programming, some Plaza staffers began doing outreach at an apartment complex that houses immigrants. During these events, staffers talk with community members about their needs, provide free books, promote virtual events, and support the residents with tech access. The library provides Chromebooks with hotspots so patrons can access the internet and perform vital tasks like registering their children for school. One of the challenges for outreach during this time was developing guidelines that would ensure the safety of both staff and visitors while still engaging with the community. DPL's mobile services department, which was in the field early in April, developed COVID-19 health and safety guidelines for outreach, such as wearing masks at all times, sanitizing and bagging books, maintaining six feet of distance with customers, and displaying books rather than handing them to patrons. Plaza staffers teamed up with their department to bring resources to the apartment complex.

Since the start of the pandemic, DPL staffers have expressed the need to connect with Plaza program

participants in person. This has been one of the biggest challenges they have faced during the pandemic. As of March, staffers are doing outreach at five locations on a weekly basis, and while this doesn't reach the large number of people they reached before the pandemic, it is a step in the right direction.

Supporting staff

As the library figured out how to better serve patrons during the pandemic, it quickly became clear that staff members also faced technical challenges of their own. Staffers who didn't have internet access at home were able to borrow hotspots and Chromebooks in order to work remotely. Many also benefitted from new training modules designed for virtual programming, while the library began working on its policies for this type of programming. These policies were developed to address concerns about confidentiality, accessibility, and privacy, particularly regarding Zoom and its security vulnerabilities.

Another concern addressed in the guidelines included which online platform to use for virtual programs. Each digital platform comes with its own pros and cons, and DPL needed to use the one that best fit the needs of

participants and staff. For example, Google Meet may be preferable when doing a program that relies on small group discussions, while Zoom may work better for larger groups.

Offering services during the pandemic has certainly been challenging for DPL, but it has taught staffers to slow down, take tasks one at a time, and be patient with one another. In doing so, they have developed new relationships and forged deeper connections with and among patrons from Denver's immigrant and refugee communities. After all, through shared challenges, empathy grows. Even with freezing screens, audio glitches, and faulty microphones, a moment of connection is a truly worthwhile endeavor. AL

NICANOR DIAZ is Denver Public Library's (DPL) immigrant services manager and head of the Cultural Inclusivity Department. He has worked in libraries with underserved populations for more than 15 years. **VIRGINIA VASSAR AGGREY** is Plaza program manager at DPL. **NAGHEM SWADE** is cultural inclusivity services coordinator at DPL.

What Does Diversity Mean?

Crafting inclusive policy
to model equity

BY Andrea Jamison

ANDREA JAMISON is assistant professor of teaching and learning at Illinois State University and chair of ALA's Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table.

As part of my dissertation in 2020, I researched the collection development policies of academic libraries. I looked specifically at universities and colleges with American Library Association (ALA)–accredited LIS programs that offer master's degrees or library programs with concentrations or career pathways in children's services. It was important to situate this study within this context because these types of library programs provide the requisite skills and training needed for the selection and acquisition of children's books. Academic libraries with children's collections that support these types of programs can and should serve as models for collection practices. Library students who encounter these collections will have opportunities to gain insight that can be applied to their professional practice.

My study aimed to determine whether sampled policies had manifest messages of diversity and the degree of congruence between these policies and ALA's "Diversity in Collection Development: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights," adopted in 1982 and last amended in 2019. Given that diversity is one of the core values of librarianship and extant literature shows that inequities persist in children's literature, it was important to identify how certain libraries address diversity. Through policy examination, library workers can identify systems or practices that either perpetuate or mitigate systems of inequity.

Study results indicated that while sampled policies articulated messages of diversity, many lacked either specificity or embeddedness. Policies lacking specificity did contain the term *diversity* but lacked the presence of other words that would make the meaning clear.

Diversity is a broad term. It can be used to describe a multiplicity of differences, experiences, or identities. Some of the policies I examined contained broad diversity statements that allude to either a "diverse collection" or a "commitment to diversity." However, these statements were too general to derive any real meaning from and did not mention the types of diverse materials or communities included in their collections.

To be fully understood, diversity has to be specified. For example, one library's collection development policy stated: "Our collection focuses on women, diversity, and leadership." No other words were used to help interpret the meaning of "diversity." It could denote diversity of thought, political beliefs, or material format. It could also reflect a diversity of people in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, language, ability, age, or experience. Given the level of ambiguity here, it is not clear which elements exist within this library's collection.

I also examined policies that had clearer messages of diversity but wherein diversity was not embedded throughout the policy, meaning they often had a single statement of diversity that was siloed into one section. As an example, one policy's vision statement mentioned diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, and language. The policy also named a specific racial group that was featured as part of a special collection. However, this message was relegated to only four sentences within the 39-page document. If *diversity* is invoked only in standalone phrases that do not recur throughout the document, that raises questions about its importance and effectiveness.

> To be fully understood, diversity has to be specified.

The goal of a collection development policy is to outline rules, protocols, or conventions that direct how collection practices should be carried out (*Collection Development for a New Century in the School Library Media Center,* Libraries Unlimited, 2002). Policies that have specific messages of diversity and incorporate those messages throughout will have more explicit guidelines for building library collections that are fair, equitable, and aligned with library standards and core values (bit.ly/AL-SchoolLibMgr).

As academic librarians, if we are going to model equity, we must begin crafting inclusive policies that are explicit and extend beyond empty statements of diversity. AL

Inclusive Media

Making online videos
accessible for all patrons

BY Carli Spina

CARLI SPINA is associate professor and head of research and instructional services at the Fashion Institute of Technology Library in New York City.

How many times a day do you encounter online videos? Whether you're catching up on news, scanning social media feeds, or following a favorite blog, video is likely central to your everyday online experience.

The tech company Cisco predicts that by 2022, video will account for 82% of all internet traffic. In recent years, large libraries have jumped on this trend, producing recorded author events, tutorials, and promotional videos; since the pandemic began, the popularity of online videos has exploded even further.

Ubiquitous as it is, much video content remains inaccessible to viewers with disabilities, particularly those who have lost vision or hearing. Only a small fraction of online videos have basic accessibility features, such as captions, and even those are rarely fully accessible to all viewers.

To respond to the needs of all patrons and offer an inclusive experience, it is vital that libraries address these gaps. Libraries can take several steps in this regard:

Include captions, transcripts, or both. From an accessibility perspective, captions and transcripts let viewers with hearing loss read along. Captions and transcripts can also help English-language learners, viewers in noisy environments (a common issue during the pandemic, when many of us are working and learning from home), and those who simply prefer to read rather than listen.

Captions and transcripts are sometimes seen as an either-or option, but offering both on all videos provides maximum accessibility. The nonprofit Amara (amara.org) offers free captioning and subtitle software; it also supports collaborative creation and editing of files.

Consider visual accessibility. It's equally important to make videos accessible to users with visual impairments—particularly if the content is not offered in other formats.

One approach is to make sure that the audio portion of the video describes everything important that appears on screen. (This is particularly useful for tutorials and instructional videos.) Where this is impractical, audio descriptions—brief descriptions of on-screen activity, timed to fit within the audio track's natural pauses—can help.

The free tool YouDescribe (bit.ly/AL-YouDescribe), designed by the Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Institute, creates audio descriptions for existing YouTube videos. And the free, browser-based tool CADET (bit.ly/AL-CADET) can create captions and write timed scripts for audio descriptions.

Evaluate your video player and content. For video files to be accessible, your library's video player must be accessible, too. The first step: auditing for accessibility any video players your library uses and addressing any issues that are found. One consideration for video content is the likelihood of flashing lights to cause seizures in people with epilepsy. The Trace Research and Development Center at University of Maryland, which studies technology and disability, offers a free Photosensitive Epilepsy Analysis Tool (trace.umd.edu/peat) that can identify content that is at high risk of causing photosensitive seizures.

Prioritize accessibility in your video collection development. In addition to videos created internally by your library, videos that are purchased or included in subscriptions must be accessible as well. Adding this evaluation to your collection development workflows can help your library better meet the needs of your patrons.

Video accessibility is often overlooked or perceived as costly or difficult, but straightforward steps and cost-effective approaches can help you offer a more inclusive video experience. This is a vital step toward ensuring that the library's online presence remains accessible and usable for all patrons.

Adapted from "Video Accessibility," Library Technology Reports vol. 57, no. 3 (Apr. 2021). Read more at bit.ly/ALA-LTR. AL

> Only a small fraction of online videos have basic accessibility features, such as captions.

Summer Reading Realities

Many libraries are entering round two of summer reading in a pandemic

BY Robbi Caldwell

ROBBI CALDWELL is information services manager at Brownsburg (Ind.) Public Library.

Preparing for summer reading is usually a year-round activity that kicks into high gear in the spring. But last year, as the COVID-19 pandemic gripped the US, preparations ground to a halt.

Brownsburg (Ind.) Public Library, where I work, abruptly closed last March. As was the case with many libraries, when we realized the virus wasn't going away, we had to decide if we wanted to cancel our summer reading program or adapt it to our new normal.

We went ahead with summer reading to give our patrons something they could depend on amid the upheaval in our world. Our library reopened with limited services in June, but we stuck to a mostly virtual program. Though we wrapped with only 25% of our typical registration numbers, we learned a lot about our services and how we reach our patrons.

This year, as communities grapple with different realities and safety mandates—and libraries find themselves tackling their first or second summer reading program during the pandemic—I wanted to share how we handled tracking, promotion and prizes, and programming when our building was closed or capacities were limited.

Tracking. Last year we used an app called Beanstack for summer reading. Fortunately, we had discussed moving to an online tracking system before the pandemic. We were previously paper-only, but virtual is an easier option for most during a public health crisis. Though the app is easy to use, the transition involved a learning curve for staffers and participants alike. Plus, I still created paper trackers, which we distributed via mail, email, and curbside pickup.

This year it will be important for libraries to balance analog and virtual options, even as communities move toward some semblance of reintegration. Though many libraries have reopened, many patrons prefer curbside services and haven't been in our buildings since before the pandemic. To reach everyone, we need to be as accessible as possible.

Promotion and prizes. Two years ago, we created a promotional video for our summer reading program that media specialists at local schools could share during students' library time. In 2020 we created another video, but with schools closed, it wasn't viewed by as many patrons.

Last year we also ordered prizes knowing that many of our usual sponsors were hit by the economic downturn and wouldn't be able to donate. We decided to mail prizes to avoid additional in-person interactions. I sent out new sponsorship letters, giving businesses the option to help promote the program if they couldn't back it financially.

> This year it will be important for libraries to balance analog and virtual options, even as we move toward reintegration.

This year we plan to create a new video and use last year's leftover prizes. We will not be mailing prizes, which was costly. We will offer curbside pickup of prizes and continue to offer businesses nonmonetary ways to support us. For example, this winter we gave sponsors the chance to be a location in a book-themed scavenger hunt. We hope these alternatives give our local economy a boost and encourage future donations.

Programming. We never could have imagined how successful our virtual programs and take-and-make kits—such as our storytime shaker craft, our teen cooking club, and school-age mystery sets—would be with new and returning participants. We quickly learned this was an effective way to reach patrons who were unable to attend summer reading activities at a scheduled time, while our regular users told us they were just happy to see their favorite librarians or discover a new type of program.

As we discuss safely returning to in-person programming, we plan to continue our virtual and socially distanced options. For libraries still not convening indoors, consider live and recorded videos, passive programs, and take-and-make kits.

Overall, what did we learn from summer reading in a pandemic? It's an opportunity—take it. Remember to be flexible, offer a little something for everyone, and don't worry if it doesn't go as planned. AL

Tools for the Job

The role of libraries
in upskilling adults

BY Fatma Ghailan

FATMA GHAILAN
is assistant
director of
Queens (N.Y.)
Public Library.

L ibraries have long been seen as safe havens for students, providing homework assistance and summer reading programs. Over the last decade, libraries have continued to embrace their role in training adults as well, offering them ways to learn digital skills that employers desperately need.

According to *America's Libraries: Powering Broadband Adoption, Access, and Use,* a 2016 report from the American Library Association, about 90% of public libraries offer digital literacy training programs through which community members can engage in job preparation and gain new skills to aid in career advancement. The report also notes that those who receive formal training, as opposed to informal assistance from family or friends, are significantly more likely to use the internet to pursue economic opportunities and cultivate social ties.

Less often discussed, however, is how libraries can help overcome barriers to communication, which are a major factor in our country's digital divide. Of the 23.3 million US adults with limited proficiency in English, only 718,000 are enrolled in English language and literacy courses through existing adult education programs, according to a 2018 Migration Policy Institute brief. This gap presents a serious hurdle for these residents, from communicating efficiently within their broader communities to finding stable, well-paying work. Working-age adults with limited English proficiency earn on average between 25% and 40% less than those with greater proficiency, a 2014 Brookings Institution report found.

Libraries have the opportunity to meet new Americans at the intersection of workforce development and language training, starting with language education that is career-specific. At Queens (N.Y.) Public Library (QPL), we offer several English-language programs targeted to both general audiences and prospective employees. Two of our Learn English for Work programs, administered through the e-learning platform Voxy EnGen, specifically focus on English for career paths in health care and technology. Both courses place the words, phrases, and grammar within a specific work context, greatly improving trainees' chances of truly learning the language— not just memorizing key vocabulary.

In the training course for home health aides, for example, students learn about the specific responsibilities of the role, such as becoming familiar with common medical conditions and understanding directions from pharmacologists. In the technology course, students study best practices and real-life examples of providing IT support via

telephone, email, live chat, and social media.

But meeting the demand for English-language learning is more than just training courses. It requires investing in strong partnerships between our libraries and the communities we serve to create a talent pipeline between immigrants and local employers.

At QPL, for example, we help connect students who have completed our English-language course in health care with reputable home care agencies. On the last day of training, agencies give a brief presentation to students and provide potential applicants with the necessary documentation to move forward with home health aide training. For graduates in other sectors, we provide a dedicated case manager who can assist with job searches, online applications, and mock interviews. These full- and part-time library staffers are partially funded by grants under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, a program of the US Department of Labor.

> Libraries are often the first place many immigrants will go for information or help.

Libraries are often the first place many immigrants will go for information or help. With the right resources, support, and partnerships, libraries can help bridge the language gap and extend economic opportunity to millions of new Americans and job seekers. AL

Pandemic Pivoting, Continued

More resources to help adapt services during COVID-19

ALLISON ESCOTO is head librarian at the Center for Fiction in Brooklyn, New York.
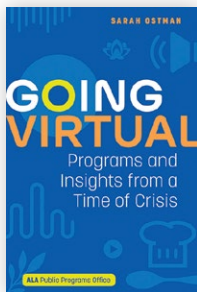
Going Virtual: Programs and Insights from a Time of Crisis

By Sarah Ostman

Going Virtual is a timely, practical guide that offers pragmatic advice and creative examples of programs for communities of all sizes and types. Divided into four sections—learning, conversation, connection, and entertainment—this book provides a wealth of ideas for programs that can be run virtually. Ranging from programs that encourage community building through group activities, to creative crafting for children and adults, to educational sessions that focus on an organization's relevance to users and employees during the pandemic, this title contains a wide array of ideas to inspire library staff. ALA Editions, 2021. 120 p. $35. PBK. 978-0-8389-4878-1.
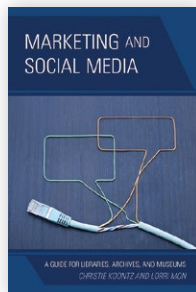
Marketing and Social Media: A Guide for Libraries, Archives, and Museums, 2nd edition

By Christie Koontz and Lorri Mon

Social media and marketing are integral to a library's community engagement. Perhaps more than ever, patrons rely on social media to discover programs and services offered by their community institutions. Seasoned library marketers and beginners alike will benefit from this book. Offering a comprehensive breakdown of the many facets of running effective social media marketing campaigns, from conception to analysis, this exhaustive guide is a valuable reference tool for getting the word out about programs and services. Library marketing staffers interested in fine-tuning their outreach and strategies will want this on their reference shelf. Rowman and Littlefield, 2020. 310 p. $99. PBK. 978-0-8108-9081-7. (Also available as an ebook.)
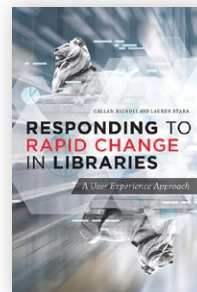
Responding to Rapid Change in Libraries: A User Experience Approach

By Callan Bignoli and Lauren Stara

The ability and willingness of libraries to embrace change takes focus, according to *Responding to Rapid Change in Libraries* (for an excerpt, see Mar./Apr., p. 44). Relying on the core tenets of librarianship being "grounded in user experience principles, attitudes, and practices," the authors posit that, while change can be disruptive and unsettling within the scope of library work, developing and maintaining a strategy to manage these inevitable shifts is not only possible but also necessary. Part philosophical discussion of the profession, part practical guide targeting specific areas (including technology), part deliberation on how to manage change, this is a topical and multilayered read. ALA Editions, 2021. 136 p. $50. PBK. 978-0-8389-4835-4.

BY Allison Escoto

## Spreadsheets for Librarians

By Bruce White

While working from home, organization and collaboration are vital to maintaining effective library services—but spreadsheets, a common organizational tool, are often underused. Enter *Spreadsheets for Librarians,* the perfect handbook for honing the practical skills of mapping out workflows and information through spreadsheet programs. Written with both beginners and experienced users in mind, this informative reference offers hands-on lessons in working with Microsoft Excel and Google Sheets and explores how these tools can be used for library-specific areas, including collection development and assessment. With clear explanations and library-work relevance, this perennially insightful guide will be especially helpful to those working remotely. Libraries Unlimited, 2021. 305 p. $50. 978-1-4408-6931-0. (Also available as an ebook.)

Make Virtual Meetings Matter

By Paul Axtell

Written with an eye toward streamlining and improving the efficacy of meeting remotely, this text discusses real ways to implement changes that will encourage productivity and collaboration. As more and more library staffers find themselves working offsite, holding meetings that accomplish work-related goals while maintaining the camaraderie that comes naturally when meeting in person is an increasingly common issue. Delving into the basic foundations and techniques that can make meetings more constructive and fulfilling, Axtell tailors this information for the virtual sphere. From fostering new perspectives on the purpose of meetings to emphasizing the importance of clear, concise, and open communication, this slim volume delivers an abundance of applicable advice. Sourcebooks, 2020. 96 p. $10. 978-1-7282-3583-7.
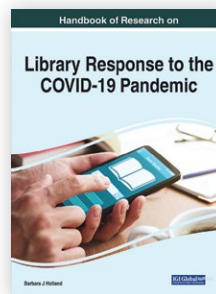
Handbook of Research on Library Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

By Barbara Holland

Expansive, informative, and collaborative, the *Handbook of Research on Library Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic* takes a scholarly approach to understanding how libraries are transforming during this global health emergency. Chapters highlight a range of topics—leadership during crises, data management, and virtual programming, among many others—and there is excellent representation of library types from around the world. Those looking for case studies as well as broader discussions of how technology has been affected by COVID-19 will find this title illuminating. IGI Global, 2021. 537 p. $209. 978-1-7998-6449-3. (Also available as an ebook.) AL

Target Acquired

Marketing and analytics for your library

BY Carrie Smith

Digital marketing and communications have changed dramatically in the past several years. Data now plays a much greater role in reaching intended audiences, and a new generation of marketing and analysis platforms created specifically for libraries aims to support patron outreach through email and demographic analysis. These tools can help libraries target communications about their services more effectively and understand how patrons engage with programs and collections. Here, library workers share their experiences with three of these platforms.

Gale Engage provides dashboard visualizations of library data.

Gale Engage

USER: RITI GROVER
Director at Farmington (Mich.) Community Library

What is Gale Engage? Gale Engage is a marketing and analysis tool designed to optimize the library's effectiveness through data analysis and dashboard visualizations that enable library staff to best focus their efforts within the community.

How do you use it? We use Gale Engage to assess current and future demands of the community so we can place ourselves strategically and evolve for changing demographics and needs. We've trained a team to upload, integrate, assess, analyze, and interpret the data that we get from Gale Engage. We use this information to ensure we're marketing our services correctly and strategically.

What are the main benefits? We can upload any data that we have and are willing to share. That includes any integrated library system (ILS) statistics, such as circulation numbers. That gives us insight into collection usage on a physical level plus digital content like ebooks, streaming services, and databases. Gale Engage also lets us upload our programming data to see which programs have received the best response in our community. All these things help us optimize our efforts and staff time to provide services that matter most. In terms of demographics, it helps us analyze where we have been doing well and where we've not: Are we serving all socioeconomic strata, educational levels, and age groups?

What would you like to see improved or added? The interface is simple to use, but users must have the expertise and knowledge to know what can be uploaded and how to do it. The learning curve can be long. It's not easy to compile statistics on program attendance, and that data import has been a challenge.

SUBMISSIONS
Want to review a product you're using?
Contact Carrie Smith at casmith@ala.org.

OCLC Wise

USER: LOGAN MACDONALD
Director of products and technology at Anythink Libraries in Thornton, Colorado

What is OCLC Wise? OCLC Wise is a customer engagement system that blends marketing, analytics, and relationship management tools with traditional ILS functionality.

How do you use it? OCLC Wise helps the library understand our customers on a personal level so we can better meet their needs based on information they choose to share. We use Wise's engagement tools to communicate with customers about programs, services, and materials that may be of interest to them. We can identify groups of customers by the interests they share with the library through selections they make in their account in the Wise online catalog or by choosing to share their borrowing history. We also use Wise for traditional ILS transactions. Our next project is setting up and using its collection analysis tools to help both selectors and branch staff make decisions about purchasing and displaying materials.

Users can share their areas of interest in their Wise account.

What are the main benefits? Wise has helped refine how we approach our relationships with customers and allowed us to design more personalized experiences. Wise also offers many management tools in one platform, simplifying the work of staff and eliminating the need to learn multiple user interfaces for marketing, reports, collection analysis, point-of-sale, and other tasks.

What would you like to see improved or added to the service? One of Anythink's goals for 2021 is to use data available in OCLC Wise to create opportunities for customers to connect with one another. I would like to see further development of the marketing tools to provide additional options for communicating with customers.
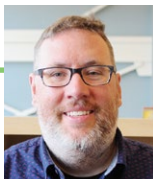
Patron Point

USER: LAURA SAUSER
Community manager at Urbandale (Iowa) Public Library

What is Patron Point? Patron Point is a marketing automation platform for public libraries. The system connects with your ILS and allows you to create and send personalized, professional messaging (notices, surveys, newsletters, and others) via email.

How do you use Patron Point? Right now, we mainly use it for our monthly newsletter, which highlights services as they have changed over the last few months, what's available, and our events. The first thing we set up in Patron Point was an automated welcome campaign that sends emails to new library cardholders about all the things they can learn and do at our library. When a new cardholder is put into our ILS, Patron Point automatically starts sending those emails. We also have campaigns around library card renewals and sign-ups.
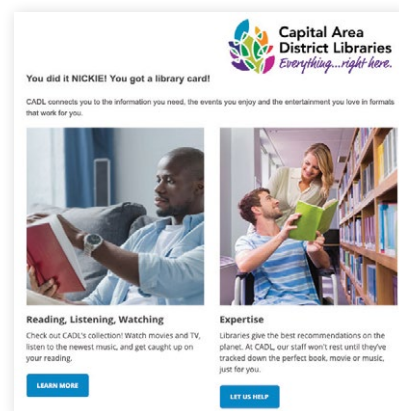
What are the main benefits? Often, the communications that are generated through your ILS are not very friendly or attractive. Patron Point allows us to share professional-looking information with patrons. It also allows us to reach a large number of patrons quickly, which was important this year. It helps us build relationships with patrons in a different way. We're really looking forward to when we reopen and can use the product to make these relationships even stronger.

What would you like to see improved or added? Patron Point has been working to make the email editor more intuitive. I'd also like to be able to create a print-friendly version of our newsletter. I'd love to be able to archive PDFs of our newsletter on our website. We also have patrons who don't have computer access or who request paper copies. AL

Patron Point will automatically send a welcome email when a new cardholder is entered into the system.

PEOPLE _Announcements_

ON THE MOVE

Wright Adams started as director of Cleveland County (N.C.) Memorial Library in October.

Steve Brindza was appointed director of Mount Sterling (Ohio) Public Library effective February 1.

In December **Pam Calfo** started as director of Plum (Pa.) Borough Community Library.

Dennis Clark became chief of research and reference services at the Library of Congress in January.

In January **Tiffany Flores** joined Eastern Shore Public Library in Accomac, Virginia, as youth services librarian.

In September **Selena Harmon** joined Unicoi County (Tenn.) Public Library as director.

Trever Jayne became director of Adel (Iowa) Public Library January 1.

January 25 **Alexander Lent** became director of Leominster (Mass.) Public Library.

Dani Rein joined Greenwood (Nebr.) Public Library as director in October.

December 14 **Cathleen Russ** started as director of West Bloomfield Township (Mich.) Public Library.

East Hampton (Conn.) Public Library appointed **Stephanie Smith** adult/young adult librarian effective in January.

Meredith Wickham joined Southwest Public Libraries in Grove City, Ohio, as director January 25.

PROMOTIONS

Baldwin Public Library in Birmingham, Michigan, promoted **Rebekah Craft** to library director January 16.

Oak Park (Ill.) Public Library promoted **Alex Gutierrez** to teen services librarian in December.

Beatrice (Nebr.) Public Library promoted **Joanne Neemann** to director December 21.

Denisse Ortega was promoted to senior librarian/supervisor at Nogales–Santa Cruz County (Ariz.) Public Library in November.

Nogales–Santa Cruz County (Ariz.) Public Library promoted **Laura Rodriguez** to children's coordinator in November.

Leslie Sharp was promoted to dean of Georgia Tech Library in Atlanta July 1.

Granville (Ohio) Public Library promoted **Emily Shellhouse** to director January 3.

RETIREMENTS

In December **Clara N. Bohrer** retired as director of West Bloomfield Township (Mich.) Public Library.

Cathy Carpenter, head of campus engagement at Georgia Tech Library in Atlanta, retired in January.

Diane Dermody retired as manager of the Highland branch of Medina County (Ohio) District Library in December.

Greenwood (Nebr.) Public Library Director **Karen Frank** retired in October.

Valerie Funderberg, reference librarian at Russell Library in Middletown, Connecticut, retired in December.

Kudos

In January **Bruce Henson** retired as associate dean for research and outreach at Georgia Tech Library in Atlanta.

December 31 **Paula James** retired as director of Adel (Iowa) Public Library.

Marilyn Klingensmith retired as director of Plum (Pa.) Borough Community Library in December.

Doug Koschik, library director at Baldwin Public Library in Birmingham, Michigan, retired January 15.

Children's Librarian **Laura Larsen** retired from Russell Library in Middletown, Connecticut, in December.

In December **Jennifer Livingston** retired as director of Marin County (Calif.) Free Library's Point Reyes branch.

Tisha Mitchell, librarian at Nay Ah Shing School in Onamia, Minnesota, retired in November.
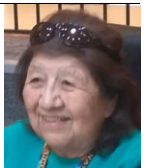
Vicky Moore retired as manager of the Osage Beach branch of Camden County (Mo.) Library District January 1.

In October **Laureen Riedesel,** director of Beatrice (Nebr.) Public Library, retired.

Gail Roy retired in January as assistant dean of learning resources at Northern Maine Community College Library in Presque Isle.

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

MORE ONLINE
americanlibraries.org/currents

In Memory

Sheila Kirven, education services librarian and associate professor at Congressman Frank J. Guarini Library at New Jersey City University, died January 9. She held positions at several libraries in New York and New Jersey.

William "Terry" Lajaunie, 49, assistant director of Lamar County (Miss.) Library System, died December 3. The Mississippi Library Association has announced plans to establish an annual scholarship in his name.

Seoud Makram Matta, 83, dean emeritus of the School of Information at Pratt Institute of Technology in New York City, died November 24. Matta's 1965 dissertation, "The Card Catalog in a Large Research Library: Present Conditions and Future Possibilities in the New York Public Library," provided a model for automating New York Public Library's research libraries' card catalogs. Matta also provided consulting services for governments, libraries, and consortia in the United States and the Middle East, and he established the Seoud M. Matta Endowed Scholarship in Information Technology at Pratt in 2000.

Anita Schiller, 94, librarian emerita at University of California, San Diego, and an ALA honorary member, died January 23. Schiller's 1968 study "Characteristics of Professional Personnel in College and University Libraries" was an influential effort to document and address inequities between men and women in librarianship, which she continued through salary surveys, research, and speaking engagements. In addition to honorary membership in 2007, she received the 1985 ALA Equality Award for her efforts. She served on ALA Council, the

Social Responsibilities Round Table Feminist Task Force, the Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship, and the Task Force on Better Salaries and Pay Equity for Library Workers.

Donald B. Simpson, 77, president of the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) in Chicago from 1980 until his 1999 retirement, died April 5, 2020. He had previously worked at the State Library of Ohio and the Bibliographical Center for Research in Aurora, Colorado. With CRL, he managed two major building construction projects and wrote and edited books, articles, and grant proposals.

Jessie M. Cottman Smith, 92, retired dean of the library at Maryland State College (now University of Maryland Eastern Shore [UMES]) in Princess Anne, died December 10. She joined Maryland State in 1966 and served as the first dean of the library at UMES until her retirement in 1998. She previously had been a teacher and librarian at Worcester High School in Newark, Maryland, for 15 years.

Judy Yung, 74, a librarian for the Chinatown branch of San Francisco Public Library and the Asian branch of Oakland (Calif.) Public Library, died December 14. After her library career, she entered academia, establishing the Asian American Studies program at University of California, Santa Cruz. She wrote 10 books on Asian American history and studies and the experiences of Chinese immigrants and was a pioneer in the development of Asian language collections in American public libraries. ●

October 30 **Trish Saylor** retired as division manager of the Children's Library at Akron–Summit County (Ohio) Public Library.

Mark M. Shaw retired as director of Southwest Public Libraries in Grove City, Ohio, in January.

Janis Test retired as information services manager at Abilene (Tex.) Public Library December 31.

Chuck Thomas retired as director of Newburgh (N.Y.) Free Library December 30.

Gail Thompson-Allen retired as manager of programming and community engagement at Russell Library in Middletown, Connecticut, in December.

In December **Virginia Volkman** retired as director of Sedona (Ariz.) Public Library.

Christopher H. Walker, serials cataloging librarian at Penn State University Libraries in University Park, retired in December.

AT ALA

Crystal Carrazco, social media manager in the Communications and Marketing Office, left ALA January 22.

Autumn Ni, coordinator in the Development Office, left ALA January 8. AL

History Rolls On

From housing former military installations to settling neighborhood squabbles over lighthouse design to becoming overpopulated with wild peacocks, Palos Verdes Peninsula, about 25 miles south of Los Angeles, is full of history.

Monique Sugimoto, an avid bicycle commuter—and archivist and librarian for Palos Verdes Library District's (PVLD) Local History Center—enjoys pairing her expertise in the region's past with her rides to work. "I'd give myself these little tours and thought it would be cool if we did an introduction to the peninsula."

Thus, Pedal PV—a series of four-minute videos—was born. "Sharing the peninsula's history is part of the library's mission," says Sugimoto. She creates bikeable tours of points of interest using archival photos and filmed footage. "When I get a topic in my head, I know what collections we have, so I'll go back and take a look through those," she says.

In the videos, Sugimoto guides locals with turn-by-turn directions and creates space for enriching detours, like a whaling station situated between lighthouses or a beautiful vista on a loop of the peninsula's main roads. Taking in the scenery is one of Sugimoto's favorite parts about riding her bicycle—which, she's quick to point out, is electric. When she finds an interesting shot, she and her husband—who uses his cellphone camera to serve as videographer for the series— will pull over. "It's kind of spur-of-the-moment," she says.

Recently, during curbside service, a patron asked Sugimoto if she was "the bike lady" and said they planned to do one of her tours. "It was really exciting to hear somebody say that," Sugimoto says. "It's tremendously rewarding because I'm also a resident in the area. It's been so much fun to be able to learn about my own community through my work." **AL**

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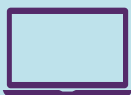
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