american libraries

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

A PATH
FORWARD
ON
Digital
Equity

Workers Turn to Unions

NEWSMAKER
Ibram X. Kendi

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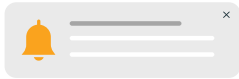
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A More Perfect Union

Sanhita SinhaRoy

In our special report, we present a path forward on digital equity, with practical ways libraries can become better informed and take action.

Many of us have seen firsthand how the pandemic has magnified digital inequities in the US. And while libraries have been tackling this complex problem for more than 20 years, the challenge of advancing digital inclusion in an ever-evolving technology landscape can feel daunting.

In our special report "Toward an Equitable Digital Future" (cover story, p. 26), we present a path forward on digital equity, with practical suggestions for ways libraries can become better informed and act. Whether it's providing more devices, reliable internet access, and skills training for patrons, or securing funding to introduce or update hardware and infrastructure, we share ways that libraries can—and continue to—innovate.

Throughout the issue, we bring you other takes on this topic: a call to action from ALA President Patricia "Patty" M. Wong (President's Message, p. 6), who has made digital equity a key part of her platform; a column by school librarian Molly June Roquet on critical digital literacy (Youth Matters, p. 48); and reviews of three tech lending options, edited by our Editorial and Advertising Associate Carrie Smith (Solutions, p. 52).

Just as digital equity moves us one step closer to a more educated and engaged public, so too do books. As historian and author Ibram X. Kendi says, "Where there are efforts to take books off shelves, we have to organize to put *more* books on shelves so we can build a better democracy" (Newsmaker, p. 24).

Book bans aren't the only challenges library workers have been facing of late. In "Getting Organized" (p. 16), Cass Balzer reports on how library staffers are forming unions in higher numbers to demand equity, accountability, and transparency from their institutions.

Finally, in "Go with the Flow" (Bookend, p. 56), we wind down with a reminder from Michelle Schaub, a library media specialist and certified yoga instructor in Monona, Wisconsin, of the importance of mental health and mindfulness in this age of pandemic stressors.

Whether it's advancing digital equity, fighting censorship, advocating for workers' rights, or taking time for self-care, library workers are defining the society we wish to be.

Sanhita

SUPPORT LIBRARIES *in Style!*

We Must Lead on Digital Equity

Internet connectivity promotes a more engaged democracy

Patricia "Patty" M. Wong

> With greater awareness of the importance of broadband connectivity in our communities comes the responsibility of all library workers to advocate for digital equity.

We've come a long way since 1994, when a study found that only 21% of public libraries had an internet connection (bit.ly/PLinternet). By 2004, more than 99% of them offered connectivity. Today, nearly 30 years later, libraries are technology hubs where patrons can learn the skills needed to navigate a vast digital world of information, ideas, and communications.

A Public Library Association study released in September 2021 (bit.ly/PLtech20) provides a current picture of how libraries serve as digital equity hubs. The study found that more than 88% of all public libraries offer formal or informal digital literacy programming, more than one-third (36.7%) have dedicated digital literacy and technology programs and training staff, and more than one in five provide classes or informal help related to coding, computer programming, robotics, and 3D printing.

Libraries have led the way in many areas, including creating access for the public's use of library devices and providing opportunities for staff and communities to learn skills to be successful and safe in the online world.

Library professionals have also been among the most vocal proponents of greater connectivity in our communities so that people can access resources for education, health, work, and civic participation in their everyday lives.

We know our libraries are hubs of connectivity for communities that have no other access, and the disparity between the haves and have-nots in our digital age was laid bare during the first months of the pandemic.

When libraries closed their physical buildings in spring 2020, users who relied on their broadband internet were cut off from a vital lifeline. Many libraries responded by leaving their Wi-Fi on around the clock or boosting their signals so patrons could access the internet from the parking lot.

With greater awareness of the importance of broadband connectivity in our communities comes the responsibility of all library workers to advocate for digital equity. I, along with my presidential advisory committee, believe this special issue of *American Libraries* can be both a resource for the field and a call to action.

In these pages, you'll find an article that outlines federal policy and funding options, including recently passed bills and benefits, to fill digital equity gaps in your community. You'll learn about the Toward Gigabit Libraries Toolkit, a resource that has empowered rural libraries to understand and improve their broadband connections; digital inclusion alliances and how librarians work within these groups to help achieve digital equity goals; and how you can advance digital equity in your library *right now,* with tips for beginners and those more seasoned in digital inclusion.

One of my favorite pieces in the issue is an infographic on digital equity that looks at how the pandemic has worsened high-speed affordability and increased need, how discount programs like the Emergency Broadband Benefit/Affordable Connectivity Program help communities, how libraries fill the gap, and how federal funding and programs can help.

As library leaders, it is our responsibility to be engaged in this work to ensure our neighbors are connected and able to fully participate in our economy, educational systems, and democracy.

We hope you enjoy this issue of the magazine and that it inspires you to reflect on the progress we have made so far and to participate actively in the work we have yet to do. AL

PATRICIA "PATTY" M. WONG is city librarian at Santa Clara (Calif.) City Library.

The Table and the Folding Chair

Managing change through shared power

Tracie D. Hall

Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to Congress and the first Black woman from a major political party to run for president, is often remembered for giving this piece of advice: "If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair." These words ring as loud today as ever—especially to those of us who feel the urgency to shift course and share power within the institutions we care about.

In this fourth and final column introducing ALA's newly implemented five-year strategic plan, I want to mine the connection between creating institutional belonging and facilitating the change management critical to organizational sustainability and impact. The first of these begets the second.

In addition to the overarching goals of the new Pivot (or change management) Strategy, ALA is working to bring greater visibility to its position as the premier and trusted voice for library advocacy, the most comprehensive and connected LIS network, the leading provider of LIS professional development and continuing education, the biggest driver of recruitment and diversity for the LIS workforce, and the largest nongovernmental LIS granting agency in the country.

"I work from the inside out," architect Frank Gehry once noted about his practice. The current Pivot Strategy, too, works from within—with our internal processes, structures, shared values, and common goals. But its terminus is a vision of ALA as an agent for social change: for information and digital access (including universal broadband); for equity, diversity, and inclusion in libraries and the LIS workforce; for preservation of library services (across library types, settings, and services); and as a driver of shared power in and among communities.

Achieving this impact will require leaders and staff who are willing to organize and be organized, and, most critically, to belong.

The late Charlemae Hill Rollins, whose legacy still looms in Chicago library memory, was a leader whose belonging—as ALA member and library activist—left a lasting impression on the library users she served, the library service area she led, and ALA as a body.

A path-charting librarian and children's author, Rollins became head of Chicago Public Library's children's department and known for rallying against racist and reductive depictions of Black life in children's literature.

She not only brought a chair to the table but made sure to place herself at the head. In 1944, Rollins admonished ALA in a letter to the *ALA Bulletin* for its plans to host meetings in segregated cities, effectively excluding Black librarians' participation. Noting that her son and brother were both fighting for freedom in France and Germany, respectively, while Black librarians faced prohibition from professional convenings at home, Rollins concluded the letter with the question of belonging: If ALA was unwilling to recognize the right of participation of all its members, "is there any reason for me or any other Negro librarian to continue membership in the ALA of the future?"

By 1957, after decades of effective disruption of the library and publishing fields, Rollins became the first Black librarian elected president of what is now ALA's Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC). Today ALSC's annual presidential program bears her name.

As ALA seeks to build public awareness of its core values and its work, as well as grow stakeholder and partnership support, it will need to expand the belonging and shared power that leaders like Chisholm and Rollins possessed in order to change the field now and into the future. **AL**

> The late Charlemae Hill Rollins not only brought a chair to the table but made sure to place herself at the head.

TRACIE D. HALL is executive director of the American Library Association. Reach her at thall@ala.org.

Acknowledging Workers

Thank you for publishing "A Conflict of Values" (Nov./Dec. 2021, p. 28). Concerns about trustees who may not share library values are gaining relevance as white conservatives work to curtail the rights of people unlike them.

I was disappointed to note that no employees of Niles-Maine (Ill.) District Library were quoted in the piece, aside from the director. The employees recently organized their union with AFSCME Council 31 in response to cuts to library staff, and the employee union has been a crucial part of gathering opposition to further cuts proposed by the board of trustees.

Library workers have an important role to play in current and future battles against library boards working to dismantle efforts to provide inclusive environments and collections. Articles that portray the only stakeholders as board members, administrators, and patrons give short shrift to the workers that make up the library. I would encourage *American Libraries* to ensure that library workers' perspectives are considered in future stories.

Violet Fox
St. Cloud, Minnesota

The Power of Wikipedia

I was disappointed to read "Stop Source Shaming" (Sept./Oct. 2021, p. 49). As an academic, educator, writer, and librarian, I struggle to teach what reliable research and facts

mean. As we are in the age of "alternative facts" and a wealth of misinformation, understanding scientific and academic research methods has literally become a matter of life and death. It is not source shaming to warn off Wikipedia—it is good research practice. We don't think we are food shaming when we say something is spoiled; it is a statement of fact. While it is true that there are pages that at any given time contain helpful, true, and valuable information, the opposite is also true. Likewise, an accurate page on Monday could be altered and become inaccurate by Monday night or Tuesday.

Su Epstein
Columbia, Connecticut

I appreciate the view that Wikipedia is a valuable resource that fills a very specific gap in accessible information. As an academic librarian, I often refer students to the site as a jumping-off point if they have no general knowledge on a subject. I also take the time to contextualize these types of sources within the greater body of research and scholarship.

I encourage students to use web resources like Wikipedia to get ideas for research papers but to be careful if using these in

their citations. I start off many of my information literacy sessions stating that Wikipedia sometimes includes academic sources within their references and these can be helpful in the beginning, but we also discuss the importance of finding at least two sources to corroborate any data or statements. I also like to demonstrate how easy it is to edit a Wikipedia article, despite the system's checks and balances.

I believe there are valuable learning opportunities with crowdsourced information, and it can even be a way to contribute as a digital citizen and get students thinking more critically about information sources.

Michelle Goodridge
Waterloo, Ontario

Thank you so much to the writers of "Stop Source Shaming." It's such a shock to students when I follow the column's advice and mention how even I often start with a Wikipedia article to get a better understanding about a topic and that it is perfectly acceptable for them to do it as well. I also love to use it as an example of source chaining.

Molly Dettmann
Norman, Oklahoma

CORRECTION
In the list of 2022 ALA Council candidates announced in our January/February issue (Update, p. 14), Mandy Nasr's position was incorrectly identified. She is library director of Camarillo (Calif.) Public Library.

San Francisco Receives $2 Million Grant for Services for Incarcerated Individuals

On January 13 San Francisco Mayor London N. Breed announced a $2 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support a collaboration between San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) and the American Library Association (ALA) aimed at improving and expanding library services for incarcerated individuals.

Led by SFPL's Jail and Reentry Services team in partnership with ALA, the Expanding Information Access for Incarcerated People initiative includes a comprehensive survey of existing models for library services to people in jails and prisons and a revision of current standards. The project also will create an interactive map that can be used to locate library services for incarcerated individuals nationwide and produce a yearlong virtual training series led by SFPL staff and other experts in the field. Lastly, the project will pilot digital literacy trainings to support those in the process of reentry.

"Little information is publicly available about the types of library services available to incarcerated people," said SFPL City Librarian Michael Lambert in a statement. "This project will allow us to see where library services exist and where they can be better supported, and provide that support through collaborations and training that will ultimately increase the amount of library services inside of jails, juvenile detention centers, and prisons. Our justice-involved patrons deserve more equitable access to the full spectrum of library programs and collections."

"Low literacy and limited access to information-rich networks continue to be chief contributors to the prison pipeline," said ALA Executive Director Tracie D. Hall in the statement. The grant will help address information access needs of incarcerated people, said Hall, by identifying and improving existing services and growing new access points for library and information services. "As a nationwide advocacy body, ALA can help create standards and programming that hold weight with prison and jail administrations and influence library policy to better serve this community," she said. ●

Keynote Speakers Announced for PLA 2022

The in-person component of the Public Library Association (PLA) 2022 Conference, scheduled for March 23–25 in Portland, Oregon, will open with author Luvvie Ajayi Jones and close with actor Kal Penn. Learn more and register at placonference.org.

Luvvie Ajayi Jones

New York Times bestselling author and podcast host Jones will open the conference by challenging attendees to overcome their fears and get comfortable with being uncomfortable—the topic of her TED talk, which has had more than 5 million views. Her latest book, *Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual,* was released in March 2021.

Kal Penn

Closing speaker Penn is an actor, writer, producer, and former associate director of the White House Office of Public Engagement. In 2019 he cocreated the sitcom *Sunnyside,* featuring stories of characters who immigrated to the US, for NBC. His first book, *You Can't Be Serious,* was released in November 2021.

SustainRT Calls for Wellness Nominations

ALA's Sustainability Round Table (SustainRT) annually recognizes libraries that go above and beyond in meeting the wellness needs of their staff with the SustainRT Citation for Wellness in the Workplace, an initiative of former ALA President Loida Garcia-Febo (2018–2019). All ALA members are invited to nominate for this year's awards any library that has made efforts to meet the needs of its staff in the areas of continuing education, wellness, positive work environment, unions, salaries, gender equity, pay equity, and other initiatives designed to improve the livelihoods and status of librarians and other library workers. The 2021 Citation was awarded to Westerville (Ohio) Public Library for its work in addressing pay equity.

SustainRT will honor this year's winning library or organization with a plaque during the SustainRT membership meeting at the 2022 ALA Annual Conference and Exhibition. For more information, visit the SustainRT awards page (ala.org/rt/sustainrt/awards). The deadline for applications is March 15.

ALA, Divisions Oppose Censorship Efforts

On November 29, 2021, the Executive Board of the American Library Association (ALA) and the boards of directors for ALA's eight divisions issued a joint statement condemning the dramatic increase in book challenges and removals from libraries and schools around the US that began in late 2021. The statement is excerpted below:

"We are committed to defending the constitutional rights of all individuals, of all ages, to use the resources and services of libraries. We champion and defend the freedom to speak, the freedom to publish, and the freedom to read, as promised by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. We stand opposed to censorship and any effort to coerce belief, suppress opinion, or punish those whose expression does not conform to what is deemed orthodox in history, politics, or belief. The unfettered exchange of ideas is essential to the preservation of a free and democratic society.... This requires the professional expertise of librarians who work in partnership with their communities to curate collections that serve the information needs of all their users.

"With the freedom to read under threat, ALA, including its Executive Board, divisions, round tables, and other units, stands firmly with our members, the entire library community, allied organizations, and all those across this country who choose to exercise their right to read and access information freely, and we call on others to do the same." ●

ALA Publishes State Legislative Toolkit

ALA has published a State Legislative Toolkit to help organizations advance state legislation that supports libraries, library workers, and the communities they serve. Authored by ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office in partnership with the Office for Intellectual Freedom, the toolkit reflects input from ALA member groups across the Association and was developed in conjunction with the state legislative summit in October 2021.

Every year, state legislatures see thousands of bills introduced, some of which can affect libraries' ability to provide access for patrons. The State Legislative Toolkit offers advocates guidance to proactively navigate legislative sessions and respond to adverse legislation; tools and resources for developing well-written

library policies; contact information for ALA's intellectual freedom and legislative support services; and more. Explore the toolkit at bit.ly/AL-legtoolkit.

ALA Donates to Hurricane Relief

Libraries and communities in Louisiana and along the East Coast are still struggling to recover from damage from Hurricane Ida, a Category 4 storm that ravaged a huge part of the country in August 2021. Thanks to support from members and other library supporters, ALA's Disaster Relief Fund is sending $5,000 each to Lafourche Parish (La.) Library, St. Charles Parish (La.) Library, and Caldwell (N.J.) Public Library to restore and upgrade resources and services.

ALA's Disaster Relief Fund also provided $12,000 to the Bibliothèque

Nationale d'Haïti to re-establish two public libraries whose facilities were damaged and made uninhabitable by the large earthquake that struck Haiti in August 2021. ALA's donation will provide for temporary locations for St. Louis du Sud Library and Marigot Library on the Tiburon Peninsula to keep their doors and services open during this critical time. Some of the funds are being used to repair the roof of Petit-Goâve Public Library, which was rebuilt after the 2010 earthquake through support from ALA and libraries and donors across the United States.

To make a donation to help rebuild libraries damaged during recent disasters, please go to the ALA Disaster Relief Fund at bit.ly/ALA-relief.

More Libraries Receive Vaccine Awareness Funding

A coalition of national museum and library associations announced in December 2021 the recipients of the second round of funding for Communities for Immunity, an initiative supported by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Institute of Museum and Library Services to boost confidence in the COVID-19 vaccine.

Round Two awards ranging from $1,500 to $100,000 were awarded to museums, libraries, and tribal organizations serving urban, suburban, and rural populations across 33 states. Projects include two "moonshot awards" of $75,000–$100,000 to the C. Williams Rush Museum of African-American Arts and Culture in Kingstree, South Carolina, and Kansas City (Mo.) Public Library.

Other examples of grant activities include:

- Quapaw Nation of Oklahoma plans to host four vaccine clinics for the tribal community, staff a hotline to answer questions about the vaccines, and market both offerings to the community.
- The Alaska Library Network will work with a range of partners to translate and disseminate vaccine information

N.Y. Governor Rejects Ebook Equity Legislation

On December 29, 2021, New York Governor Kathy Hochul vetoed legislation that would require publishers to offer licenses for electronic books to libraries under reasonable terms. The bills had passed the New York State Senate and Assembly with overwhelming bipartisan support in June 2021. ALA published a statement expressing disappointment in this outcome.

"Governor Hochul's decision to veto [the legislation] is unfortunate and disappointing," President Patricia "Patty" M. Wong said in the statement. "Protecting New Yorkers' access to digital books through the library is critical to ensuring equitable access to information for all."

The governor's claim that federal law ties the hands of state lawmakers is a misguided response to publishers' unreasonable attempts to discriminate against public libraries, ALA has argued. The Association will continue active engagement toward more reasonable access to digital books for libraries, the statement said. ALA will also work at the state and federal levels to extend to the digital environment some of the rights that libraries have in the print world.

"ALA firmly believes libraries need to have more of a voice in the digital book market," the statement reads. "America's communities deserve to be heard and served through their libraries. Library groups, library advocates, and friends of libraries will not cease our efforts to ensure fair pricing for libraries." ●

throughout Alaska, including broad distribution through the Statewide Library Electronic Door.

- The Scott Family Amazeum in Bentonville, Arkansas, will work with partners to develop information directed at caregivers of young children and host vaccination clinics.

Submissions Sought for LRRT Shera Awards

ALA's Library Research Round Table (LRRT) will present two Jesse H. Shera Awards in spring 2022. One is for Support of Dissertation Research, the other for Distinguished Published Research. Both winners will receive a certificate, and the winner of the dissertation award will also receive $250.

All nominated articles must relate to library and information studies. Any research method is acceptable. Authors of nominated articles need not be LRRT members. The deadline for submitting entries for the 2022 awards is

February 28. For guidelines and application instructions, visit bit.ly/LRRT-Shera.

Professional Development Grant Available

ALA's Learning Round Table (LRT) will award up to $1,000 to an individual to participate in continuing education events between September 1 of this year and August 31, 2023. The award recipient will be required to share their new learning with other members in some way.

In addition to the financial award, the recipient will be provided with access to an LRT mentor, plus a free one-year LRT membership. The award recipient will be notified before the ALA Annual Conference in June.

This grant, named after the late Pat Carterette, past LRT president, honors her passion for professional development in librarianship and belief in quality library service, leadership development, and continual learning. Apply at bit.ly/AL-LRTgrant by March 18. AL

Peter Hepburn

Head librarian, College of the Canyons in
Santa Clarita, California | peterhepburn4ala.org

CANDIDATE FOR **ALA TREASURER**

L ibrary workers need a strong professional association that can conduct the critical work of advocating for libraries, for those who use them, and for the materials libraries collect and safeguard. The American Library Association (ALA) must continue to do that work in an environment where the financial health and sustainability of the Association are challenging issues for its leadership. The Association, as with so many of us in our libraries and at home, is still contending with the effects of the pandemic. Emerging from COVID-19, ALA needs to do more than simply endure.

In recent years, ALA has experienced declining membership and conference attendance. Publishing, another key revenue stream, has struggled to meet its projections. ALA sold its Chicago headquarters, trading the expense of maintaining and upgrading that building for the obligation of a long-term lease. And there have been changes in key personnel in the Finance office.

There have also been bright spots, however. For one, ALA's endowment has continued to grow. Our executive director has led the Development Office in securing grants and donations for the Association. ALA staff members

have worked hard at keeping expenses down. The next treasurer will have a considerable task in helping steer ALA through the roadblocks that have had an impact on the financial stability of the Association, compounded by the effects of the pandemic.

The treasurer is charged with providing sound guidance in relation to the budget so that ALA member leaders can make informed fiscal decisions. The treasurer also needs to work closely with ALA staff, ensuring strong coordination when setting the course for ALA's finances and adapting to challenges.

Transparency is key to this work. As ALA treasurer, I will build on the work of my predecessors to strengthen lines of communication, ensure dissemination of information related to Association finances, and prioritize clarity for members. The financial health of the Association affects divisions, round

> Because ALA's financial health affects all units, information should be accessible to all members.

tables, and offices, so information should be accessible to and understandable by all members.

I have been active at every level of ALA, from the ALA Executive Board and Council to the divisions and round tables. I have worked closely on the budget with ALA's Finance and Accounting staff through my membership on the Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC) and the Finance and Audit Subcommittee. As chair of BARC from 2019 to 2021, I have also worked with our current treasurer and increased my familiarity with what the position entails. Coupled with my strong understanding of the structure and practices within ALA, my skills and experience provide the foundation needed for me to assume the role.

As treasurer, I will ensure that ALA remains financially stable and sustainable and that it thrives. I will support our president and other member leaders by providing the sound financial guidance they need to further the Association's impact on our libraries, our communities and institutions, our patrons, and our colleagues working in libraries.

I am honored to stand for election to the position of ALA treasurer and eager to take on this work on our behalf. I ask for your vote. **AL**

ALA ELECTION VOTE: March 14–April 6. More information at bit.ly/ALA-election22

Emily Drabinski

Interim chief librarian, The Graduate Center,
City University of New York | emilydrabinski.com

CANDIDATE FOR **ALA PRESIDENT**

Decades of disinvestment in public institutions, coupled with deep inequalities at the core of our profession, have left our libraries without the resources necessary to advance our common mission of providing access to information to everyone in our communities. ALA shapes national and international agendas for libraries of all kinds. As members and as library workers, our task is to shape the Association and its priorities.

I take this call seriously. I edit a reinvigorated reviews section for *College & Research Libraries.* I've served on Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) program planning committees, led information literacy standards and guidelines work, and presented on a broad range of topics at ALA and ACRL conferences. As a member of Core, I have served on two nominating committees, helping to shape the leadership of this dynamic new division. In "big ALA," I served as a 2017–2020 councilor-at-large and chaired the International Relations Committee in 2019–2020.

If elected, I will prioritize advocacy for what we need most: reinvestment in schools, libraries, and communities; economic and racial justice for library workers and for their communities; environmental sustainability; and collaboration and cooperation beyond US borders.

Collective organizing for collective power. Sustained attacks on library funding, state bans on the right to read, dangerous and precarious working conditions—we all face problems that require collective solutions. I cut my teeth in unions, on strike, locked out, and on ordinary days. There are ways to get better at fighting back and getting wins. Building these skills for all of us will be my first priority.

Green New Deal for libraries. Floods, hurricanes, wildfires, and other consequences of climate change threaten libraries, library workers, and library publics around the world. I will expand the work of ALA leaders, connecting us to broader conversations that too often overlook our role as key actors for a sustainable future.

International connections. The problems facing American libraries

> This crucial moment calls for leadership that understands the importance of mass movements.

are also faced by colleagues outside our borders, many of whom have been working on these issues for years and whose innovative ideas and strategies can serve as models for our own. I will draw on our strong record of international leadership to help make equity and justice central to global exchange.

Public infrastructure for public goods. Consolidation in the library vendor landscape has led many of us to rely on a dwindling number of high-cost publishers and platforms for everything from selection and acquisition to description, circulation, and preservation. I will lead a public conversation about the implications of corporate control of core library functions and develop a plan to fight back.

Our institutions—school, public, academic, and special—are fundamental infrastructures of the public good. This crucial moment calls for leadership that understands the importance of mass movements for restoring and expanding investments in us. We must help our respective publics understand the connections between daily practices of selection, acquisition, description, circulation, and preservation to broader movements for a more just society. This is a story I can help all of us tell. I am honored to accept a nomination for the ALA presidency. I ask for your vote! **AL**

ALA ELECTION VOTE: March 14–April 6. More information at bit.ly/ALA-election22

Kelvin Watson

Executive director, Las Vegas–Clark County (Nev.)
Library District | kelvinwatsonorg.squarespace.com

Greetings, fellow members. Back when I was an MLS student, I received the kind of meaningful support from ALA that made me a lifelong admirer of this distinguished organization and its mission. It also reinforced why I was drawn to the profession after a career in library book distribution and bookstore retailing, where I witnessed firsthand how librarians uplift lives. This understanding is why I proudly and humbly accept the nomination for ALA president.

Not nearly enough people realize the critical role libraries play in economically depressed communities, and how heavily marginalized populations—BIPOC patrons, veterans, immigrants, those who have faced incarceration, the LGBTQ+ community, and people with disabilities—continue to rely upon them.

To reach more people from all walks of life, I propose a national rebranding campaign, spotlighting how libraries improve lives. This will be done through the stories of individual ALA members who bring unique experiences to their work. The campaign will redefine the local library as the dynamic community resource that it is—a place where education, opportunity, and inclusion await.

ALA's new Pivot Strategy is geared toward transformation and sustainability, and I am fully behind this call for rethinking and retooling. To grow and revitalize our membership, I am looking to attract new library professionals and support staff by developing career paths that will appeal to people with wide-ranging educational backgrounds. The national rebranding campaign will jump-start these internal and external growth initiatives to help ensure we remain an essential voice for the next 150 years.

As president, I will demonstrate our intrinsic value to state and federal leaders as we deliver on Build Back Better funding for library infrastructure, technology, elevated training for library staff, and broadband access.

In my role as cochair of the ALA Digital Content Working Group, I am heartened to see Congress taking steps to address the ebook pricing structure

> We must build upon this unique moment, revitalizing our mission while remaining agile to adapt quickly.

that publishers have imposed on library budgets for years. US Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Oreg.) and US Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.) are leading this charge and will need ALA's full support and resources to prevail.

We must also address the troubling trend of censorship, which has become a divisive new political tool. Some of this country's best-loved literature, which tells important truths about lived experiences, has come under attack. As defenders of free speech, who better to address this threat than ALA?

Over the past two years, ALA has been a beacon, guiding our profession through these unparalleled times and providing leadership with its advocacy and partnerships to support all libraries and communities while balancing the changes that the pandemic has brought with it. We must build upon this unique moment, revitalizing our mission while remaining agile to adapt quickly to whatever comes next.

I encourage fellow ALA members to imagine new possibilities along with me. It would be an honor and a privilege to lead ALA through this time.

I hope you will consider me for your vote so that we can make 2023–2024 a year to see real returns on your membership investment. **AL**

ALA ELECTION VOTE: March 14–April 6. More information at bit.ly/ALA-election22

TRENDS
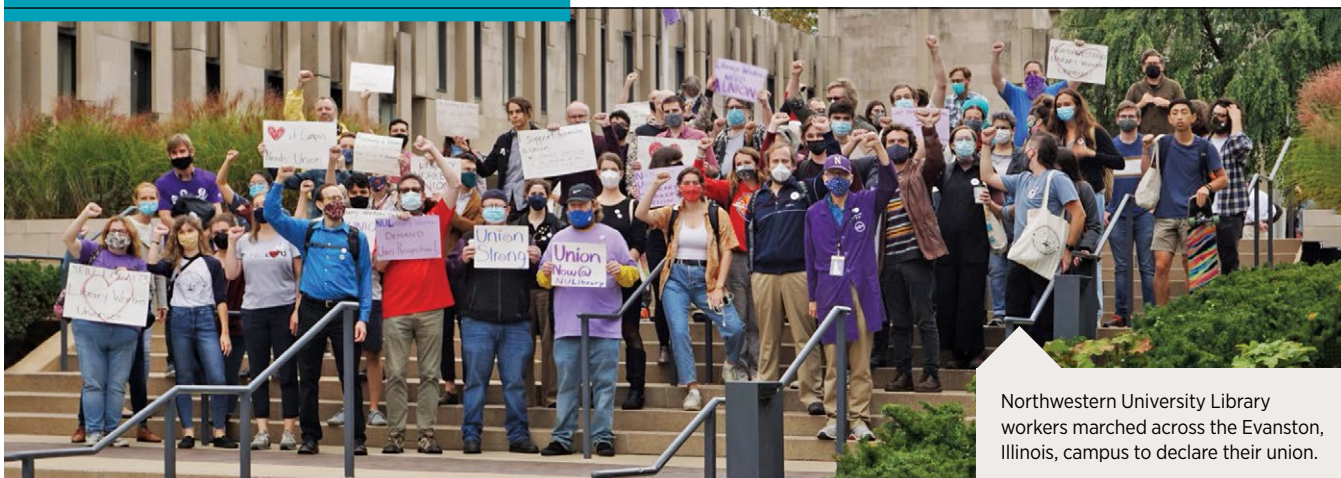
Northwestern University Library workers marched across the Evanston, Illinois, campus to declare their union.

Getting Organized

More library staffers are turning to unions for security and social equity

BY Cass Balzer

At noon on October 12, 2021, more than 130 library workers at Northwestern University met at the Rock, a well-known gathering space on the Evanston, Illinois, campus. They had decided to march to the provost's office to declare their intent to organize as an affiliate of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 73 and to ask the university to recognize their union. After walking for several blocks, the workers turned a corner and were met by groups of students who cheered as they passed by.

"We love our students, and we're here to support them and the faculty," says Jamie Carlstone, metadata librarian. "Seeing that they value us so much—I get teary-eyed talking about it."

Library unionization efforts are blooming around the country, taking place in public, private, and academic institutions of all sizes. In Maryland, Baltimore County Public Library workers have joined the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, and in Colorado,

Denver Public Library (DPL) staffers formed Denver Public Library Workers United, a unit of the Communications Workers of America Local 7799.

While the unionization process varies depending on the unionizing body and institution, worker demands remain consistent across the board: They want equity—monetary, social, and cultural—and the ability for frontline workers to participate in decision making.

At Northwestern University Library, talk of unionization began at the start of the pandemic after the university announced widespread furloughs. The news came just months after the university had revealed its first budget surplus in years. Of the nearly 250 noncontract Northwestern staffers furloughed, 52 were from the library.

Though Carlstone was not furloughed, she says the experience was dispiriting for her and her colleagues. "I don't think the university fully recognizes the emotional toll it took on us and what a kick to morale [it was]," she says.

After almost a year of organizing, library workers connected with SEIU Local 73 in May 2021, asked for recognition from the university in October, and voted—by a count of 70 to 28—to certify the union in December. Since then, members have been working to articulate key demands. Their goals include negotiating annual cost-of-living raises, a promotion path, salary transparency, and a codified hybrid work schedule, once the pandemic recedes.

Now that the university has officially recognized the union election, library workers will begin preparing for bargaining efforts, which will likely happen in spring 2022.

'We are the union'

Northwestern's library workers are not the only ones newly affiliated with SEIU Local 73. Just a few miles away, Skokie (Ill.) Public Library (SPL) joined SEIU and announced its union in early 2021. Talks of forming a union began in spring 2020 among part-time staffers, many of them people of color. According to Angela Jones, SPL youth and family program coordinator, those lower-wage and part-time workers have either limited benefits or none at all. During the pandemic, they worked in some of the riskiest conditions.

Photo: SEIU Local 73

"They were the ones that had to come into the building, the ones who couldn't work from home, the ones who had the closest contact with patrons," Jones says. "There were already concerns that our staff had regarding equity, but a spotlight was put on the situation during the pandemic."

As at Northwestern, a lack of institutional respect and safety were cited as chief reasons for organizing. According to Jones, shifting the workplace hierarchy is a key goal of the union. "We've done surveys about the things important to our members, and dignity is always at the top of the list," she says. "There's a general sentiment that people would like to be paid equitably and that people would like a cost-of-living increase, but it's so much more than a financial thing."

While SEIU was essential to the unionizing process, Jones points out that unionization would not have been possible if not for the hard work of the library's part-time staff. "There's a misunderstanding of the idea that unions come in and do all of this, but an outside entity cannot

> ## "There were already concerns that our staff had regarding equity, but a spotlight was put on the situation during the pandemic."
>
> **ANGELA JONES,** youth and family program coordinator at Skokie (Ill.) Public Library

organize a union," she says. "SEIU is not the union. We are the union. This was very much an effort that was developed by our part-time staff at the Skokie library."

Strength in numbers

Some library workers are forming their own unions while others have decided to join existing organizations. Librarians, archivists, and curators at University of Michigan teamed up with an existing campus union, the Lecturers' Employee Organization (LEO), American Federation of Teachers Local 6244, in 2021. LEO is a union for non-tenure-track faculty on all three University of Michigan campuses.

According to Meredith Kahn, librarian for gender and sexuality studies at University of Michigan, there were several benefits to merging with LEO. "By joining an existing union, we would have access to a level of support beyond what we would have if we were just on our own," Kahn says. "LEO was an appealing union to join because much like lecturers, we kind of sit in this weird space between what people think of as 'real faculty' and other positions."

The idea of forming a library workers union had been discussed for several years before a 2020 decision by the university's board of regents simplified the process. The resolution states that the university will recognize new bargaining units on campus via card check—a simplified process where union representation can be approved by a majority of eligible workers signing authorization forms—rather than requiring a formal election. Additionally, the

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Poetry

1996
Year the Academy of American Poets launched National Poetry Month in April. According to the organization, the observance reminds the public that poetry matters and that poets have an integral role to play in our culture.

3
Number of books released by poet Amanda Gorman last year. Titles included the poetry anthology *Call Us What We Carry,* the lyrical picture book *Change Sings,* and *The Hill We Climb,* a bound edition of the poem she read at President Biden's inauguration—just days before her appearance at ALA's 2021 Midwinter Meeting.

17,500
Area in square feet of the Poetry Center at University of Arizona in Tucson. This landmark facility, which has won several design awards since opening in 2007, houses 3,000 photographic portraits of poets, an art gallery, a children's corner, a rare book room, and a garden of bamboo and river rocks for experiencing poetry in solitude.

47
Number of Native Nations poets whose work is featured in "Living Nations, Living Worlds," the signature project of US Poet Laureate Joy Harjo. Among those who have contributed audio recordings to this collection themed around place and displacement are Ray Young Bear, a Meskwaki tribe member who lives in Iowa; Louise Erdrich, a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa in North Dakota; and Layli Long Soldier, a citizen of the Oglala Lakota Nation who lives in New Mexico. ●

Elgin (Ill.) Area Pandemic Team members Anamaria Mora (seated, left) and Susan Tuominen provide information at Gail Borden Public Library District. They are part of a broader program set up by the state's health department to connect communities with resources related to pandemic challenges.

Relief for Renters

Libraries assist patrons facing eviction

BY Emily Udell

In spring 2021, a family of eight from Elgin, Illinois, found itself in trouble. One parent's work hours had been reduced because of the pandemic, the other parent couldn't work because of a high-risk pregnancy, and the family had fallen behind in rent, facing possible eviction from their two-unit apartment building. Help arrived, though, from what might seem like a surprising source—the local library.

In March 2021, Gail Borden Public Library District (GBPLD) received a grant contract from the Illinois Department of Public Health with a budget of up to $415,000 to create the Elgin Area Pandemic Assistance Team. Part of the department's Pandemic Health Navigator Program, the project connects people with community and municipal resources that address pandemic-induced challenges.

The team gave the family money directly—through funds granted by the health department—to catch up on rent, which convinced their landlord to halt eviction proceedings.

"We found [eviction policies] to be a moving target, so no wonder people have trouble finding this stuff on their own," says Martha Martinez, the team's supervisor, who had previously worked with GBPLD on its census-related outreach. "We're an overlay that supports [people] on a pop-up basis."

A trusted resource

Many individuals and families in the US have faced similar hardships related to the economic fallout from the pandemic. In September 2020, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) took the unusual step of issuing a moratorium on evictions for nonpayment of rent with the goals of slowing the spread of COVID-19 and giving people breathing room after record rates of job loss. Though some state and local municipalities extended protections, the CDC moratorium expired on July 31, 2021, when the Supreme Court ruled not to extend it, leaving housing experts to fear an increase in eviction filings.

As of October 11, 2021, an estimated 8 million tenant households were behind on their rent in the US, according to the US Census Bureau's experimental Household Pulse Survey. Black and Hispanic families are twice as likely to report being behind on their housing payments than white families, and many who go through eviction later have difficulty applying for credit, borrowing money, and finding housing.

That's where some libraries have stepped in to help patrons facing eviction and its aftereffects.

GBPLD's pandemic health navigators keep on top of the shifting landscape of assistance networks in the region northwest of Chicago. They connect with clients by phone or virtually, as needed, and they staff a table near the front door of GBPLD on weekday afternoons.

"They are ambassadors for the library—they are the first people [patrons] see," says Denise Raleigh, division chief of public relations and development at GBPLD. "They are actually very good at promoting the library."

The team has helped 1,500 people since its launch in March 2021 and has funding to continue through June. In addition to dealing with eviction issues, it assists with utilities payments, food needs, appointments for vaccines, and negotiating other pandemic-related setbacks and bureaucratic snarls.

"Most library staff are probably being asked [about] these things anyway," Raleigh says. "We're just taking it to the next level and providing the resources. We're trusted, and we're going to give people accurate information."

Connecting with experts

Some librarians may hesitate to help with eviction and similar issues because they cannot necessarily

offer legal advice, says Deborah Hamilton, strategic services librarian at Pikes Peak Library District (PPDL) in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She has experience with legal questions, however, as PPLD maintains a legal research collection that was formerly housed in its county courthouse.

"I'm always very upfront with people about what I can and can't do," says Hamilton, author of *Helping Library Users with Legal Questions* (Libraries Unlimited, 2021).

She works with a local legal aid organization to offer renters'-rights workshops that include information on what to do if you face eviction proceedings. She also presents at OCLC workshops on how libraries can help serve patrons in eviction situations.

Hamilton advises libraries interested in this work to partner with their area legal and housing experts.

"A lot of legal reference work is referrals or showing people how to get the information themselves," she says, pointing out that for librarians, it's more a question of information literacy than legal expertise: "I'm going to show you these things, and you have to determine what the answer is."

Some patrons are frustrated when directed to another source, but by and large they are appreciative, Hamilton says, adding that her goal is to "get people one step forward."

In Minnesota, Hennepin County Library (HCL) has been hosting expungement workshops to help people clear their records of evictions. It also offers sessions on criminal record expungement and credit repair.

"We are committed to removing barriers," says Ali Turner, division manager for community engagement at HCL. "Those three things can limit people working when and where they want."

The library works with Central Minnesota Legal Services (CMLS),

which needed a partner in spreading the word on how the organization can help with evictions and a venue for connecting with community members. Workshops presented by CMLS attorneys cover renters' rights, how to expunge an eviction, and costs associated with taking legal steps.

About 20–25 people attend each session, which HCL started offering monthly in a virtual format since fall 2020.

"Everything about it is [designed for] folks already working a couple jobs, having to arrange childcare, and so on," Turner says. "Virtual programming also mitigates the stigma and the scheduling."

> "We found [eviction policies] to be a moving target, so no wonder people have trouble finding this stuff on their own."
>
> **MARTHA MARTINEZ,** supervisor of the Elgin (Ill.) Area Pandemic Assistance Team

She says that while the sunset of the federal moratorium may cause a bump in the demand for eviction-related support, library staffers expect the need for education and assistance to continue beyond the long tail of the pandemic.

"For a segment of our residents, this is always going to be an issue," says Turner. "It's connected to poverty. It's connected to domestic violence. It's connected to a lot of things. We're super committed to continuing this as long as there is demand." AL

EMILY UDELL is a freelance writer based in Indianapolis.

university has stated it will take an official stance of neutrality and not unnecessarily challenge bargaining units.

"I think we had it much easier than many of our colleagues at other educational institutions and public libraries because we weren't facing any kind of organized resistance from the employer," Kahn says.

As at SPL and Northwestern, Kahn says the decision by University of Michigan library staff members to unionize has a lot to do with equity, accountability, and transparency. "The thing that people learn right away is that this is not an information problem," Kahn says. "It's not that the employer doesn't know that we're underpaid or doesn't know that we're upset about some of our working conditions. It's a lack of political will to change those things."

Library workers at all three institutions say that the COVID-19 pandemic was one of many factors in their decision to unionize. In most cases, unionization talks had begun months or years earlier; the pandemic merely made workers' concerns feel more immediate.

These pandemic grievances and widespread unionization efforts may also spur nearby library systems into action. The formation of a union in Denver has caught the attention of nearby library districts, which have expressed gratitude for the library's efforts. According to DPL library clerk Liana Kiddy-Gan, "It feels more real to people. That we did it makes them feel like it's something they could do."

Many library workers involved in unions agree that the experience of unionizing has been meaningful, both professionally and personally. "This was one of the most empowering experiences of my career," Jones says. "I will be telling my grandkids about this." AL

CASS BALZER is a writer in Chicago.

Chess club members face off in a tournament at Halifax (Nova Scotia) Public Libraries (HPL) in 2019. HPL has had chess clubs since 1991.

A Winning Move

As chess soars in popularity, libraries get strategic

BY Diana Panuncial

Halifax (Nova Scotia) Public Libraries (HPL) has had active chess clubs since at least 1991. But interest in chess has waxed and waned with pop culture trends, staffers say. In 2001 it was the *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* film, which culminates with its heroes playing a giant, magical game of high-stakes chess, says HPL Librarian Alison Creech. In 2020, during the first year of the coronavirus pandemic and stay-at-home orders, the Netflix series *The Queen's Gambit* put the spotlight back on the familiar black-and-ivory checkered board with a lustrous adaptation of the 1983 book of the same name. CNN reports that 3.2 million users joined the online platform chess.com after the show's debut, as players either took up or revisited the game while stuck at home.

Libraries have made the most of chess's surging popularity by starting their own chess clubs and helping existing in-person clubs transition online. Along the way, players from multiple generations have found common ground and grown their love for the game—and maybe even checked out a book or two to read up on strategies.

An incubator

The chess club at Vineyard Haven (Mass.) Public Library (VHPL) welcomes players of all skill levels, sometimes putting a seasoned 80-year-old across the table from an 8-year-old newbie. Anne McDonough, the VHPL adult program coordinator who oversees the chess club, which began in July 2021, says games can get loud and animated but are "not cutthroat." She also says the club's older players will often explain their moves and guide their younger opponents on what to do next. "It happens every single week," she says. "There's somebody who sits down in front of one of our more experienced chess players and says either 'I haven't played in a long time' or 'I'm just learning.'" Some younger members

will "graduate" and return as volunteer coaches or tournament supervisors.

"People who love chess also want to spread their love of chess to other people," Creech says. And the library is a perfect place to share it: Though some members of HPL's chess club aren't regular library users, they on occasion venture into the stacks in search of chess-related books and media. "We had a full load of chess books and they would go out," Creech says.

Over the board and through the screen

Though many think of traditional chess as a face-to-face activity ("over the board," in chess terminology), virtual chess clubs are also gaining traction. When the pandemic hit, Evan Annis, coordinator of the chess club at Camden (Maine) Public Library (CPL), took to lichess.org, a free and open source website where users play chess online. Annis created a specific group just for his club members to set up matches; they are able to chat in-game on the website or in a separate Discord server that Annis also manages.

Photo: Halifax (Nova Scotia) Public Library

Going virtual has had its pros and cons, as libraries have seen with all sorts of programs. Annis's club, which originated in person in 2018, has lost several original members since shifting online. Before the pandemic, it had many senior members; Annis guesses the virtual environment may have turned them off. However, the format has attracted a few new members, mostly younger people.

Online chess tournaments, such as PogChamps on Twitch, started popping up early in the pandemic and have allowed gamers to broadcast their experiences. The intersection of a traditional game like chess with a massive, modern platform like Twitch sparked youth interest—a reflection of the game's suitability for online gameplay, Creech says. Communities have also formed

Interest in chess has waxed and waned with pop culture trends.

around players researching, sharing, and discussing strategies on online forums and pages.

Winning strategies

One of the attractions of starting a chess club is the low (or, for libraries like HPL, nonexistent) start-up cost. "Everybody has a chess set in a closet," McDonough says. She recommends that library workers who are starting their own chess clubs or gathering materials for a club seek community donations:

"The chess sets will come out of the woodwork."

She also says to open the club up to all ages and skill levels. One of her focuses in the VHPL chess club is to get more women involved in playing chess; according to Slate, only about 8% of ranked US players in 2019 were women, as tracked by the International Chess Federation.

Annis says any chess club's first priority should be having fun—the revelry in Annis's prepandemic in-person club even attracted nonmember patrons who were passing by. And until the pandemic loosens its grip and in-person play becomes safe again, he says, a good online platform can keep members connected. AL

DIANA PANUNCIAL is a writer in Zion, Illinois.

Madison (Wis.) Public Library's first Native Storyteller-in-Residence, A. J. "Andi" Cloud, leads a harvest walk in the city's Edna Taylor Conservation Park last fall.

Storytellers-in-Residence

Library program sparks interest in local Indigenous history and culture

Madison, Wisconsin, is on land that is the ancestral home of the Ho-Chunk people. The tribe was forced to cede its territory in 1832, and in the decades that followed, state and federal governments violently removed the Ho-Chunk people from their lands in Wisconsin. Today, the rich history and ongoing traditions of the Ho-Chunk Nation in Madison are often overlooked. To promote intercultural understanding, Madison Public Library (MPL) introduced a three-month Native storyteller-in-residence program. The first installment, "Ho-Chunk through Story: The Origin, the Wayz, and the Life," debuted last fall.

BY Tana Elias and Neeyati Shah

At MPL, taking a conscious approach to diversifying our collection, staff, and services has been essential to our mission. In recent years, our programming efforts have followed a model that encourages staffers to connect with local communities and partners and amplify their voices through collaboration. Through conversations with our partners in the local Indigenous community, we learned there was little support among them for a single, yearly celebration of Native American Heritage Month in November. Instead, they told us, they would like to interact with the library more regularly.

Community Engagement Librarian Neeyati Shah approached leaders at Ho-Chunk Gaming Madison, owned by the Ho-Chunk Nation, to explore ideas. She proposed a residency program similar to one she had seen at Vancouver (B.C.) Public Library and also to our library's established artist-in-residence program. Together, MPL and Ho-Chunk Gaming drafted a plan for a three-month pilot residency that would include programs and interactive elements that could be shaped by a storyteller's unique skills and experiences. Our partners approved the language for the call for applications, suggested places to advertise, and shared this

information within the Ho-Chunk community. We secured a grant from the Madison Public Library Foundation to fund the pilot.

MPL developed goals jointly with our partners. These goals included raising the profile of the Ho-Chunk people, responding to community interest in learning more about Ho-Chunk culture and history, dispelling misconceptions about Native peoples, and sharing information about Ho-Chunk land stewardship and government structure and how each affects non-Native people. Through these aims, our hope was to share stories and make a space for healing and connection.

The first Native storyteller-in-residence chosen by MPL was A. J. "Andi" Cloud, an enrolled member of the Ho-Chunk Nation, whose Ho-Chunk name, or *waksik,* is Nizuwi, meaning Rain Woman. Cloud grew up northwest of Madison, in Black River Falls, and has a background teaching a variety of ages and working for her tribal government.

For her residency, Cloud held in-person storytimes featuring traditional Ho-Chunk stories and language, interactive programs where participants created beadwork and wove black ash baskets, and family-friendly activities such as a harvest walk and outdoor scavenger hunt. She also planned a series of online lectures with guest speakers, including Anne Thundercloud, former public relations officer for the Ho-Chunk Nation; Patty Loew, professor and author of *Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal*; and

Judge JoAnn Jones, former president of the Ho-Chunk Nation and the first woman to hold that role. Nearly 600 people participated in the programs, and many more engaged with the series through social media and viewing in-person displays. Patrons told us that they welcomed the opportunity to learn more about Ho-Chunk culture and appreciated Cloud's engaging presentation style.

Reflecting on the residency, Cloud said that what stood out to her most were moments when participants would make "a connection to who the Ho-Chunk are and a realization that the Ho-Chunk are here still today."

It was important that our program supported Ho-Chunk individuals economically as well as programmatically, in line with MPL's contractor equity policy. We paid our storyteller a stipend, and other funds went to

Our hope was to share stories and make a space for healing and connection.

the Native community in the form of speaker honorariums, purchases from local Native businesses, and paid advertising in the Ho-Chunk newsletter, *Hocak Worak*.

The program was delayed for more than a year because of the pandemic, but that challenge inspired creative approaches to engagement. Take-home activity kits featuring effigy mound bingo cards, coloring sheets with Ho-Chunk themes, and

moccasin designs were made available to kids. Lectures on Ho-Chunk traditions, law, and kinship were moved to Zoom. This spring, the library will debrief with Cloud and Ho-Chunk Gaming to gather feedback that will inform the next residency.

If you're hoping to host a similar program, we suggest you partner with an Indigenous organization or community group and figure out what the library is able to offer early in the process. Doing so helped us gauge what type of collaboration was appropriate, guided decisions around cultural protocols, and fostered trust. Together, you can create a program that is relevant to and respectful of the people your library serves. **AL**

TANA ELIAS is digital services and marketing manager and **NEEYATI SHAH** is community engagement librarian at Madison (Wis.) Public Library.

Ibram X. Kendi

Author and historian on book challenges, neutrality, and antiracism
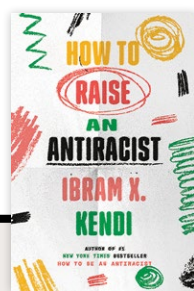
Since the breakout success of his National Book Award–winning *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* in 2017, historian Ibram X. Kendi has continued to research and write about antiracism for new audiences. In early 2020 he partnered with author Jason Reynolds to adapt the book for young adults, offering a framework and vocabulary for understanding how the US arrived at the current moment of racial reckoning. His latest work is *How to Raise an Antiracist* (June).

Kendi spoke with *American Libraries* about having his work challenged in libraries and schools, the myth of neutrality in libraries, and how to raise the next generation of antiracists.

BY Heather Booth

Your books are among the most frequently challenged in the current wave of censorship attempts. What's that like? I write books for the general public, for the type of person who would walk into a library and ask a librarian, "Hey, I'm interested in rethinking my views on race. What books should I read?"

A librarian may be able to point to my book and it might be transformative, and then that person comes back for another book. The fact that in some libraries that may not be possible certainly is dispiriting.

How do we respond to challenges in this volatile climate? [The current climate] necessitates more bravery. When you're striving to be antiracist, and there are some people who are loudly and forcibly striving to be racist who end up combating you and people like you, it takes more courage [to respond] than it did, for instance, at this time last year. We have to ensure that we are organizing and building the capacity to not just withstand assaults from those who seek to either maintain or create injustice but also build toward equity. Where there are efforts to take books off shelves, we have to organize to put *more* books on shelves so we can build a better democracy.

One of the most debated questions in the profession is whether libraries can be neutral. What role do you see libraries playing in the work of antiracism? I would first land on the side of the argument that there's really no such thing as neutrality. But there is the side of truth, and there's the side of valuing the widespread availability of information. In making decisions about restricting information and banning books, a library can state, "We are on the side of truth. We're on the side of making as many books available as possible." If there's any institution that should declare that—that recognizes that we need public institutions that arm us with information and facts and context and constructive dialogue and debate—it's a library.

Who is the ideal reader for *How to Raise an Antiracist?* The primary audience is caregivers—educators and parents, but there are also coaches and aunts and grandparents and counselors and pediatricians. Many people are part of the village that raise our children. I personally see every child as part of my village. Ultimately my work isn't just focused on how to raise antiracist children; it's also about how to raise an antiracist society that allows us to systematically raise antiracist children.

What role have libraries played in your work? When I was researching my first book, *The Black Campus Movement,* which documented Black student activism across the country in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I contacted hundreds of librarians around the country. I remember driving through the South in the summer of 2011 and visiting libraries one after the other, starting in North Carolina, through Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and West Virginia. It was probably one of the best experiences of my life, largely because I got to hang out every single day in one of my favorite places. **AL**

Photo: Stephen Voss

"Once a book is challenged, you're not just challenging the library, you're challenging the librarian, because they are the ones who choose what books go into the library."

GEORGE M. JOHNSON in "George M. Johnson Challenges School District Ban of Book: 'I Refuse to Be Erased,'" The Grio, Nov. 15, 2021.

"Perhaps many people's biggest fear is that their children may come home and say 'I think you may be wrong.' Because once that challenge happens, one has to address and reassess the ground on which we all stand. And I honestly think there are a lot of adults who just don't want to have the conversation and furthermore don't have the resources and the information to have that conversation in a sound way because they didn't have these books either."

JASON REYNOLDS in "Authors on Challenged Books List Speak Out," NowThis News, Jan. 4.

"I THINK PEOPLE THAT WANT TO CHALLENGE BOOKS AND PEOPLE LIKE ME THAT WANT TO DEFEND THEM [HAVE] IN COMMON THAT WE ALL RECOGNIZE BOOKS HAVE A LOT OF POWER. I THINK MAYBE PEOPLE SHOULD JUST TALK WITH THEIR TEENS MORE."

HOLLY EBERLE in "A Librarian Recommends Talking about Books, Not Banning Them," WGLT-FM, Nov. 11, 2021.

"Libraries spend billions of dollars on publishers' products, supporting authors, illustrators, and designers. If libraries become mere customer service departments for publishers' prepackaged product lines, the role that librarians play in highlighting marginalized voices, providing information to the disadvantaged, and preserving cultural memory independent of those in power will be lost."

BREWSTER KAHLE in "I Set Out to Build the Next Library of Alexandria. Now I Wonder: Will There Be Libraries in 25 Years?," *Time,* Oct. 22, 2021.

"What we are seeing in our county is a small faction of predominantly conservative parents targeting books that are mostly written by authors of color. They are calling these books into question because they depict life experiences that are a reality for millions of students across our country, and that makes them uncomfortable, and we understand because it makes us uncomfortable too. Important books such as these make us feel uncomfortable because they teach us important things about ourselves and society."

TAYLOR LYONS in "Tennessee Librarians Speak Out against Chattanooga School Board Member's Attempt to Ban Books," *The Tennessean*, Oct. 21, 2021.

Photo: Vincent Marc
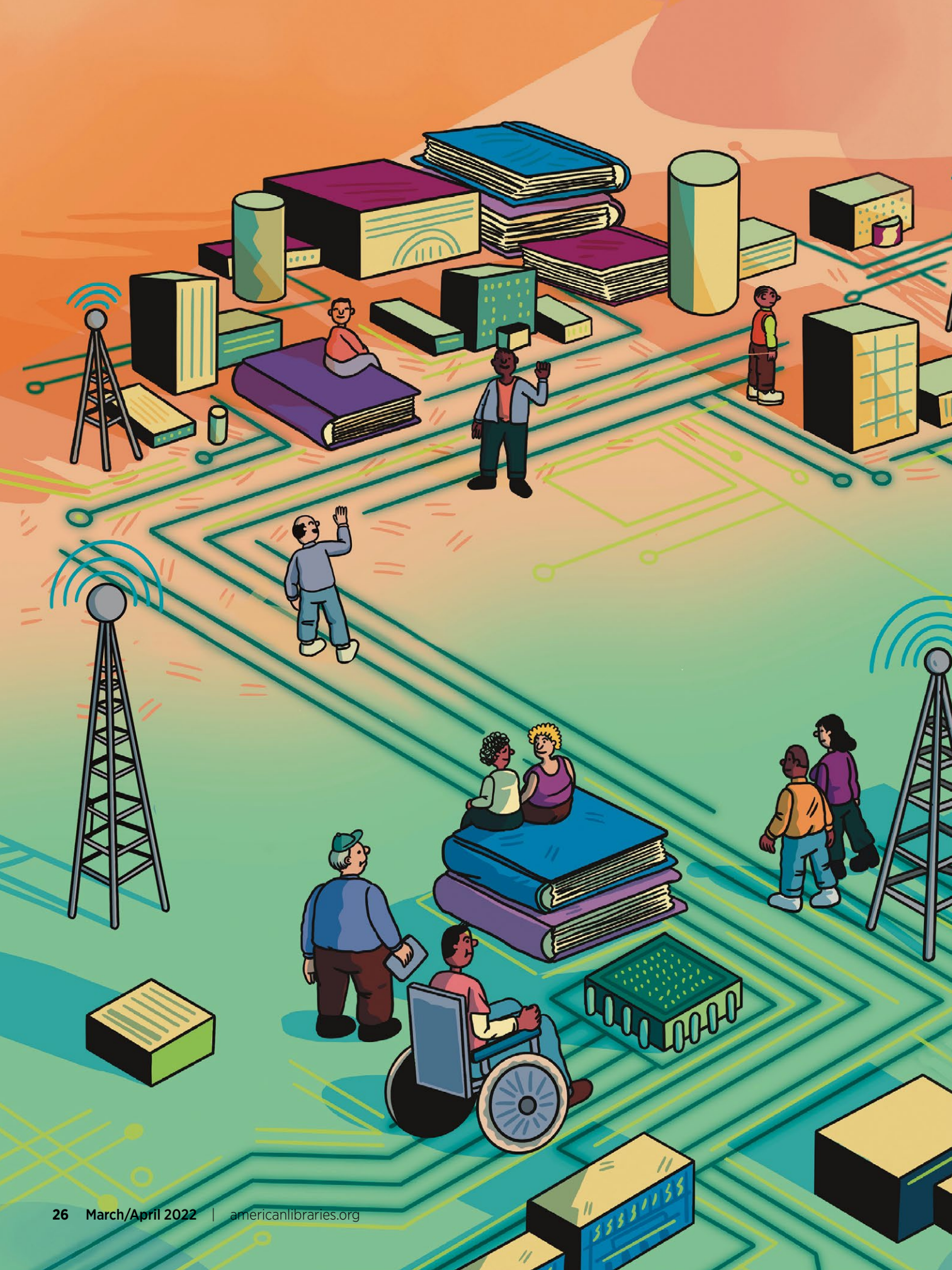
TOWARD AN
Equitable Digital Future

Libraries are bridging the divide and empowering communities

O ver the past two years, the pandemic has exposed the widening gap in the US among those with and without consistent access to the internet.

Even as lockdowns have eased and most schools and libraries have reopened, the availability of reliable broadband, devices, and digital literacy training remains critical—whether for schoolwork, employment, public services, telehealth visits, social connections, or civic participation. And this need will grow exponentially as technology infrastructure continues to evolve.

Library workers have been working to address the complex issue of the digital divide and advance digital equity for more than two decades. Now, armed with new tools, funding, partnerships, data, and social awareness, many groups, including libraries, see that a more equitable digital future is within reach.

Our special report on digital equity is inspired by a key focus area of ALA President Patricia "Patty" M. Wong's "Libraries Connect" presidential initiative. As she writes in her column this issue (p. 6), "With greater awareness … comes the responsibility of all library workers to advocate for digital equity."

On the following pages you'll find articles on:
■ free resources for libraries, including the Toward Gigabit Libraries Toolkit (p. 28)

■ statistics and context on broadband affordability and access (p. 30)
■ federal funding that's available now—and what's on the policy horizon—for libraries working toward digital inclusion (p. 32)
■ eight tips to advance digital equity immediately (p. 36)
■ a round table discussion on community coalitions (p. 38)

With innovation, outreach, and collaboration, library workers are educating themselves, their communities, and their stakeholders on the growing need for digital inclusion efforts. This special report is intended to be a launch pad for further exploration and action.

What action will your library take to serve your digitally underserved communities? **AL**

Illustrations: David Alvarado

The Last Mile

Toolkit enables libraries to advocate for their broadband connections

BY Greg Landgraf

For librarians working to overcome the digital divide in rural communities, understanding the value of—and urgent need for—broadband internet service is just a starting point. Grasping the details of the equipment and infrastructure necessary for high-quality service is another matter and can be a major stumbling block for librarians not steeped in the IT world. How can they be brought up to speed, literally and figuratively?

Using a 2015 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), nonprofit consortium Internet2 and its Community Anchor Program (CAP) have worked with technology consultant Carson Block to develop a free, downloadable toolkit to help library staffers understand and improve their broadband services and technical knowledge, says CAP Director Stephanie Stenberg. Called the Toward Gigabit Libraries Toolkit (bit.ly/AL-TGLtoolkit), the open-to-anyone resource grew out of IMLS's recognition of a significant gap in broadband access in rural and tribal libraries.

A new IMLS grant, awarded in 2020, will allow Internet2 to update and improve the toolkit. "We're adding sections based on feedback, including ones on community support and advocacy and funding," Stenberg says. Internet2 will also expand the focus to include under-resourced urban libraries.

The "last-mile" problem—the final leg of a telecommunications network that connects to the end-users' premises, where bandwidth limits can create data bottlenecks—is well known. But the "last hundred meters" haven't received a lot of attention, Block says, referring to the equipment and connections inside a building that can also limit internet connectivity.

Asking the right questions

CAP's toolkit starts with a detailed questionnaire that a library can use to describe its current broadband connection and infrastructure. Each question includes information to help librarians identify and understand the equipment and service they have. The toolkit provides instructions for measuring the download and upload speeds of an internet connection, for example. It also explains network quality measurements such as latency, jitter, and packet loss, which are collected in speed tests but may require a different approach to improve performance.

In addition to a thorough review of the library's existing systems, the toolkit has sections that help librarians estimate their broadband needs, identify technical support that might be available to them, evaluate their costs for internet service, and find potential sources of funding to help them improve service.

"When you understand your connection, you're able to advocate better for your needs," Block says. That may take the

form of simply understanding how a network connection can be improved, but it can go well beyond that to raising more complex questions: Would the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) E-Rate program be worth pursuing? Would partnering with a local entity help to improve a community's broadband?

Maureen Wacondo, interim librarian at Jemez Pueblo (N.Mex.) Community Library and Archives, says she had just applied for E-Rate funds to improve the library's broadband connection in 2017 when she learned about the toolkit from the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums. "I didn't know much about E-Rate, and the language was very difficult for me," she says. Having to research technical concepts she didn't understand made progress slow and difficult.

The Toward Gigabit Libraries Toolkit helped Wacondo improve her overall knowledge of E-Rate and her library's broadband connection. "The toolkit was my savior because everything I had questions about or was confused about was answered there," she says.

> ## "The toolkit was my savior because everything I had questions about or was confused about was answered there."
>
> **MAUREEN WACONDO,** interim librarian at Jemez Pueblo (N.Mex.) Community Library and Archives

Improved broadband internet service became especially important for her community—Pueblo of Jemez is home to about 2,000 people—when the pandemic struck. The library had used DSL broadband previously, but the connection was not strong. "At 3:30 every afternoon, when the children were on the computers after school, our internet speed went down drastically," Wacondo recalls.

Though Pueblo of Jemez is currently closed to outside visitors because of COVID-19 restrictions, the library remains open to tribal residents—and its connection is now faster and more reliable. The community has also used E-Rate funding to extend wireless coverage beyond the school and library buildings.

Wacondo's technical knowledge from the toolkit proved a valuable resource when the pueblo's tribal council and leadership decided to use CARES Act money and other funding to build a separate community broadband network and install equipment in each home. This has helped students connect to remote learning and tribal members access telework and telehealth options.

Building the toolkit

CAP and Block initially developed the toolkit in conjunction with research and education networks and state libraries, but they knew they needed more input from prospective users. "We had an idea of what we wanted to include, but we convened experts from rural and tribal libraries to let them take a look and rip it apart," Block says. The project team conducted site visits with 58 libraries, introducing the toolkit and having discussions with staffers about issues each library was facing.

In one case, a librarian discovered that poor Wi-Fi reception in the front of the library building was caused by the access point's location in the back of the building. When she took that information to her IT person, he relocated it, Block says. "Understanding the lingo and the concepts made her powerful in that conversation."

In another case, a city was installing a fiberoptic internet network but wasn't planning to include a connection to the library even though the fiber route passed immediately behind the building. "A library connection wouldn't have interfered with service for other users," Block says. "We discussed that so they could better advocate for a connection."

A springboard for funding

While Internet2 doesn't know precisely who is using its free toolkit, it has been downloaded frequently, and many state libraries are actively promoting it locally. In Montana, 115 of the state's 117 public libraries have used the toolkit.

"It was marketed really well by the Montana State Library," says Susie McIntyre, director of Great Falls (Mont.) Public Library (GFPL). The library is one of the only sources of free broadband in the community, and it's badly needed; during pandemic-related library closures, more than 2,000 people used the library's connection from the parking lot. But while its connection is billed as having upload and download speeds of 50 Mbps, in reality, last-mile connections limited download speeds to about 35 Mbps and upload speeds to about 15 Mbps—figures far below the 100 Mbps that the American Library Association and FCC recommend for smaller libraries in 2014's E-Rate Modernization Order.

McIntyre credits the toolkit with helping her to ask the library's foundation for funding to replace network switches to improve network stability—a request that was granted. She also used the toolkit to write a proposal for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds released by the state library to assist with broadband. GFPL was chosen to receive that funding, which will help it to update, streamline, and standardize cabling. The library has also applied for city ARPA funds to improve its last-mile connection.

Says McIntyre: "Our hope is that we're going to go from having an inadequate system to one that really works for our community." AL
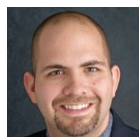
GREG LANDGRAF is communications and marketing coordinator at Georgetown University Libraries in Washington, D.C., and a regular contributor to *American Libraries.*

What Is Broadband?

Broadband, or high-speed internet, is internet with a minimum download speed of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) and a minimum upload speed of 3 Mbps—known as **25/3 Mbps speed.** There are 6 main types of broadband: broadband over power lines (BPL), cable modem, digital subscriber line (DSL), fiber, satellite, and wireless. **Fiber** is the fastest, with speeds up to 10,000 Mbps in some areas. **Cable** is the most used.

Unlike most other types of infrastructure—such as roads, bridges, energy grids, water lines, and sewage systems—the nation's **digital infrastructure is largely corporate owned** and generates revenues from paying subscribers.

Why Access Is Important

During the pandemic, technology has been a lifeline: 9 in 10 Americans said the internet has been essential or important to them over the past two years. But for those who lack digital access, **inequality has widened.** Without the internet, people are more likely to miss out on the ability to work, find a job, bank, participate in telemedicine, and do schoolwork, not to mention maintain social connections with friends and family. Affordability and availability are key factors for why people lack access.

Who's Left Out

19 million

households lack access to fixed broadband service at threshold speeds.[1]

14%

of US households (roughly **17 million**) don't have broadband of any kind.[2] Some estimate that number to be as high as **22.5%,** or **27.6 million** households.[3]

BY INCOME

Adults with household incomes below $30,000 a year

1 in 4

don't own a smartphone[4]

4 in 10

don't have home broadband services[4]

A Broad Look at BROADBAND

What high-speed internet access and affordability look like around the country

The Impact on Wallets—and Lives

$68.38/month

The average monthly internet price in the United States is higher than the average price for all North America at $61.46 and Europe at $44.71.[5]

	$70	United States
$60	North America
$50	
$40	Europe
$30	
$20	
$10	

Rural residents pay an average of $69 per month, while those living in urban areas pay $59.[6]

	$70	
$60	
$50	Rural
$40	Urban
$30	
$20	
$10	
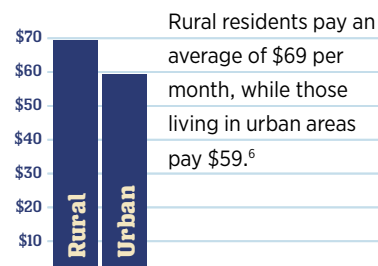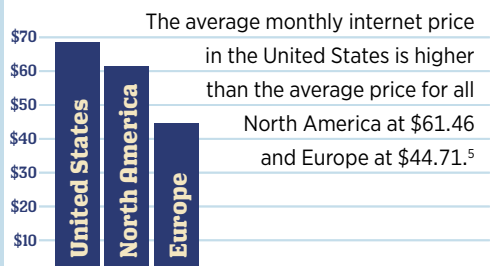
"Quality services should be available at just, reasonable, and affordable rates."
Section 254 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996

BY ABILITY

Percentage of adults who own a desktop or laptop computer[4]

With a disability
62%

Without a disability
81%

Among smartphone owners, there is a gap of 16 percentage points between those with a disability and those without one (72% vs. 88%).
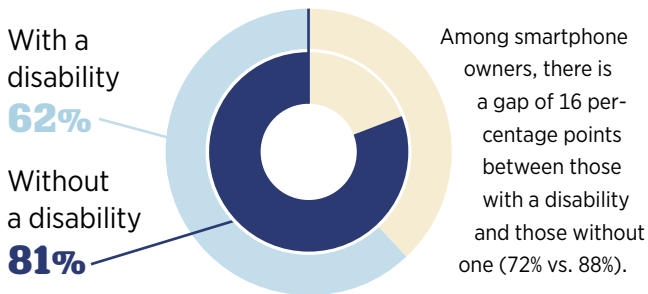
BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

Percentage of adults who report having a broadband connection at home[4]

80% White*

71% Black
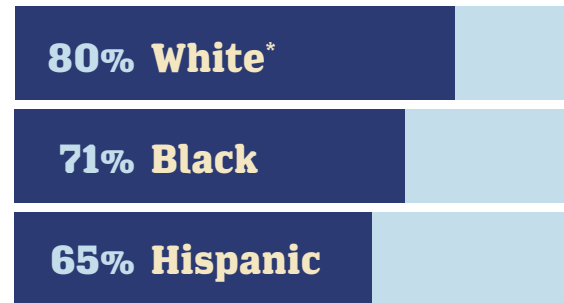
65% Hispanic

*Non-Hispanic white

BY POPULATION

About 1 in 4 people living in rural and tribal areas continue to lack access to fixed broadband.[7] That means 4.6 million of these households don't have a broadband connection.[8] Part of the reason: Private companies have little financial incentive to install infrastructure in areas with low population density and low adoption rates, and where terrain is expansive, rugged, or mountainous.

$40 billion

The estimated price to wire 98% of rural America.[9]

Potential Opportunities for Libraries

What households with annual incomes of $50,000 or below trust "a lot"[6]

31% local public libraries

20% schools

14% community nonprofits

8% internet service providers

4% of low- and lower-middle income people without access to the internet have used a local public library's broadband or the library's Wi-Fi connection outdoors.[6]
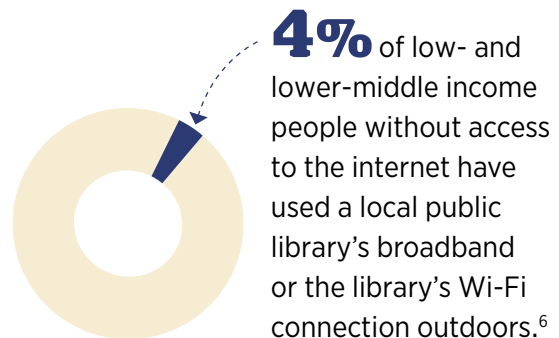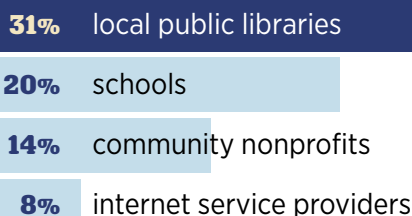
90% of libraries offer digital skills training. These programs can help inform people about the benefits of the internet and educate them on how to use devices and sign up for broadband discounts and other affordability programs.[10]

Sources: 1. FCC; 2. US Census Bureau's American Community Survey; 3. Reviews.org; 4. Pew Research Center; 5. New America's *Cost of Connectivity 2020* report; 6. EveryoneOn's *Affordability and the Digital Divide* December 2021 report; 7. FCC's 2020 *Broadband Deployment Report;* 8. US Census Bureau data; 9. FCC's 2017 *Improving the Nation's Digital Infrastructure* policy report; 10. ALA/PLA Libraries Lead with Digital Skills initiative
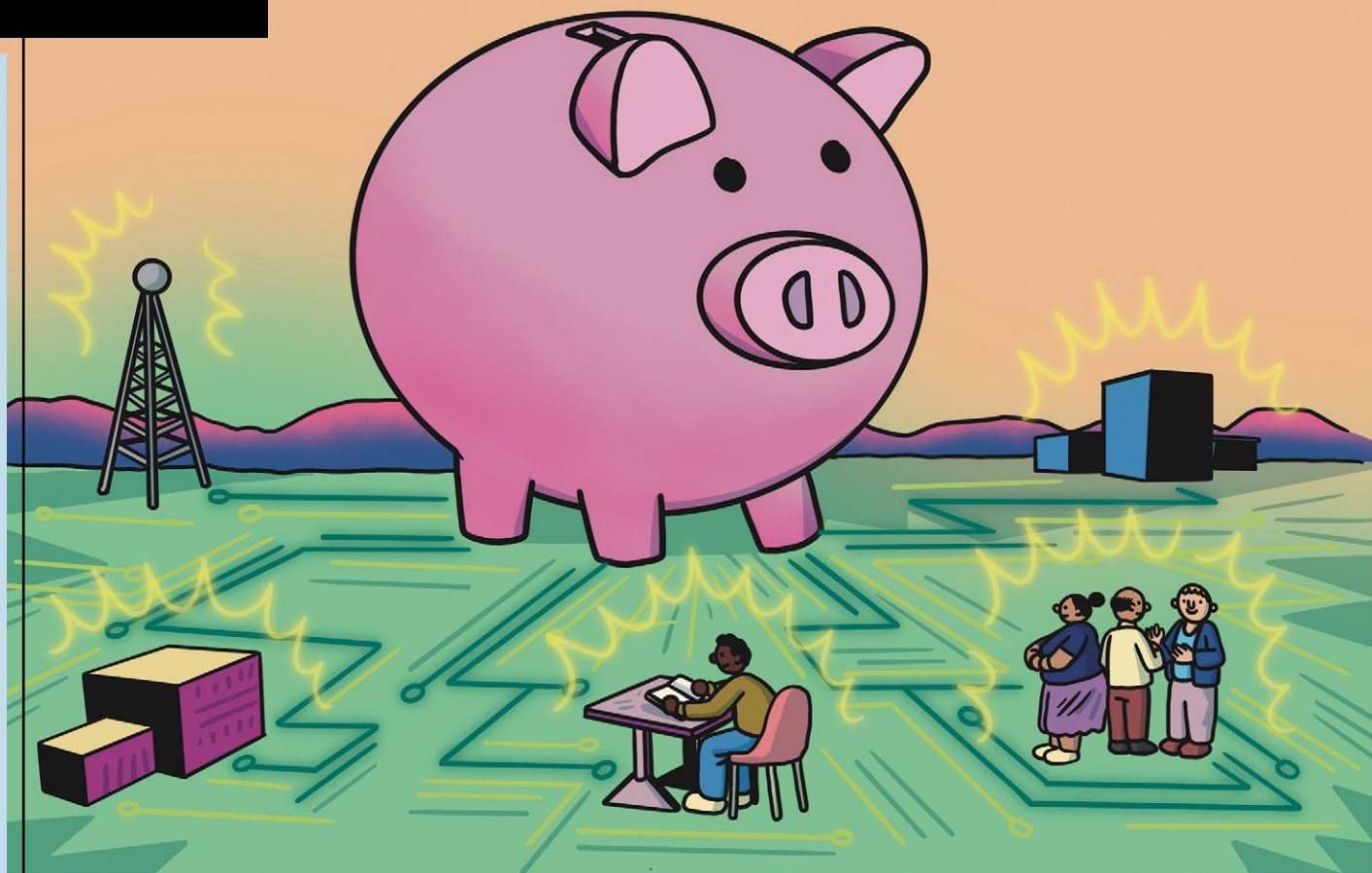
The 411 on Funding

Making sense of policy and funding options to fill digital equity gaps

BY Lara Ewen

I n January 2021, the American Library Association's (ALA) Council passed a resolution declaring support for broadband as a human right. Yet the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reports that approximately 19 million Americans lack broadband access, and "even in areas where broadband is available, approximately 100 mil-

lion Americans still do not subscribe." According to the Public Library Association's (PLA) *2020 Public Library Technology Survey,* released in September 2021, only half of all libraries provide some type of technology for use outside the library.

The pandemic threw the issue of unequal access to technology into sharp relief. Multiple funding bills have been proposed in the past few years—many with similar names— to alleviate this imbalance. However, staying on top of which bills have passed, what funding is available for libraries, and how librarians can get that funding can be a challenge.

Even for experts, the process is onerous. "It's hard for me to keep track, and my specialty is broadband," says John Windhausen Jr., executive director of the Schools, Health, and Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition in Washington, D.C. "There are so many sources of funding. Congress has put more energy and more funding into broadband initiatives than ever before."

Funding streams can have different sources—and targets. Larra Clark, deputy director of PLA and ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office, advocates for funding and resources on two levels: those specifically aimed at libraries, such as the E-Rate program, and those that maximize resources for serving community members, such as the Emergency Broadband Benefit. "I think sometimes those two streams

can get muddy," she says. "But they're both important to the communities we serve."

Old-school option: E-Rate

Some of the programs available are long-standing, such as E-Rate, which is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), a contractor to the FCC, as part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. "[E-Rate] provides schools and libraries with discounts on broadband connection, cost of internet access, and internal networking," says Robert Bocher, an ALA Public Policy and Advocacy fellow and former USAC board member based in Madison, Wisconsin. He adds that because E-Rate is funded by continuing appropriations, it's not subject to the political vagaries of other funding sources. The program provides libraries with discounts of up to 90% off their broadband bills, and community eligibility is based on National School Lunch Program guidelines.

Bocher says the program is noncompetitive but many libraries lack the resources to apply. "There's enough money to fund all the applications, and everyone qualifies," he notes. "But the application process is complicated, and smaller libraries often find it difficult to fill out the applications and deal with the FCC requirements."

Alan S. Inouye, ALA's senior director of public policy and government relations, acknowledges the problem. "As you might guess, there's a consulting industry that's grown up around this. However, it tends to help only larger library systems. If you're applying for a seven-figure E-Rate grant, paying a consultant may be worth it, but not for a small library."

Sovereign tribal libraries that had been denied access to E-Rate funds because of federal guidelines can now qualify as well. On January 27, at its open commission meeting, the FCC unanimously voted to clarify that tribal libraries are eligible for E-Rate. Previously, it was defined that applicants needed to be eligible for assistance from a state library agency. Bocher says that organizations such as the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums may be able to help with the application process now that the FCC has changed its guidelines.

New stimulus funds

Further funding came in March 2021 when the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) passed. It includes the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) and the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB). The $7.17 billion ECF was designed to help schools and libraries assist their communities with remote learning. Yet, unlike E-Rate, the ECF is a 100% reimbursement program.

"It's free money," Inouye says. "The ECF pays for the devices, laptops, tablets, and that kind of thing. And ECF pays for hotspots." He says he had hoped that the ECF would be bolstered by an additional $300 million from the Build Back Better Act, but the bill hit a wall in the Senate in January.

PROMISES MADE...

2004 President George W. Bush called for **affordable, high-speed internet access for all** Americans by 2007 to help promote the nation's economic growth.

2010 President Barack Obama promoted a **National Broadband Plan** as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a 360-page plan that outlined 208 recommendations.

2015 The **Connect America Fund Phase II** program required grant recipients to deliver service of only 10 Mbps downloads and 1 Mbps uploads—speeds less than half of those established by the FCC's definition of broadband. The effort initially granted 10 companies more than $1.5 billion annually to build broadband infrastructure over a six-year period through 2020. One of those companies—Frontier Communications—filed for bankruptcy in early 2020, citing the pandemic.

2019 President Donald Trump unveiled the $20 billion **Rural Digital Opportunity Fund,** designed to reach 5 million US locations through subsidies provided over 10 years. Consumer advocacy groups found that some of those funds were going to urban areas that already had service. ●

Instead, says Inouye, that funding is now "speculative" as legislators attempt to break the spending package into individual bills for passage.

ARPA has earmarked $130 billion for a local fiscal recovery fund, Bocher says. "That money goes to states and localities, and libraries could get some of this funding [for broadband infrastructure projects]." He says an additional $200 million in ARPA funds is going to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and can be used to purchase laptops and hotspots. "Most states are in the process of getting applications out for this," Bocher says. "We rely heavily on state agencies to get the word out on funding resources, specifically on the IMLS funding."

For library patrons, there's also the EBB, which directly benefits consumers, says Bocher. "It's similar to the lifeline program, which provides [funds] for low-income households with connectivity issues," he says, adding that libraries can

help patrons access EBB funds via public relations, outreach, and application assistance.

Infrastructure and digital equity

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which passed in November 2021, provides an additional $65 billion in broadband investments. "It includes $14 billion for a $30-per-month, low-income subsidy program," says Windhausen. "[The SHLB Coalition] said we're supporting that, but the average price of broadband nationwide is $65 per month, so $30 may not be sufficient." Windhausen says IIJA also includes $1 billion for middle-mile deployment, which is meant to connect anchor institutions (such as libraries) to the internet, as well as $2 billion for tribal libraries, which is separate from the E-Rate tribal library initiative. Another $2 billion will be available for rural services, and additional funding is provided for private activity bonds that allow localities to borrow money.

> ## "Congress has put more energy and more funding into broadband initiatives than ever before."
>
> **JOHN WINDHAUSEN JR.,** executive director of the Schools, Health, and Libraries Broadband Coalition in Washington, D.C.

Additionally, IIJA includes the Digital Equity Act (DEA), which provides $2.75 billion for digital inclusion and digital literacy, says Inouye. "That's the human side of how to make use of all that technology, and libraries are well-positioned for that," he says. "There's also $43 billion for broadband deployment in areas that don't have much broadband access. That's for digging ditches and laying cables for unserved and underserved areas."

"The DEA has the most potential for libraries," Windhausen says. "If libraries collaborate and submit joint applications, that could provide them with the funding to hire the staff they need, and the consulting firm costs could even be included in the application."

Pending bills and challenges

There may also be more funding initiatives coming in 2022. The Build America's Libraries Act (BALA) proposes $5 billion to modernize library infrastructure to address broadband, environmental, and accessibility challenges. Although not included in the Build Back Better spending bill, BALA is not likely to be "scrapped completely," says Inouye.

In the process of working on the legislation, he says, "we discovered many libraries could use some help in rebuilding and renovation." More than 100 members of Congress endorsed BALA, Inouye says, so the legislation may take

another form, possibly as a standalone bill or part of the FY2023 appropriations bill.

Windhausen adds that since a lot of funding goes through the states, governors have a say about allocation. "ALA and SHLB will try to convince them that libraries get this funding," he says. "But [telecom companies] will try to discourage investment in regions where they have coverage, even though they may only provide perfunctory coverage. Their lobbying efforts often have the effect of denying coverage to needy communities."

COVID-19, advocacy, and the long game

That's why advocacy work on behalf of libraries is so crucial, says Clark. "Library workers do things that aren't visible to their communities," she says. "ALA also does work that isn't always visible to libraries," like developing relationships to influence policy. "The long-term nature of our broadband advocacy is important. We've had setbacks and wins, but it's a long game."

Bocher says the pandemic has helped libraries develop better relationships with their communities to help ease overall connectivity problems, which may be a stopgap until more funding becomes available. "We have this homework gap in K–12, where 9–13 million students don't have digital access," he says. "But now we have a fair number of programs targeting those students, which means COVID-19 has helped close that gap." This will be especially important as funding remains in flux, he says.

Even so, Windhausen says, libraries should dream big. He suggests assembling "your most comprehensive plan of attack" to get everybody connected. He also encourages libraries to develop relationships with governors and other officials and ask to be included on task forces. "Libraries need to be seated at that table," he says. Find out if patrons have broadband at home and collect that data. "It can be anonymous," he says, "but ask how much it costs, and learn what parts of the community to target."

Clark says visibility is the key to funding and advocacy. "Libraries are rightly seen as leaders in digital equity," she says. "It's important as we come out of the pandemic to be visible." Send a report about what your library is doing through EBB, E-Rate, or the ECF to decision makers at city, state, and federal levels, she advises. Let them know what you could do if you had more support.

Technology also needs to be considered in a broader context, says Inouye. "People go to libraries looking for new jobs, or health information, or looking for help with schoolwork, or information about traveling," he says. "These are the things people care about. Access to technology is a means to an end." AL

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

Funding from the Feds

$65 billion

Amount allocated for expanding broadband access and subsidizing monthly internet fees for low-income households within the $1.2 trillion **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act** (IIJA) signed into law by President Biden on November 15. The funding is estimated to expand access to 50%–75% of the 19 million Americans who lack high-speed internet.

$2.75 billion

Funding for the **Digital Equity Act**—a provision within IIJA—which includes $1.25 billion for the **Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program.** Through this program, eligible entities, such as libraries, will receive funds to promote digital inclusion and spur greater adoption of broadband among qualifying individuals.

2015

Year the FCC defined broadband as a minimum download speed of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) and a minimum upload speed of 3 Mbps. There's a **new push** to redefine it as 100 Mbps both into and out of the home.
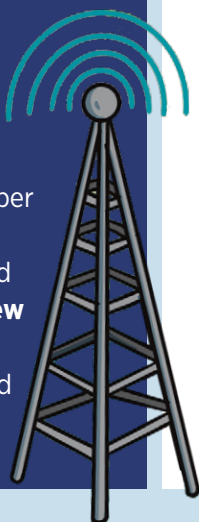
Closing the Gap

BY RACE AND ETHNICITY
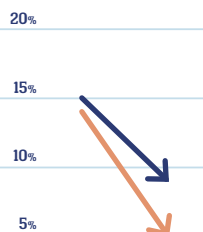
From 2019 to 2021, the percentage of Black and Hispanic adults who are offline has fallen significantly, from **15% to 9% among those who are Black,** and from **14% to 5% among those who are Hispanic.**[1]

BY AGE

Percentage of adults with no broadband at home[1]

Older adults have lower rates of adoption of high-speed internet and are taking less advantage of the benefits of discounts.

22% Ages 18–64

36% Over age 65
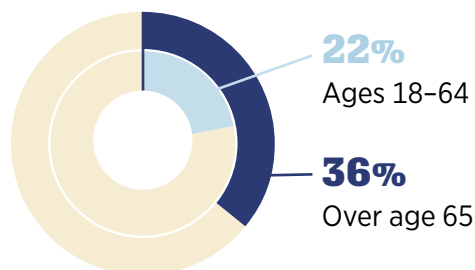
BY INCOME

7 million

Number of households whose annual incomes are $50,000 or less that have signed up for free or discounted high-speed service plan offers since the pandemic began through programs like the $3.2 billion federal Emergency Broadband Benefit program. Households with K–12 kids and very low-income households (annual income below $15,000) are more likely to have signed up for these offers.[2]

Those who take advantage of free or discounted offers pay **$27 per month,** on average, for high-speed internet.

$62

$27

Those whose income makes them eligible for these programs, but who say the programs are not easy to use, pay an average **monthly bill of $62.**

Sources: 1. Pew; 2. EveryoneOn's *Affordability and the Digital Divide* December 2021 report

Moving the Needle

8 tips to advance digital inclusion right now—regardless of your library's size or situation

BY Sallyann Price

Perhaps you've read about the new funding available for libraries to purchase laptops and hotspots (see p. 32), or you're familiar with digital equity concepts but aren't sure what they mean for your library. We talked with librarians and experts from the Public Library Association (PLA) and ALA's Committee on Literacy about practical steps to take and critical questions to ask to help level the playing field when it comes to devices, access, and training—even if you don't have a big budget or supportive infrastructure.

1 // LOOK AROUND

The first step is to take inventory of what digital programs, services, resources, and staffing already exist in your library and identify gaps and opportunities, says Larra Clark, deputy director of PLA and ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office. "That's the number one thing—where are you today? No matter who you are, no matter where you are, every library is providing assets that relate to digital equity," she says. "It's about understanding what you are doing with those assets and what's available to share with other people." From there, a needs assessment could take the form of a community survey, interviews with city and county leadership, or an examination of census data. Clark says: "It's not just what the library has but what do people need?"

2 // SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS

DigitalLearn.org, a suite of tech training resources developed by PLA, provides a trusted foundation for guiding patrons through computer basics like using a keyboard and setting up an email account. "I'm a big believer in not reinventing the wheel," says Gwenn Weaver, a retired consultant and former librarian who serves on ALA's Committee on Literacy. "There's a lot of money out there right now for broadband, there's a lot of money out there for equipment and services; [libraries] need to think about the *training*." Start with the tech skills checklist for library staff (bit.ly/AL-TechChecklist) and tools and resources for trainers (training.digitallearn.org).

3 // EXPAND ACCESS

TO DEVICES: Invest in hotspots and inexpensive laptops like Chromebooks to lend out to patrons, which many libraries have started doing during the pandemic. If you're able to host in-person events, consider hosting a technology fair where patrons can try out different devices. Weaver urges managers to account for technology troubleshooting, maintenance costs, and staff training in their long-term planning.

TO LIBRARY FACILITIES: Leave your building's Wi-Fi on at all times and consider adding outdoor access points and range extenders. PLA's March 2020 survey of public libraries' responses to COVID-19 found that 81% of public libraries were already doing this—which helped users access the internet when buildings closed at the outset of the pandemic.

IN COMMUNITIES: Turn your bookmobile or outreach vehicle into a mobile hotspot outfitted with tech tools and mobile services (like printing), and take the show on the road. Williamsburg (Va.) Regional Library did this with two of its vans, and library director Betsy Fowler said in an April 2020 PLA webinar that the approach had been effective: "We've been building a real usership as we get the word out in a variety of ways to the community."

4 // NAVIGATE

Embrace the role of the librarian as digital navigator, a dedicated one-on-one consultant and caseworker helping patrons with digital skills and devices. When Salt Lake City Public Library (SLCPL) launched a pilot digital navigator program in fall 2020 with a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, staffers overshot their service and engagement goals by reaching 585 individuals—more than the 450 users projected—and holding interactions for longer than expected. Shauna Edson, SLCPL's technology and digital equity manager and coauthor of a toolkit for digital navigators, also reports that many patrons returned for more guidance after the initial consultation. Read more about the National Digital Inclusion Alliance's digital navigator model at bit.ly/AL-NDIAmodel.

5 // ASK CRITICAL QUESTIONS

The digital divide is never just digital—it reflects social patterns and structures, meaning that years of entrenched biases and flawed policies have contributed to an institutionalized lack of access to resources. ALA Executive Director Tracie D. Hall has called the systematic denial of equitable access to information, information services, and information retrieval methods "information redlining." Look closely at where the need is in your community: What factors or forces have shaped it? How might your library target and tailor its outreach to meet it? How can the library design programs and services with rather than for marginalized groups?

6 // COLLABORATE

The most successful digital equity programs include collaborations with community partners, whether it's a school or university, a state agency or community organization providing a specific service, or a grant-making institution. When SLCPL launched its digital navigators pilot, for example, staffers identified a need for multilingual services in lower-income neighborhoods and approached local partners who could help meet that need. "Cultural competency, language, and communication were an essential component of the project," Edson says, citing partnerships with Suazo Business Center, which serves minority entrepreneurs, and Catholic Community Services of Utah, which serves immigrants and refugees. She also recommends linking up with community coalitions (see p. 38) or local chapters of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (digitalinclusion.org/affiliates). Consider taking a role in starting an alliance if there is not one in your area.

7 // TALK IT UP

Build a public awareness campaign around the library as a center for digital access and inclusion, where all patrons can get the skills and tools they need to take care of business online.

- Distribute direct mailers, fliers, transit advertising, or whatever works in your community.
- Pitch human interest stories and interviews with library staffers to local news outlets.
- Promote services on social media and on your library's website.
- Keep your board and Friends group informed of digital equity efforts.
- Add signage outside the building indicating what services are accessible remotely.

8 // EVOLVE

The pandemic has highlighted the ways our digital needs can rapidly evolve, requiring different skills and support over time, Clark says. Remote learning, telehealth, virtual interviews, hybrid schedules, and other realities of conducting business for the past couple of years are likely here to stay in some form, and the library's approach to digital equity must adjust to suit those shifting needs.

"In my mind, these questions about digital equity and digital literacy are really about lifelong learning," Clark says. "We all know there's going to be a new device, a new application. It's a lifelong journey for all of us to stay on top of this." **AL**
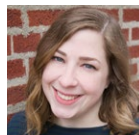
SALLYANN PRICE is associate editor of *American Libraries.*

Getting There Together

Digital equity coalitions offer partners new ideas and extra resources for solving problems

EDITED BY Terra Dankowski

Coalition, alliance, task force, committee, collaborative. The digital equity coalition is a model that goes by many names, but ultimately these groups share one familiar goal: closing the digital divide. In the years since *American Libraries* first reported on this trend (bit.ly/AL-DEcoalitions), these organizations have grown in frequency and scale across the country, with public-private partnerships often setting the agenda for digital inclusion in their cities, regions, and school and university networks.

"During the pandemic, the number of place-based digital inclusion coalitions has more than tripled," says Angela Siefer, director of the nonprofit National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA), a community of digital inclusion practitioners and policymakers. "The sudden awareness of digital inequities and the need for coordinated solutions caused folks to come together, [and] libraries are often the trusted community entities that are leading coalitions, connecting partners, and gathering resources to increase digital equity."

We talked with three library professionals about how digital equity coalitions have helped them improve capacity and resource-sharing and supported their communities during the pandemic:

CHRISTINE HERTZEL, interim director of library services at Long Beach (Calif.) Public Library and Long Beach Digital Inclusion Stakeholder Committee member

KATIE KEHOE, grants and communications librarian at F. D. Bluford Library at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro and member of Digital Durham's grants committee

DAWN KIGHT, dean of libraries at Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and member of the Louisiana Board of Regents Digital Inclusion Task Force

Christine Hertzel

Katie Kehoe

Dawn Kight

What digital equity problems does your community want to solve? How did you get involved with a coalition, and who are your local partners?

KEHOE: In Durham County, North Carolina, an estimated 7% of households do not have a computer at home and 13% of households are not subscribed to broadband internet. Digital Durham was founded in 2016 by Jenny Levine of Durham County Library, Lori Special of State Library of North Carolina, and Laura B. Fogle of Durham Public Schools to serve these households.

Our collaborative of more than a dozen members includes libraries and schools, literacy nonprofit Book Harvest, Durham Housing Authority, and Triangle Ecycling, a business that collects, refurbishes, and recycles computers and other electronics. Our group created a formal governance structure in 2019, which has allowed it to apply for a BAND-NC grant and fund the creation of a digital equity plan for the city and county.

> "Smartphones are internet-enabled devices, but it is very difficult to submit a résumé or write a research paper on them."

KATIE KEHOE, grants and communications librarian at F. D. Bluford Library at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro

KIGHT: My library supports students who attend Southern University and A&M College, the largest historically Black college and university in Louisiana. Our main goal is to provide access to resources that support learning, instruction, and research. For many years the library has offered computer and internet access to the campus community, as many students are without devices and broadband.

The Louisiana Board of Regents formed the Digital Inclusion Task Force during the COVID-19 pandemic to address the digital divide in higher education. I was invited to participate in the task force's Inclusion Operational Action Team subgroup. It was a natural fit since our library already offers a laptop loaner program and hosts Digital Literacy Days, which educate our community about opportunities to improve digital skills. Other partners on the task force include librarians, educational technologists, and faculty members from other Louisiana universities.

HERTZEL: In Long Beach, California, it is people of color and our older-adult population who are disproportionately affected by digital inequities. In 2021, the city reported that 10.1% of Latinx households, 11.4% of Black/African-American households, and 11.7% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander households lacked an internet subscription—more than twice the rate of white households (4.6%). Among adults age 65 years and older, 15.3% are without computer access.

In 2019, I joined the city's newly formed Digital Inclusion Stakeholder Committee as a representative for Long Beach Public Library (LBPL). The committee provided guidance on developing the vision, goals, and strategies that eventually became the Digital Inclusion Roadmap. Partners include city departments, community-based organizations, digital inclusion nonprofits, funders, internet service providers, K–12 and higher education institutions, and private technology companies. Community members were also interviewed at pop-up events, and their responses were included in the road map.

How does your coalition address the three main aspects of digital equity: affordable, high-speed internet; internet-enabled devices; and digital literacy training?

HERTZEL: Our committee reflects the spectrum of digital inclusion and was split into three working groups that cover capacity, connectivity, and technology. The capacity group, of which I am a part, focused discussions on leadership, multilingual computer literacy training and support, technology jobs and internship opportunities, job preparedness, and computer literacy skills development. Some of the partners in this group included the YMCA of Greater Long Beach, the Long Beach Economic Development Commission, and Gals Starting Over, a community program designed to help women restart their careers.

KIGHT: Our task force was charged with developing a plan to ensure that higher education faculty members have access to professional development, students have the digital literacy skills to be successful online, and students have the tools to get online, including affordable and sustainable broadband connections. To implement these goals, partnerships and collaborations have been essential. For example, LOUIS: The Louisiana Library Network, our statewide higher education consortium, provided institutions with access to training modules from Northstar Digital Literacy that were shared with students and faculty.

KEHOE: The term I tend to use is *usable device* instead of *internet-enabled device.* Smartphones are internet-enabled devices, but it is very difficult to submit a résumé or write a research paper on them. Pew Research Center data suggests that smartphone and cellphone ownership is nearly ubiquitous, but this device alone does not meet many people's needs.

While our collaborative is open to organizations and individuals with a common interest in bridging the digital

divide, it does not itself often sponsor programming. Every organization in Digital Durham is independent, but efforts are amplified by the group. For example, Durham County Library lends technology kits and Wi-Fi hotspots, and offers digital literacy classes. Members are aware of these offerings and can tell their users about them or partner with the library on a program to increase the capacity of the service. As a group, we share best practices and data, and partner on grant applications.

What successes has your digital equity coalition seen?

KIGHT: Task force meetings allow each campus to express its digital inclusion needs and schools are able to receive resources, such as Wi-Fi hotspots and mobile devices. While I do not know exact numbers, I can state that before the COVID-19 pandemic, the library had a long list of students—and some faculty members—who were waiting to check out laptops. The list still exists, but we're closing the gap thanks to CARES Act funding and the task force's efforts. The university community is now more aware of the need for digital literacy, and our administrators now champion the library's efforts.

HERTZEL: The connections made on this committee have allowed LBPL to accomplish goals that we couldn't otherwise on our own. The Digital Inclusion Resources Hotline, for instance, was a partnership of three city departments—LBPL, the Economic Development Department, and the Technology and Innovation Department—and funded by the CARES Act.

Long Beach has a resource called ConnectedLB, where residents can enter their information on a website and find low-cost options for internet services, computers, and hotspots. But what if you don't have internet at all? A website doesn't help residents get connected in that situation. The committee thought, what about a multilingual hotline that people can call for help?

When the hotline was in its early stages, LBPL Manager of Branch Libraries Cathy De Leon reminded city partners that the library is perfectly positioned to staff such a service, because digital navigation is already an integral part of our day-to-day work.

KEHOE: Some highlights of Digital Durham's work have so

far included completing an inventory of resources and gaps, meeting with Detroit's director of digital inclusion, and holding seven online focus groups and surveying 300 residents in English and Spanish online and in-person—input that was used to craft our digital equity plan.

Our partners have themselves done innovative work. Durham Public Schools was able to increase parents' digital literacy skills by holding evening sessions that made them more aware of the digital tools their children use in class. The district's foundation provided grant funding to cover child-care for these events. And Durham Public Library's Stanford L. Warren branch is using a state Library Services and Technology Act grant to pilot a digital navigator program, where users can reserve appointments with librarians who personally connect them with resources over the phone or during a socially distanced session.

How has COVID-19 affected your coalition's work?

KIGHT: The greatest challenge was trying to implement action plans quickly so that there wouldn't be an interruption to services or learning. Task force members were also experiencing work-life balance challenges and needing support. I remember one meeting where the group was divided into smaller Zoom rooms to discuss a topic, and much of the time was spent talking about mental health and a need for institutions to respond in this area.

The task force advised campuses to consider the emotional needs of their communities as decisions were made concerning housing, library and technology access, assignments, and instruction. At my library, I made sure employees—including student workers—knew that counseling was available to them. When campus reopened, I worked with the counseling center's director to reserve individual study rooms for private and confidential virtual counseling sessions for students without computers.

HERTZEL: During the pandemic, LBPL launched Tech To-Go, a Chromebook and hotspot lending service,

During the pandemic, Long Beach (Calif.) Public Library launched Tech To-Go (below), a Chromebook and hotspot lending service.

Digital Durham created fliers (above) in English and Spanish that explain the Emergency Broadband Benefit program.

and served as a distribution point for the city's Free Internet Services and Computing Devices Program, a partnership that has so far distributed 1,093 hotspots and 1,592 computing devices on a first-come, first-served basis to qualified, low-income residents.

KEHOE: In March 2020, our hearts were breaking over the digital inclusion work that we knew needed to be done, but our options were so limited. Digital literacy classes were canceled, and those partners who distributed low-cost devices were quickly running out of inventory. Durham Public Schools was working to get kids laptops and internet for remote schooling, and we knew telehealth was going to present a challenge for many users. Moreover, reaching people who needed services was difficult during lockdown. Our group created fliers in English and Spanish listing options for free and low-cost internet services and spots offering free Wi-Fi that could be found in Durham and the county.

On a macro level the pandemic has magnified digital inequities in this country, and we have spent less time explaining the issues and more time developing solutions. There is now more money and focus on digital inclusion at a higher level of government than I have seen before (see p. 32). Billions of dollars have been earmarked to be spent on digital inclusion efforts through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Emergency Broadband Benefit, and American Rescue Plan Act. At the local level, decisions are still being made about how to spend federal funds, so there are opportunities for libraries to influence how this money should be spent.

What tips do you have for libraries looking to form or join a digital equity partnership or coalition?

KIGHT: Realistic goals, relevant meeting agendas, a willingness to collaborate, time, passion, and good leadership are all key elements needed for a functional and sustainable task force.

KEHOE: For those looking to form a coalition, NDIA has a guide-book (bit.ly/AL-NDIAguide). Be sure to seek out support at the state and federal level and consider becoming an NDIA affiliate. Also, make it easy for the community to find you by setting up a website with contact information.

HERTZEL: Your library doesn't need to be a city department in order to engage with your city on the topic of digital inclusion. Find the organizations that would make for appropriate stakeholders and connect. Look to other communities and libraries to see how they're approaching the work, involving the public, and getting things done. **AL**

TERRA DANKOWSKI is managing editor of *American Libraries.*

Creating Fundable Grant Proposals

10 steps for successful grant seeking with partners

BY Bess G. de Farber

G rant proposals that include partnerships have a significant competitive advantage. Whether these partnerships are with other departments within the same library or with external groups that allow the funder to invest in multiple groups through one grant, collaborations can give you a leg up. But most people have little or no training in developing grant proposals. And to make things more complicated, imagine doing this work with little or no familiarity with those you may want to partner with. For both seasoned and novice grant seekers, and for applicants and their partners, the following steps demystify the partnership process.

1 Create a workflow

When a team wants to submit a grant proposal, it should first ask this question: Do we know the review and approval steps and authorities within our organization who are required to sign off on the proposal prior to submission? If the answer is no, then ascertaining this information will be the first step.

A problem with grant seeking for those who plan to do it for the first time is that it appears to be a deceptively easy process if the guidelines are clear, correct, and complete. But if one simply followed the guidelines as offered by the sponsor and had a version ready 24 hours prior to the deadline, there would be insufficient time to share the proposal with the necessary approvers within the organization. That's because the process requires time to read and fully understand the proposal—especially its budget—and opportunity for feedback and corrections.

The key step to submitting any grant application? Make sure the organization's administrators have endorsed the feasibility of a project. Administrators and others in an organization who are assigned extra work that results from "surprise" grant projects can possibly sabotage a grant-seeking culture. Accordingly, organizations should try to maximize transparency about grant projects that are in development well in advance of the approval process.
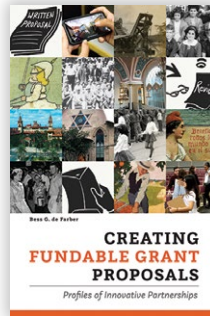
2 Find funding opportunities

Personnel interested in grant seeking should be provided with a periodic list of deadlines for funding opportunities. If a few librarians dedicated one hour biweekly to a search, they would uncover a treasure trove of opportunities.

To do this effectively, those searching must be aware of the organization's inherent assets, the interests of its employees, and past project themes on which to build. Creating an asset map of resources, projects, past sponsors of funded proposals, and past published articles is a way to build continuous knowledge of what is happening in an organization that may inspire new proposals for funding, whether internal or external.

3 Workshop funding opportunities

Consider presenting workshops to help others learn about specific sponsors and their funding programs. Federal grant programs, such as those administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services or the National Endowment for the Humanities, or state libraries' annual Library Services and Technology Act grant programs, will be good examples to highlight. The guidelines are fairly stable each year, and the programs often announce grant awardees during the funding cycle in a news release, along with abstracts that describe projects being awarded.

Analyzing award lists in a workshop setting can help contextualize the types of projects that these sponsors have chosen to invest in. Participants can be instructed to determine which projects could be replicated in their own organizations. Or they can be asked to think up new projects that might have more benefits and impact because of an innovative element identified within their organization. Groups can categorize the proposals that feature various types of projects, such as research, outreach, literacy, technology, and so on. This will further their understanding of the interests of a particular sponsor in any given year. The process offers a window into funding trends that can be applied to grant application planning efforts.

This is an excerpt from *Creating Fundable Grant Proposals: Profiles of Innovative Partnerships* by Bess G. de Farber (ALA Editions, 2021).

4 Create a checklist

Sponsor guidelines, including the application itself, are not uniform in quality. Many people who write sponsor guidelines have never planned, prepared, or written a grant proposal. This means the quality of the proposal can be compromised by the quality of the guidelines. How can you get around this? One way is to translate the application's guidelines and criteria for evaluation into a checklist of questions to be answered by the project team.

First, start with the narrative components of the application. Create two columns to make a checklist: one for questions to be addressed and another to identify the person who will author the draft responses for each specific question or narrative section. Most guidelines ask the applicant to describe the project's significance or its outcomes. The applicant's checklist should convert these statements into

questions. Completing this activity will likely generate an excellent blueprint for the grant application's narrative sections.

5 Find partners and develop an idea

This step can be tricky for those with limited experience with grants. Let's say your team identifies a funding opportunity that appears promising. It secures the list of previously awarded projects and award amounts, completes its checklist, and is ready to define the project. At this point the team should ask: What assets are readily available to improve the project? Once this list is generated, the team should ask: What assets are potentially available in external organizations that may enhance and improve the quality of the project? Finally, the team should consider: Which asset contributors are potentially available in external organizations that are unknown to the team?

Obviously, the more access the team has to external assets, the less resistance the team will encounter to quickly onboarding new partners. The more interest and excitement the project generates, the more others will want to join.

6 Create a timeline and budget and find partners

The draft timeline is the glue that holds the project together. The more detail available to describe each activity, the more easily prospective partners will be able to visualize and understand the project and their prospective roles in its execution.

Building the draft budget will determine the grant amount to request. The total contributed effort (cost share or in-kind contributions) can be quantified by those involved in executing the timeline, whether the sponsor requires it or not. The estimate should include lump sums to cover expenses that partners may need to participate and to complete the project as envisioned. Compare this amount with previously awarded grants for this specific sponsor. With this information, the team can decide if it is reasonable to invite partners to consider performing a role in the project.

Prospective partners should be asked: Why might you be interested in participating? What do you think you might gain? What do you foresee would be your involvement in the

> **If there is any chance that the project lacks enthusiasm or at least a consensus to move forward, the team should reconsider the narrative.**

activities outlined in the timeline? Going further, the team can ask: What experiences does your organization have, or what resources would you be able to contribute to the project?

If this conversation is fruitful and all parties feel energized by the opportunity, then the team can ask: Would your organization's participation require a portion of the funds requested or can participation be contributed as cost share, or a combination of both? After receiving answers to these questions, the team can determine the total amount of grant funds to request. The costs for each partner's participation in the project are added to the draft budget to decide if the project remains feasible.

The most time-consuming part of the application is writing the narrative section. If there is any chance the project lacks enthusiasm or at least a consensus to move forward, the team should reconsider the narrative. Project members should convene with their respective supervisors and all those involved in the proposal to review the grant application. If it receives positive reviews, the proposal is feasible. The team and its partners can now move forward to prepare the narrative, finalize the timeline and budget, and gather the remaining application materials.

7 Prepare, package, and submit the proposal

It may take months or even a year to get to this point, or it can happen quickly if the assets, application information, and documentation already exist and just need to be combined into a single proposal. First, seek out the elements that are dependent on other partners to complete and are therefore largely beyond the control of the team, such as letters of commitment, letters of support, and key personnel résumés; these are all typical requirements for most proposals.

Packaging the proposal should begin at least 48 hours prior to the internal deadline for institutional authorized review

and approval before submission. This should provide sufficient time to catch mistakes or missing documents. It is best to print the entire proposal package and view its elements in hard-copy format prior to submitting it for review. Reading the entire proposal out loud is one of the best ways to find mistakes or sections that are missing information. Seeing it in a printed format can expose all kinds of hidden errors.

8 What to do while waiting

Some review processes can take up to nine months. During that period, a lot can happen. People can change jobs within the organization, retire, or leave for positions elsewhere. Family or medical situations can arise that prevent partner representatives from participating in the project. When these life events occur, applicant team members must be made aware so that contingency plans can accommodate changes in advance.

During this dormant time, the team and its partners can strategize about other funding sources and share plans for attending conferences where partners can meet. They can also share information about other funding awards, the progress made on project activities to prepare for possible funding, or the addition of new personnel who plan to contribute to the project.

9 What to do if you do— or don't—get the grant

Once the principal investigator is notified of the award or declination, the news should be circulated among the project team, financial management administrators, the institution's central grants administrators, and partners. If the proposal has been declined, request the grant reviewer's comments, which should be readily available for all government grant programs. Private foundations traditionally do not share reviewer comments.

In general, there are two types of awards: the full grant award and a partial grant award. For partial awards, the project team and partners must determine if they can complete the project with a smaller award or whether the shortfall can be made up by some other source; what budget items can be reduced; and which budget items, if any, the sponsor expects to be reduced or eliminated. For grant applications receiving either full or partial funding, there likely will be other documents requiring the signatures of the organization's authorized signatory and the project leader to formally commit to accepting the funds and executing the project under the terms and conditions offered by the sponsor.

The team and its partners should note the dates when reports will be due. Also, it is important to review the timeline of activities with everyone at the start to determine if any dates need adjusting. Scheduling regular grant project meetings with all participants and adopting a communication plan to keep everyone informed should be done in the first month.

10 Celebrate your success

The team and its partners may need time to complete the grant project. Usually a sponsor will specify provisions for how to request a no-cost extension. Keeping tabs on the team's and partners' activities and progress will help anticipate situations that may require a grant period extension. Assessing these situations 45–90 days prior to the end of the grant period is essential. Most extensions cover an additional year to complete the project to avoid multiple extension requests.

Monitoring budget expenses throughout the project becomes even more important as the project winds down. The project leader will need to touch base with partners to confirm that all funds will be spent down as planned. Some situations, such as those in which equipment purchases were less than projected or delays occurred in hiring time-limited personnel to execute grant-funded activities, can result in grant funds remaining at the end of the project. By anticipating these occurrences, a request can be made to extend the grant period so that funds can be expended.

Finally, celebrate to acknowledge completing the project. This is an important step. It can boost a sense of community and encourage participants to consider future grant projects. To support a culture of grantsmanship, present a showcase of the team's grant-funded work during a standalone presentation for staff members in the organization. This presentation can be inspirational and uplifting—sharing stories about what is possible when assets are combined in new ways, when participants offer mutual assistance to activate these assets, and where there is a genuine sense of appreciation for those who have contributed to these efforts. AL

BESS G. DE FARBER is grants manager for George A. Smathers Libraries at University of Florida in Gainesville.

Prioritizing Ethnic Studies

How library workers can support the field

BY Raymond Pun, Melissa Cardenas-Dow, and Kenya S. Flash

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Ethnic studies is a multifaceted field that connects to other academic disciplines such as history, religious studies, literature, sociology, political science, education, and health sciences. Not to be confused with area studies—the "systematic investigation of the particularities of various regions through deep knowledge of their histories, languages, and cultures," such as Asian studies, Latin American studies, and African studies (bit.ly/AL-AreaStudies)—ethnic studies examines the lived experiences of ethnic groups within the US and analyzes the roots of racial and ethnic inequalities and their contemporary impact. This understanding is especially important with the increasing significance of ethnic studies at the national level.

In August 2020, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed California Assembly Bill 1460, requiring all students in the 23-campus California State University system to take a three-unit ethnic studies class—in Native-American studies, African-American/Black studies, Asian/Pacific American studies, or Chicanx/Latinx studies.

During the 2021–2022 academic year, thousands of students enrolled in these courses in order to graduate. California's community colleges require students to take an ethnic studies course as well, and the state has approved a K–12 ethnic studies curriculum.

In Illinois, Gov. J. B. Pritzker signed the TEAACH (Teaching Equitable Asian-American History) Act in July 2021 and mandated that public schools incorporate "a unit of instruction studying the events of Asian-American history, including the history of Asian Americans in Illinois and the Midwest" (bit.ly/AL-TEAACH). Other states passed or proposed similar bills in 2020 (bit.ly/AL-StateStandards).

While not every state has adopted an ethnic studies curriculum, it is time for libraries to create space for ethnic studies. Examples include committing to proactive, culturally competent outreach and engagement in these areas, expanding ethnic studies collections, supporting events and programs hosted by ethnic studies departments, and engaging with communities outside university and school walls.

According to Christine E. Sleeter and Miguel Zavala's *Transformative Ethnic Studies in Schools: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Research* (Teachers College Press, 2020), ethnic studies "seeks to rehumanize experiences, challenge problematic Eurocentric narratives, and build community solidarity across difference."

In 2020, the combined impact of police brutality against African Americans, the rise of anti-Asian violence and xenophobia, and other acts of white supremacy since the emergence of COVID-19 have forced us, as a profession and as a nation, to reckon with America's history of systemic racism and violence toward communities of color. Ethnic studies has long done the work of critical inquiry into racial injustice from the past to the present, yet the engagement of libraries in this work is not comprehensive.

In light of many university libraries' stated commitments to antiracism (bit.ly/AL-Statements), library workers should explore ways that we can support departments that have long engaged in the work of challenging Eurocentric institutions. To do so, we should take a page from the mission and vision of ethnic studies as a discipline, examine long-held biases, and consider how we marginalize certain groups in our midst. What narratives do we propagate and support that contribute to ongoing subjugation at work? What counternarratives can we use instead? How can we engage to build a more just world?

> Ethnic studies has long done the work of critical inquiry into racial injustice.

The possibilities for collaboration are limitless. Making space in libraries for ethnic studies signals to students and faculty that these topics matter, their scholarship and education matter, and they belong in our academic community. Let's not wait for more education bills to adopt an ethnic studies–focused approach that is humanizing. We can start making spaces now.

Raymond Pun, Melissa Cardenas-Dow, and Kenya S. Flash are coeditors of Ethnic Studies in Academic and Research Libraries (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2021). AL

A Model for Privacy?

How to approach user data in management systems and marketing services

BY Marshall Breeding

MARSHALL BREEDING is an independent consultant, speaker, and author. He writes and edits the website Library Technology Guides.

Commercial marketing techniques make extensive use of personal information to target content. Libraries, however, must take a more tempered approach when marketing content and services to ensure patron privacy with policies that govern how personally identifiable data can be stored, accessed, used, and shared.

In general, there are four approaches that libraries can take in relation to patron privacy. As library leaders consider implementing new tools for improving user outreach, they need to consider which model best suits their mission and strategic initiatives:

- **Strict privacy.** At one end of the spectrum, the library configures its integrated library system (ILS) to never retain circulation history in transaction files or borrower records.
- **Full retention.** At the other end, the library configures the ILS to always retain circulation history and records.
- **Optional retention.** Patrons can choose to have the system retain their borrowing history and other data that may enable personalized services, and they may view their own information. Unless the patron opts in, the system follows the model of strict privacy.
- **Optional privacy.** Patrons can choose to have the system remove or anonymize their history. Unless the patron opts in, the system follows the full retention model.

Although privacy policies vary from library to library, they share some general prevailing concerns. One is data encryption in both storage and transmission. Any sensitive data should be encrypted to prevent unauthorized access. Because patron records contain personally identifiable information such as names, email addresses, and birth dates, they must be held securely to prevent data breaches. Encryption ensures that even if an intruder gains access to the internal system, the information will not be accessible without the required digital credentials. Most modern database management systems have built-in capabilities to store data with encryption. When data is transmitted from one system to another or accessed through an application such as an ILS, use of secure protocols such as HTTPS provides strong protection from interception of data on the internet or other networks.

Another general concern is data anonymization. To preserve patron privacy, reporting or analytics should be based on fully anonymized data sets. Ideally, any data collected removes personal information before it is recorded. When personal details are needed for essential operational processes, the data can be anonymized as soon as

> Although privacy policies vary from library to library, they share some general prevailing concerns.

transactions that require those details conclude.

When it comes to data collection and retention, the ILS creates and keeps essential records for every circulation transaction. While it is necessary to maintain data linking a patron and an item during the course of a loan, another set of data retention issues applies once the item is returned. From a strict privacy perspective, no records should be retained that make it possible to reconstruct the use of that item by a specific patron in a specific period.

Rather than completely remove circulation transaction records, libraries could replace personally identifiable data with placeholders that retain specific characteristics of the patron but not the person's specific identity. These anonymized circulation history records can be used for statistics and analytics while respecting privacy requirements.

Which privacy model a library chooses will have an impact on its strategies for personalized services and marketing. But even under the strictest privacy models, libraries can work with patrons and vendors to implement effective marketing and outreach services.

Adapted from "Patron Engagement and Marketing Products and Services for Public Libraries," Library Technology Reports vol. 58, no. 2 (Feb./Mar. 2022). Read more at bit.ly/ALA-LTR. AL

Rethinking Digital Literacy

A critical approach empowers students to create change

BY Molly June Roquet

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Around the globe, networked technology is amplifying deadly misinformation, monetizing surveillance, fueling hatred, and facilitating antidemocratic violence. Digital literacy education has never been more vital.

But instead of helping students understand these phenomena, digital literacy curricula tend to focus on individual behavior and responsibilities: *Do* protect your private information. *Don't* cyberbully your classmates. *Do* use citations. These lessons often aim to correct perceived misbehavior or build academic skills but do little to raise students' awareness of the complex social issues around technology.

Frustrated by this disconnect, I went looking for a different approach. I found hope and inspiration in scholarship on critical information literacy and other critical frameworks in education (bit.ly/critdiglit). While I certainly don't have all the answers, I would like to share some ideas on what critical digital literacy looks like and how it informs my teaching.

Critical digital literacy is the ability to seek context, imagine alternatives, and build agency to create change. This approach is not a replacement for skills instruction; rather, it can be added to any lesson.

Seeking context means that students understand technologies as products of historical, social, political, and economic systems and moments. Students should also recognize that systemic oppression is re-created in tools that might seem neutral at first glance. When seeking context, students ask questions, consider impacts, and look beyond the superficial. For example, instead of just telling my middle school students that cyberbullying is wrong, I invite them to investigate how social media companies tweak algorithms to maximize engagement and profits, with some choosing to amplify vitriol and misinformation. Students can reflect on their own online experiences and discuss how they would change platforms to make the internet a less hostile place.

Imagining alternatives means that students think beyond the current moment and imagine ways that technology could better serve humanity. It's important to create space for students to be critical thinkers. When introducing new tools, I ask students what changes they would make to improve their experience. Building on their ideas, I might introduce deeper questions: *What would this look like if it wasn't funded by advertising? What data is being collected and why?* Other times, I ask students to imagine something completely new. For example, *If Google disappeared tomorrow, what tool could you develop to navigate the internet?*

> Instead of being cheerleaders for new technologies, librarians should model a critical approach.

Building agency to create change means that students understand the ways technologies evolve and think about how to work toward those changes. Too often, we discuss technology as if it has a predetermined destiny beyond our control. Media celebrates individual entrepreneurs, but technologies are often shaped by groups of everyday people: users switching services, citizens advocating for regulations, employees working for change within an organization. Our students are the activists, programmers, and CEOs of tomorrow; it's important that they start thinking about solutions. I ask students to look at examples of digital activism and dig into the history of consumer technology, seeing how companies and technologies rise, fall, and change in response to economic, social, and political pressures.

Should we teach younger kids to use technologies before we discuss complicated social issues? As challenging as it is, we must do both. Even our youngest students are surveilled and influenced by networked technology, and they are fully capable of expressing what they do or do not like about an app or website.

Instead of just being cheerleaders for new technologies—or books, for that matter—librarians should model a critical approach in every part of school library service, from collection development to teacher collaboration. Everything we do should empower our communities to create change. **AL**

Broadening Outreach

Maximize family outreach and impact
through community collaboration   **BY** Cynthia Kiyotake

CYNTHIA KIYOTAKE is associate director of library operations with Arapahoe (Colo.) Libraries. She has worked at Arapahoe Libraries in various operational capacities for almost 20 years.

All public libraries offer some form of traditional programming: storytimes, book clubs, crafts, or résumé workshops, for instance. But the best, most innovative programs are tailored to the specific needs of a community, and I've found that targeted outreach and collaboration with other organizations often yield the strongest results.

My eight-branch library system in the Denver metro area serves about 655,000 people across much of Arapahoe County, covering a diverse social landscape: lower-income communities, rural Coloradans, a county jail, and a variety of residential and commercial interests. Various groups within our libraries administer programming work collaboratively to meet the particular needs of children and families.

Here are some of the strategies we've employed:

Connect with preschools. My team identified preschools in underserved communities, where teachers are less likely to be fully certified in early childhood development (which is not a requirement in Colorado preschools). Our library's preschool outreach specialist, who is degreed in early childhood development, now trains teachers at those preschools, conducting monthly online courses with the end goal of teacher certification. This intervention provides needed support to preschools and preschool teachers, broadening the library's reach as we've promoted library resources, signed teachers up for library cards, and delivered specialized training.

Connect with elementary schools. A December 2021 article in *The Colorado Sun,* "When Even Books Are 'Quarantined,' Reading Progress in Colorado's Early Grades Is Challenging," reported troubling trends in children's reading skills. The story noted an 8% increase in significant reading deficiency among kindergartners over the previous year, as recorded by the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Education Initiative that fall. Those revelations prompted us to consider how our library might help bridge the gap.

We approached an elementary school principal in our Sheridan community to ask if he was interested in supplementing the school's collection with books from the public library. The answer was a resounding yes, and we went to work. Now our youth librarian chooses relevant titles that teachers can then check out to their students, and the library administers a deposit collection system—and we assure the principal that families will not incur overdue or lost-item fines.

Make space for families. Arapahoe Libraries has been part of the nationwide Family Place Libraries program for 10 years. We now have five branches designated as Family Place libraries, meaning that they circulate an intentional parenting collection and hold a series of family engagement programs each year that bring in community experts in child literacy, nutrition, speech, and behavior. During the programs, children rove from station to station to play with musical instruments, hear stories, and play with toys, while parents and caregivers engage with local leaders in an informal setting.

In the case of Sheridan Library, which serves a large population of Spanish-speaking patrons, we work with community experts who speak Spanish, building awareness of local resources and promoting the library as a welcoming space for everyone.

Free Library of Philadelphia's Skills for Community-Centered Libraries program provides free training in community engagement (bit.ly/AL-FreeSkills). For further reading on family outreach, I recommend *A Librarian's Guide to Engaging Families in Learning,* edited by M. Elena Lopez, Bharat Mehra, and Margaret Caspe. As they write, it takes deliberate and sustained effort to be a foundation for growth. While collaboration efforts can be time-consuming, the rewards of increased engagement have a great impact on the communities we serve. **AL**

> I've found that targeted outreach and collaboration with other organizations often yield the strongest results.

Harbingers of Harmony

Equipping employees with tools for engagement and change in the workplace

ARACELI MÉNDEZ HINTERMEISTER is knowledge manager at Uplift Education in Dallas.

Library Next: Seven Action Steps for Reinvention

By Catherine Murray-Rust

The pandemic has presented libraries with unusual challenges, creating an atmosphere in which change comes quickly and often. *Library Next* offers takeaways and activities you can adapt to your work style and organizational culture while navigating new developments in the profession. A self-proclaimed library disrupter, Murray-Rust shares knowledge from more than 40 years of experience working with libraries to help them address uninvited instability, whether through employee engagement or organizational change. She aims to inspire readers to make the necessary disruptions that will strengthen their libraries today and for years to come. ALA Editions, 2021. 120 p. $55. PBK. 978-0-8389-4839-2.
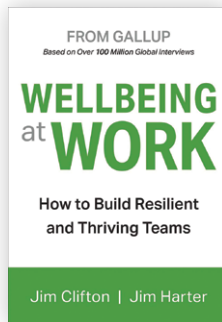
Wellbeing at Work: How to Build Resilient and Thriving Teams

By Jim Clifton and Jim Harter

Clifton and Harter are longtime leaders at Gallup, the analytics and advisory company behind the Gallup Q12 employee engagement survey and CliftonStrengths, a personality assessment tool. With extensive careers in employee engagement, the authors assert that employment satisfaction is the foundation of "the best possible life." In this title, they explore five key elements of well-being—career, social, financial, physical, and community—and present institutional strategies on how to help employees succeed in these areas. The book is also filled with ideas and action items to help employees develop professionally and, in turn, thrive within each well-being element. Gallup Press, 2021. 336 p. $16.50. 978-1-59562-241-9. (Also available as an ebook.)
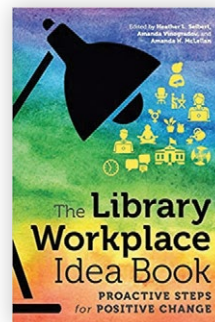
The Library Workplace Idea Book: Proactive Steps for Positive Change

By Heather L. Seibert, Amanda Vinogradov, and Amanda H. McLellan

Libraries often focus on growth and improvements for a more fulfilling patron experience but neglect to pay attention to the employee experience. This compilation of case studies and personal narratives showcases how library employees from a range of institutions are making their workplaces more fulfilling. The stories center on enhancements and conversations around areas that directly affect employees' social and emotional well-being, such as work-life balance, inclusion and sensitivity, and leadership. There are also helpful tips for bettering a library's physical environment to make workers more comfortable. These stories will inspire action to address pressing issues and bring innovative ideas to your library. ALA Editions, 2020. 192 p. $65. PBK. 978-0-8389-4645-9.

BY Araceli Méndez Hintermeister
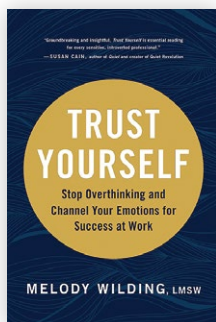
Trust Yourself: Stop Overthinking and Channel Your Emotions for Success at Work

By Melody Wilding

Sometimes the harmony you seek begins with personal reflection and change. In this book, Wilding, a human behavior expert and executive coach, shares decades of research and experience with clients on overcoming stressful thoughts, self-doubt, and self-criticism that can interfere with a person's work. She describes how being attuned to your emotions, your environment, and the behavior of others can be your superpower. Through neuroscience-based strategies, she guides readers toward finding the self-empathy and inner confidence to voice their opinions, overcome imposter syndrome, and persevere against new challenges. Chronicle Prism, 2022. 256 p. $17. PBK. 978-1-79720-200-6. (Also available as an ebook.)
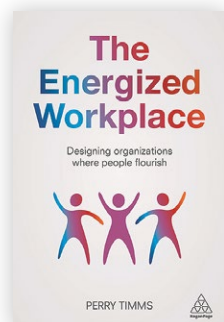
The Energized Workplace: Designing Organizations Where People Flourish

By Perry Timms

Organizations have been spurred by the pandemic to address issues that can jeopardize their success and employee health and happiness. Timms challenges organizations to engage in this moment of change by redesigning systems and processes to support employee engagement. Through case studies, testimonials, and a bit of soul searching, Timms digs into approaches for managing and protecting employee energy for organizational success. While this book is geared toward those who work in talent management and development, it includes general advice, tips, and tools for motivating colleagues and helping employees bring their energized and engaged selves to the workplace. Kogan Page, 2020. 232 p. $26. PBK. 978-0-7494-9866-5. (Also available as an ebook.)

Ask a Manager: How to Navigate Clueless Colleagues, Lunch-Stealing Bosses, and the Rest of Your Life at Work

By Alison Green

Green has more than a decade of experience as a workplace advice columnist on her Ask a Manager blog. In an attempt to provide workers everywhere with honest manager feedback, she found that her readers weren't looking for résumé advice but rather for help with difficult conversations that, though necessary, were often avoided. In this book, she tries to give employees in all roles the confidence and know-how to tackle unique situations. When it comes to having difficult conversations with your boss, coworkers, or direct reports, you'll find this book helpful in learning what to say and when—if at all—you should say it. Ballantine Books, 2018. 304 p. $16. PBK. 978-0-399-18181-8. (Also available as an ebook.) **AL**

SOLUTIONS

Devices on the Go

### Tech lending options to support digital equity

BY Carrie Smith

For people who don't have digital devices at home, accessing critical information can be difficult. As a result, many libraries now lend equipment to increase internet access and help close the digital divide. Tablets and laptops—whether for in-library or home use—allow users to gain computer skills, take advantage of learning resources, and increase digital literacy. We recently talked with workers from three libraries that offer self-service tablet and laptop lending and preloaded tablets with educational apps.

Launchpad tablets are preloaded with educational apps and games.

Launchpad

What are Launchpads? Launchpads are tablets with preloaded educational apps and games, produced by Playaway. They enable digital learning without the need for Wi-Fi or internet access. Each tablet is for a different educational level and subject area, such as language, motor skills, math and science, and social and emotional literacy.
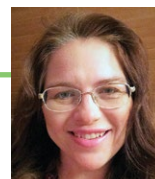
USER: REBECCA COLBERT, head of collection and bibliographic services, Las Vegas–Clark County (Nev.) Library District

How do you use Launchpads in your library? Las Vegas–Clark County (Nev.) Library District (LVCCLD) introduced 1,050 Launchpads in early 2022 as another way to bridge the digital divide. Lack of access to Wi-Fi and internet are huge barriers to early learning for low-income library users. We selected content from the Pre-K Academy and the Reading Academy, as well as all their Super Packs, which are tablets with twice as many apps. Each tablet is fully cataloged and available for checkout at all 25 LVCCLD branches.

Fewer than 40% of Clark County 3- and 4-year-olds are enrolled in preschool. Launchpads help children who don't have digital access learn technological basics. Because they work without Wi-Fi access, they can become like a personal electronic device at home, in a bus or a car, or anywhere on the go.

What are the main benefits? It's fantastic that these devices do not require internet access or Wi-Fi. They are also durable, with a rubber bumper and a locking case, so we can place them on the shelves and in the holds-pickup area for independent access without worrying that they will be damaged. Launchpads are also fun for staffers to demonstrate. The range of tablet content is designed for ages 2 through adult, although our collection focuses on the under-10 group.

What would you like to see improved or added to the system? I think ESL content or bilingual Spanish/English content would be helpful for our second-language patrons.

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

Hublet

What is Hublet? Hublet is a self-service tablet station that allows libraries to lend tablets to patrons for use in the library. It allows users to access the internet and digital content in a mobile format and supplements the public computers available for internet access.

USER: SILVIA CHRISTY, assistant library director, Seguin (Tex.) Public Library

How do you use Hublet in your library? We lend tablets as easily as books, without any staff intervention. Using the Hublet station, someone can check out a Samsung tablet that provides internet access and is preloaded with curated digital content and resources including subscription databases, free online resources, games, and social media apps. The tablets include different profiles based on age, with apps and programs appropriate for children, teens, and adults. The devices and the checkout process are user-friendly, so minimal training is required.

What are the main benefits? Very little assistance is needed from staffers after they explain how the kiosk works. Children enjoy checking them out on their own. Another benefit is mobility: Patrons can check out tablets and use them anywhere inside the library. We've seen increased demand for tablets for Zoom meetings for use in our study rooms. Additionally, users' data privacy is protected—information is wiped from tablets after devices are returned to the kiosk. Plus, the tablets are tied to the library network, so if a customer walks out of our building with a tablet, the device is disabled automatically.

Hublet is a self-service tablet lending station.

What would you like to see improved or added to the system? I would like to see a bigger screen interface on the kiosk so it's easier for people to see prompts. On the library back end, I would like a more user-friendly interface that makes adding and removing apps, links, and resources more intuitive.

ComputeIT

What is ComputeIT? ComputeIT is a self-service kiosk for dispensing devices to patrons. It's a modular locker that safely stores, charges, and issues laptops or other devices via a user-friendly interface. It can also be customized with branding—ours is Brooklyn Public Library blue. It's accessible for all ages, and there's even a feature where you can designate the center lockers for people who can't reach high or bend low.

USERS: GARY CONWAY, manager of technology support, and **SELVON SMITH,** chief information officer and vice president of information technology, Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library

How do you use ComputeIT in your library? Patrons come in and check out a laptop with their library card. The system integrates with our library management system to verify that they're valid users. Information on the screen explains the checkout period and the rules and regulations for laptop use. Lights next to each locker tell you if a device is in there and, if it is, whether it's charging or ready to go.

What are the main benefits? In some neighborhoods where there's huge need for technology devices, our branches have only a small amount of space for computers that are wired. There's no way to expand other than to have a kiosk like this. At our Coney Island branch, we were able to go from eight computers to 24 with ComputeIT. Another benefit is the reduced staff involvement.

ComputeIT kiosks store, charge, and dispense laptops and other devices.

What would you improve or change about the system? The system for our public desktop computers allows patrons to queue for the next available computer. We'd like a similar module to integrate into ComputeIT. In situations where all the laptops are charging, we'd also like some indication on the screen of how long it will be until the next one is ready. AL

PEOPLE *Announcements*

ON THE MOVE

Adam Baron started as head of metadata services at University of California, Berkeley, Library November 1.

Lauren Cardinal joined New York State Library's Division of Library Development in November as library development specialist.

The Washington Research Library Consortium in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, named **Angelique Carson** as shared collections librarian November 15.

Toni Carter started as director of Kares Library at Athens (Ala.) State University September 7.

Kevin Garewal was named vice provost and dean of University of Rochester (N.Y.) Libraries effective in February.

November 29 **Nomi Hague** became youth services librarian at Cranston (R.I.) Public Library's Auburn branch.

University of Pennsylvania Libraries appointed **Samantha Hill** curator for civic engagement effective October 5.

In September **Alisa Iannucci** started as head of youth services at Conant Public Library in Sterling, Massachusetts.

Petrina D. Jackson joined Harvard Radcliffe Institute's Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as Lia Gelin Poorvu Executive Director in November.

October 25 **Max Kadel** became library software applications developer at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries.

Kudos

St. Louis County (Mo.) Library received an Outstanding Local Government Achievement award from the East-West Gateway Council of Governments November 17 for its Pandemic Response through Collaboration of Community Resources project. ●

Dianne Keeping started as dean of Memorial University Libraries in St. John's, Newfoundland, January 10.

December 1 **Ryan McCrory** joined Pierce County (Wash.) Library System as manager of the Lakewood branch.

Laura Mielenhausen joined Ulysses Philomathic Library in Trumansburg, New York, as director October 11.

Sno-Isle Libraries in Marysville, Washington, has appointed **Antoinette Morales-Tanner** manager of its Lake Stevens Library.

Mckenzie Murphy was appointed director of McPherson (Kans.) Public Library December 6.

November 1 **Chaitra Powell** started as curator of the Southern Historical Collection at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Wilson Special Collections Library.

Kelly Richards was named president and director of the Free Library of Philadelphia effective January 14.

Jacqueline "Jackie" Saavedra became consortial network zone manager at the Washington Research Library Consortium in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, November 8.

Jefferson (Tex.) Carnegie Library named **Sandra Spencer** youth services director effective October 18.

PROMOTIONS

Anne-Marie Deitering was promoted to Delpha and Donald Campbell Dean of Libraries at Oregon State University in Corvallis December 1.

RETIREMENTS

Kathlin L. Ray retired as dean of university libraries and teaching and learning technologies at University of Nevada, Reno, September 1.

October 5 **Karen Silverthorn** retired as adult services librarian at Thayer Memorial Library in Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Pamela Westby retired as director of L. E. Phillips Memorial Public Library in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, October 1.

AT ALA

Tammy Dillard-Steels, executive director of the Young Adult Library Services Association, left ALA February 4.

Phil Morehart, previously *American Libraries* senior editor, joined the Communications and Marketing Office as a communications manager November 29.

Chase Ollis, previously ACRL professional development and outreach specialist, became a communications manager in the Communications and Marketing Office November 29.

Fred Reuland, continuing education and communications program officer for Core, retired November 5.

December 2 **Darcy Young** joined ALA's Data, Design, and Research unit as an ALA data fellow. AL

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

MORE ONLINE
americanlibraries.org/currents

In Memory

Bruce D. Bonta, 80, head of reference at Penn State University's Pattee Library in University Park for several decades, died September 27. He had also worked at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and Colby College Libraries in Waterville, Maine. Bonta coedited *The Role of the American Academic Library in International Programs,* which led to committee work for the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, and wrote *Peaceful Peoples: An Annotated Bibliography.* As an independent peace scholar, he produced several literature surveys and founded the Peaceful Societies website now maintained by University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Department of Peace and Conflict Studies.

Jane (Han-Jun) Cheng, 89, senior East Asian catalog librarian at Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City for 28 years until her 2010 retirement, died November 5. She had also served as a librarian at Upper Arlington (Ohio) Public Library and taught Mandarin as an adjunct instructor at University of Missouri–Kansas City.

Jean L. Connor, 102, who served as reference librarian for several public libraries and as an administrator in library development for the New York State Education Department, died November 9. She received a citation for reference librarianship from the American Library Association's (ALA) Reference and Adult Services division. Connor also published two books of poetry, *A Cartography of Peace* and *A Hinge of Joy.*

Kenya S. Flash, 41, who was librarian for political science, global affairs, government information, and the Ethnicity, Race, and Migration program at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, died December 24. She previously worked as an academic librarian at King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Flash was active in the residency program of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Diversity Alliance.

Lorrita E. Ford, 72, who retired as director of library and learning services at the College of San Mateo in California in 2016, died September 19. She had also worked at Oakland (Calif.) Public Library's Dimond branch and Diablo Valley College in Contra Costa County, California.

Patricia "Pat" E. Gallagher, 67, who served as a librarian with the National Library of Medicine before her 2021 retirement, died December 1. She also worked for 15 years as a user services librarian at New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) and was elected by her peers as a NYAM fellow. She was active in the professional group Librarians, Archivists, and Museum Professionals in the History of Health Sciences.

Mandy Havert, 51, graduate outreach and research services librarian at University of Notre Dame's (Ind.) Hesburgh Libraries, died October 21. She had worked at Hesburgh in various positions for 24 years and developed the popular Thesis and Dissertation Camps program for graduate students. She also served in leadership and committee roles at ALA, ACRL, the Academic Libraries of Indiana, the Indiana Library Federation, and the American Educational Research Association, and served as a volunteer for the Westville (Ind.) Education Initiative.

William L. Joyce, 79, Dorothy Foehr Huck Chair for Special Collections and head of special collections at Penn State University in University Park from 2000 to 2010, died June 6. He had previously worked at University of Michigan's Clements Library in Ann Arbor; the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts; New York Public Library; and Princeton (N.J.) University Library. Joyce also served on the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Review Board (1994–1998). In retirement, he created the Organization of American Historians' John Higham Research Fellowship to support graduate students writing dissertations in American history and the William L. and Carol B. Joyce Historical Collections and Labor Archives Program Endowment at Penn State University Libraries.

William "Bill" J. Studer, 85, director of Ohio State University (OSU) Libraries for 22 years until his 1999 retirement, died October 14. Under his leadership, OSU added significantly to its archives and special collections. He advocated for the renovation of the Thompson Library, a project the university committed to at his retirement and completed in 2009. Studer was also a founder of the network of academic libraries that became OhioLINK. ●

Go with the Flow

Michelle Schaub believes in the restorative power of movement. So when the library media specialist at Monona (Wis.) Grove High School (MGHS) and certified yoga instructor saw changes in her students brought on by pandemic stressors, she thought that lessons from her yoga practice could help.

"Students have a very rigorous and intense school day based on perceptions of what they should be doing and on the expectations of teachers and their parents," Schaub says. "Adults recognize more readily how we are pulled and stretched in different ways in our time and expectations, but students don't always recognize that."

In October 2021, she began a club at MGHS to teach yoga and mindfulness exercises to students. They meet one morning each week in the library and twice a week in the afternoon, either in the choir room or auditorium, to learn basic yoga poses. Mala Yoga Center in Monona donated 14 mats for the club to use, and Schaub

purchased bolsters, blocks, straps, and stereo speakers with a Monona Grove Education Foundation grant. To complement the yoga programming, Schaub created areas in the library for brain-break activities like Lego sets, puzzles, and crafts—"things that allow students to play and step back from the seriousness of work," she says.

The yoga club has been an overwhelming success, Schaub says, and student involvement continues to grow: "We've had great student turnout. It's been small but mighty." Up to six kids participate in each session; Schaub says that's comparable to some adult yoga classes she has taken. Those who do attend seem to want to spread the word. "Every student who comes is grateful for the opportunity and has expressed that gratitude by returning and bringing friends." **AL**

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

Photo: Sharon Vanorny

PLA 2022 Virtual Conference

MARCH 23–25

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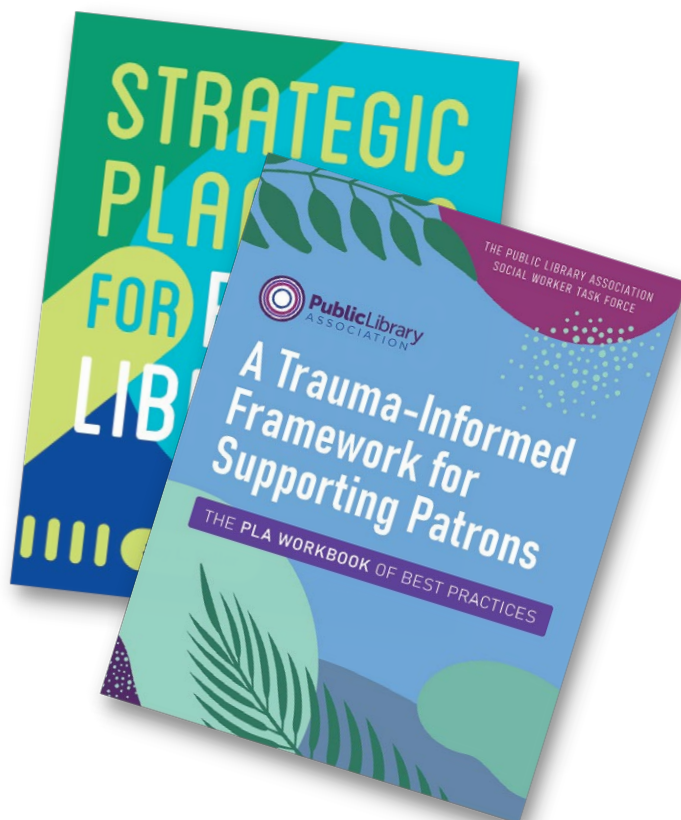
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A Trauma-Informed Framework for Supporting Patrons: The PLA Workbook of Best Practices
Written by the PLA Social Worker Task Force
Offering practical guidance and support, this workbook will spark curiosity and reflection on how everyday library interactions intersect with trauma and adversity.

Strategic Planning for Public Libraries
Written by Joy L. Fuller
This publication is a complete toolkit, with a base framework any library can use for strategic planning and supplemental materials to help guide the reader through the entire process.

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NOW IS THE TIME