

american libraries

March/April 2023

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

THREE YEARS LATER

How the pandemic
has reshaped libraries

p. 20



Smartphone
Lending p. 16

Litter Cleanup
Kits p. 12

PLUS: Clint Smith, Medical
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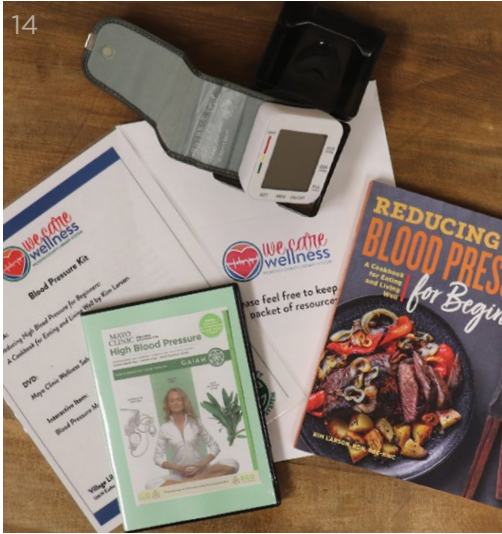
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Website: americanlibraries.org
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Favorite comedian or humorist?

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Sanhita SinhaRoy → Tig Notaro
ssinharoy@ala.org | x4219

MANAGING EDITOR

Terra Dankowski → Fozzie Bear
tdankowski@ala.org | x5282

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Megan Bennett → Jenny Slate
mbennett@ala.org | x4213

Bianca Del Rio ← **Diana Panuncial**
dpanuncial@ala.org | x4218

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING ASSOCIATE

Carrie Smith
casmith@ala.org | x4216

ART DIRECTOR

Rebecca Lomax → David Sedaris
rlomax@ala.org | x4217

Bob Odenkirk

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Conan O'Brien → **Lucas McGranahan, Joanne Trestrail** → Maria Bamford

ADVERTISING

Melissa Carr melcarr@ala.org | 704-491-7789
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PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT

Samantha Bee ← **Mary Mackay**
Associate Executive Director
Mary Jo Bolduc → Leslie Jones
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Melissa Kay Walling, Associate Executive Director,
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Jason K. Alston (Chair), Sian Brannon, Jaena Rae Cabrera,
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Editorial policy: ALA Policy Manual, section A.8.2

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from the
EDITOR

A Time of Reflection



Sanhita SinhaRoy

On this third anniversary of the pandemic's arrival, the *American Libraries* team reflects on the unprecedented choices and challenges the profession has faced since 2020. In our special report "Three Years Later" (cover story, p. 20), you'll find stories about library innovations that have endured, as well as some that fell by the wayside (p. 22); the impact the pandemic has had on fundraising (p. 26); and how some libraries have navigated two tragedies—COVID-19 and a natural disaster—at the same time (p. 30).

You can read our archived and ongoing coverage of the pandemic at bit.ly/AL-COVID-19. If you have experiences or ideas from your library from the past three years that you'd like to share, please tell us on social media or send them as a letter to the editor for possible inclusion in a future issue.

Other articles in this issue touch on subjects related to the pandemic in indirect but fascinating ways. There's one on medical and wellness kits being offered by some libraries to address community health issues ("A Checkup for Checkout," p. 14), and another on a smartphone lending program at Las Vegas–Clark County (Nev.) Library District that was created to help unhoused individuals stay connected to social services and important contacts ("Libraries on Call," p. 16).

With Earth Day approaching in April, read how several public libraries are tackling the country's widespread litter problem. In "Talking Trash" (p. 12), Cass Balzer reports on cleanup kits that are being loaned to help beautify communities.

Also bringing beauty, as well as reflection, is poet and author Clint Smith, our Newsmaker (p. 18). As he tells Associate Editor Diana Panuncial in the interview, the past few years have led him to wrestle with "how to hold despair and joy at once, how to hold immense gratitude and immense anxiety in the same body." It's a sentiment many of us can relate to, I'm sure.

As ever, the need for balance, both personal and professional, remains a goal for all of us. We hope you'll continue to take good care of yourselves and one another.

Sanhita

On this third anniversary of the pandemic's arrival, we reflect on the unprecedented choices and challenges the profession has faced since 2020.

‘Resistance Is Its Own Reward’

Library workers hold the line for their communities



**Lessa Kanani'opua
Pelayo-Lozada**

Resist is what library workers do daily. We all do it, no matter our position in the library and on behalf of our communities.

As we continue to face record book challenges and censorship attempts, I feel empowered by the words of Native Hawaiian scholar and activist Haunani Kay-Trask: “Resistance is its own reward.”

When talking about the fight for justice, fairness, and equity, the fruits of our labor are often not seen within a lifetime. We must trust that our efforts will lay the path for those who follow, so that their resistance builds communities of love and strength that we may never be able to witness or imagine.

Traveling the world on behalf of ALA, I have seen library workers stand up against all that runs counter to our professional core values. I have seen them uphold democracy and social responsibility in the face of hatred and attempts to silence voices. I have heard stories about libraries increasing security for storytimes and programs—merely to ensure that attendees can see themselves represented in library programs and have a safe space.

At the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums conference last fall in Temecula, California, I heard from Native Hawaiian librarians who are incorporating our traditional practices into library services, spaces, and collections. Alongside educators, cultural practitioners, and other experts in language and culture, librarians Shavonn Matsuda and Annemarie Paikai worked within the University of Hawai‘i library system to create language-controlled vocabularies and authority records that better represent and respect Indigenous worldviews.

At the same conference, in a session about community engagement, library school student Hau‘olihiwahiwa Moniz discussed how tapping into our Hawaiian culture not only teaches students and their families the traditions we’ve lost but also makes the library space feel like home, resisting colonization to create a fuller, more inclusive society.

When I hosted a December 2022 ALA Connect Live (bit.ly/ALAConnectLive) about book challenges and censorship attempts, I heard from individuals facing these issues head-on in their school or public library and in their state. Each person has resisted—and continues to resist—the forces working against them. They acknowledged that the task has not always been easy and that it has taken a mental and physical toll, but they noted that they approached their efforts in a way that worked best for their community and their individual style.

How do we resist? By having a network of allies to call upon at a moment’s notice, encouraging students and community members to speak up, and fighting for legislation to ensure that every reader has their book and every book has their reader—regardless of how outside forces want to moralize society. Resist is what library workers do daily. We all do it, no matter our position in the library and on behalf of our communities.

I know that library workers of all types take seriously the fundamental mission to enhance and provide access to information for all. We understand that at our very core, we are an equity-based profession—one that might not exist if someone were to suggest it today.

Libraries are a space where individuals are encouraged to come as they are, tap into and expand their identities, and become full members of our society.

We are resisters at our core. We protect all our patrons, uphold intellectual freedom, and serve our communities. Yes, the wins we see every day are a reward, but knowing that we have resisted for yet another day and continue to provide that safe space is a reward in and of itself for me, and I hope for all of you as well. **ALA**

LESSA KANANI’OPUA PELAYO-LOZADA is adult services assistant manager at Palos Verdes Library District in Rolling Hills Estates, California.

Civic Imagination Stations

Libraries accelerate community transformation



Tracie D. Hall

I don't believe there is any educational or public service institution that more ably facilitates personal growth and community access than libraries.

Civic imagination is described as the “capacity to imagine alternatives to current cultural, social, political, or economic conditions,” by Henry Jenkins, Gabriel Peters-Lazaro, and Sangita Shresthova, a few of the concept’s leading thinkers.

Having visited, worked or consulted for, and spoken at hundreds of libraries, I don’t believe there is any educational or public service institution that more ably facilitates personal growth and community access than libraries.

Case in point: After a tip from Chaundra Johnson, Utah’s dynamic state librarian, I visited the J. Willard Marriott Library ProtoSpace at University of Utah in Salt Lake City, a kind of super knowledge commons boasting every digital scholarship, content production, and 3D fabrication resource you could ask for. The workshop schedule invited experts and novices alike to increase their understanding of these tools to support their learning and creative content goals. The energy in ProtoSpace was kinetic. The 3D printing machines whirled, podcast booths beckoned, and students were deep in the act of ideation and creation. I remember thinking that if I were a prospective student visiting the campus, I would want to attend the university based on the library’s offerings alone.

That is what the best libraries do: They place the acts of discovery and changemaking within reach of everyone.

The library’s proven ability to stimulate people and ideas into action is what fueled ALA’s new Civic Imagination Stations project, a pilot supported by the Estée Lauder Companies’ Writing Change program, a three-year initiative designed to advance literacy as a pathway to equality, access, and social change.

Recognizing that communities with limited access to the arts are the same ones that experience limited broadband access and digital literacy,

the Civic Imagination Stations project paired staff from 12 libraries with local artist dyads in August 2022 to implement arts programming that builds information literacy and digital skills.

The project has brought together academic and public library teams in rural and urban communities, including The People’s Library in Fox, Arkansas; Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center Library and Herman B Wells Library at Indiana University Bloomington; and Burnsville (W.Va.) Public Library. The cohort participated in workshops and coaching led by Civic Imagination Stations lead artists Willa J. Taylor of Chicago’s Goodman Theatre and Michael Rohd of the ensemble Sojourn Theatre.

Cohorts are expected to culminate their work later this year with the implementation of arts-based projects designed to help forge deeper connections between users, libraries, their larger communities, and one another. The end goal is helping library users and program participants see themselves and one another, as Jenkins and collaborators write, as “civic agents capable of making change” and “as an equal participant within a democratic culture, and as empathetic to the plight of others different than one’s self.”

In her *Guardian* article on how US libraries are becoming community problem solvers, Larra Clark, deputy director of ALA’s Public Library Association and Public Policy and Advocacy Office, wrote in 2014: “We must fundamentally change how we view libraries and move from a historical idea of libraries as merely physical repositories to seeing them as an opportunity for proactive community engagement.”

Clark summarizes what I believe to be the most timely work for library leaders: equipping libraries and their staffers to facilitate constructive change and social progress and to make the fulfillment of that undertaking the measure of our success. **AL**

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

ALA Awarded \$5.5 Million from the Mellon Foundation

The American Library Association (ALA) announced on January 24 that it has received a \$5.5 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to help advance ALA's mission of enhancing the profession of librarianship and ensuring access to information for all.

"At a time when libraries and librarians are facing immense pressure and scrutiny, it is affirming and deeply meaningful to have the support of community champions like the Mellon Foundation, who understand our plight and are willing to invest in our mission," said ALA President Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada in the statement. "This transformational gift will enable ALA to expand its existing programs and establish new initiatives to better serve librarians and communities across the nation."

The grant—which marks Mellon's most significant investment in the Association thus far—will provide for programs and initiatives such as those dedicated to expanding advocacy for intellectual freedom and countering censorship and book bans; scholarships and career development support for

Black and Indigenous librarians and librarians of color; adult and digital literacy instruction; the continuation of COVID-19 relief funding; and organizational capacity building in libraries.

ALA will also use the grant to address illiteracy rates among US adults, bridge the digital divide, and mitigate barriers to information access. Within the organization, ALA will use the grant to boost its staffing and infrastructure needs, providing updates to its technology and improving overall membership experience.

"Libraries remain among the country's largest providers of adult basic education, literacy, and digital access and instruction," said ALA Executive Director Tracie D. Hall in the statement. "ALA has historically helped to shape the national conversation in each of those areas. The Mellon Foundation's catalytic investment in our work allows us to continue to drive innovation and future-oriented thinking toward service areas that will ultimately help position libraries for long-term impact and their users for personal agency and socioeconomic mobility." ●

2023 Carnegie Medal Winners Announced

On January 29, ALA announced that it had selected *The Swimmers* by Julie Otsuka (Alfred A. Knopf) as the winner of the 2023 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction and *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us* by Ed Yong (Random House) as the winner of the 2023 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction. The selections were announced during ALA's 2023 LibLearnX conference in New Orleans at the Reference and User Services Association's (RUSA) Book and Media Awards event.

Carnegie Medal winners receive \$5,000 and will be presented their medals during a celebratory event at the American Writers Museum in Chicago

during ALA's 2023 Annual Conference and Exhibition this June.

These honors are cosponsored by ALA's *Booklist* and RUSA.

For more information about the finalists and award winners, visit bit.ly/2023Carnegies.

2023 AASL Conference Registration Now Open

Registration is now open for the 2023 American Association of School Librarians (AASL) National Conference, to be held October 19–21 in Tampa, Florida.

The conference will feature sessions and events, including daily keynote speakers and more than 150 educational sessions, author panels, and signings. There will also be more than 150 exhibitors and networking opportunities with others in the profession.

For more information, including registration rates, visit bit.ly/AASL-23.

ALA Launches Banned Book Club Series on NBC Chicago

ALA has announced it is teaming up with NBC Chicago's midday program, *Chicago Today*, to launch a banned book club series.

Once a month, ALA Executive Director Tracie D. Hall will join *Chicago Today* hosts Cortney Hall and Matthew Rodrigues on the show to introduce the chosen book of the month and encourage viewers and community members to read along.

The goals of the series are to highlight books being banned or challenged across the country, encourage support for the authors and storytellers who are often from marginalized communities, and

ALA Supports Human Rights in Iran

On December 9, the ALA Executive Board issued a statement in support of human rights and freedom of expression in Iran. The statement reads as follows:

"[ALA] supports its Iranian colleagues and the people of Iran in their efforts for human rights, including women's rights and freedom of speech and expression.

"ALA has adopted Article 19 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights into its policies. It states, 'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.'

"ALA expresses its solidarity with librarians, teachers, and others in the woman-led uprising in Iran for human rights, in which hundreds have died and thousands have been detained. ALA encourages members to provide educational materials and other resources and tools to raise awareness in their communities of the current situation in Iran and to combat misinformation." •

inspire community advocacy for intellectual freedom.

Chicago Today's "Banned Book Club Presented by ALA" debuted January 25 with Hall's on-air introduction of February's book of the month, *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson.

Join the discussion on social media using the hashtag #BannedBookClubChi, and follow @NBCChicagoToday and @ALALibrary and for updates related to the book club.

Traveling Exhibition Heading to 15 Libraries

On January 17, ALA announced that 15 public libraries will host the traveling exhibition "World on the Move: 250,000 Years of Human Migration," developed by the American Anthropological Association and the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.

The libraries, selected through a librarian peer-reviewed application process, will host the exhibit for five- or six-week periods from March 2023

to August 2025. Libraries will receive a \$500 stipend to conduct programs, events, or activities related to the themes explored in the exhibit.

The exhibit is overseen by the ALA Public Programs Office. For more information, including which libraries have been selected to host the exhibit, visit bit.ly/ALA-WotM.

New Workforce Legislation Supports Libraries

On December 7, US Sens. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) and Todd Young (R-Ind.) began discussions to increase funding for adult education.

The bipartisan Adult Education Workforce Opportunity and Reskilling for Knowledge and Success Act (Adult Education WORKS Act) is designed to strengthen coordination across adult education and workforce programs. It will also provide support for college and career navigators at public libraries and community-based organizations. The bill, which will need to be

CALENDAR

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APR.

School Library Month
ala.org/aasl/slm

APR. 15-21

Money Smart Week
moneysmartweek.org

APR. 23-29

National Library Week
ala.org/nlw

APR. 25

National Library Workers Day
ala-apa.org/nlwd

APR. 26

National Library Outreach Day
bit.ly/ALA-NLOD

APR. 30

Dia: Children's Day/Book Day
dia.ala.org

APR. 30-MAY 6

Preservation Week
preservationweek.org

JUNE

Rainbow Book Month
ala.org/rt/rrt

JUNE 22-27

ALA's 2023 Annual Conference
Chicago
2023.alaannual.org

AUG. 21-25

IFLA World Library and Information Congress
Rotterdam, The Netherlands
2023.ifla.org

OCT. 1-7

Banned Books Week
bannedbooksweek.org

OCT. 4

Banned Websites Awareness Day
ala.org/aasl/advocacy/bwad

OCT. 15-21

National Friends of Libraries Week
bit.ly/ALA-NFLW

OCT. 19-21

AASL National Conference
Tampa, Florida
bit.ly/AASL-23

UPDATE

reintroduced this year for passing, updates the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. ALA has worked with Senate offices to ensure that the new legislation will use America's public libraries to boost college and career readiness.

ALA and the Public Library Association will continue their work in advancing this legislation. For more information, visit bit.ly/ALA-WORKSAct.

Apply for Great Stories Club Grants

Applications are open now until March 15 for grants to ALA's Great Stories Club program, a thematic reading and discussion program for teens.

ALA will distribute grants to 100 libraries to host their own Great Stories Clubs centered on two themes: "Deeper than Our Skins: The Present Is a Conversation with the Past" and "Finding

Your Voice: Speaking Truth to Power." These themes, created by scholars Maria Sachiko Cecire and Susana M. Morris, will feature books that explore questions of race, equity, identity, and history.

Selected libraries will receive 11 copies of books to use in the clubs as well as a \$500 stipend for programming, online training, and program resources and support throughout the grant term.

For more information, visit bit.ly/ALA-GSCgrants.

ALA Names Senior Policy Advisors

On January 13, ALA announced that Sara R. Benson and Kent Oliver will serve as senior policy advisors for its Public Policy and Advocacy Office.

Benson will advise ALA on federal copyright policy and digital licensing policy and advocacy. She will be part of a team focused on crafting ALA's strategic



Sara R. Benson



Kent Oliver

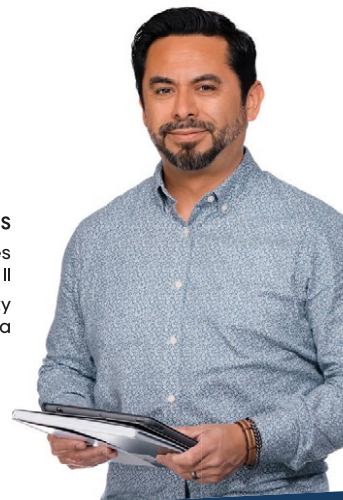
direction on copyright and licensing for the coming decade. Benson is a copyright librarian and an associate professor in the Scholarly Communication and Publishing unit at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a member of the ALA Policy Corps.

Oliver will collaborate with members of the ALA Policy Corps to advance ALA's advocacy on fighting book bans and to strengthen ALA's Unite Against Book Bans campaign. He recently retired after a decade as director of Nashville (Tenn.) Public Library, where he launched the I Read Banned Books campaign. Oliver is former president of the Freedom to Read Foundation and has been awarded the

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For more information, visit bit.ly/OliverBenson.

Choice's 2022 Outstanding Academic Titles Announced


On November 30, *Choice* released its list of Outstanding Academic Titles (OAT) in 2022. The list reflects the best scholarly titles reviewed by *Choice* during the previous calendar year, as chosen by the editors. It features 433 books and digital resources from 115 publishers.

Choice editors will present a weekly series of sneak peeks into the 2022 OAT list, providing an overview of the year's best academic nonfiction. The entire OAT list is only available to *Choice* magazine and *Choice Reviews* subscribers, but the sneak peeks will be available to nonsubscribers via email newsletter and at choice360.org. 

Increases in Federal Funding for Libraries

On December 29, President Biden signed into law the 2023 Omnibus Appropriations bill, which increases federal funding for libraries for the fiscal year ending September 30.

The Library Services and Technology Act, administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, saw an increase of \$13.5 million, raising the program's funding to \$211 million. Innovative Approaches to Literacy, a US Department of Education program designed to support school library initiatives nationwide, saw a \$1 million increase, bringing total funding to \$30 million.

"[ALA] is proud to see continued strong support for libraries and library funding at the highest levels of government. Members of Congress understand that investing in libraries means investing in communities. The significant library funding measures in this budget reflect that," said ALA President Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada in a December 23 statement. "ALA advocates and library workers from across the country helped lead the way for this success, reminding their federal elected officials of the importance of fully funded libraries." For more information, visit bit.ly/ALA-FY2023. 



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CANDIDATE FOR ALA PRESIDENT

Han, Mitakuyapi! Greetings, All Relations! I am a member of the Santee Sioux Nation, and in Dakota beliefs, we are all connected, and we make sustainable decisions that will have a positive impact on current and future generations.

This is the work we are called to do as ALA members, and it is an honor to stand for election as president-elect, as the greatest calling of leadership is to support others equitably and in a good way. I am humbled by the nomination and appreciate the work of the nominating committee and leadership team.

With a passion for leadership, I make myself available to help speak out about matters of inclusion, community and team building, intellectual freedom, equal access, literacy, and career development. To quote my role model since the 3rd grade, Martin Luther King Jr. called so many to action by stating “the time is always right to do what is right,” and the time is most definitely right to stand up for equality, social justice, and belonging in our communities. I see all of you, and I am proud of our fierce spirit to stand up for what is right while creating welcoming experiences for all in the face of censorship and adversity. While we continue to make incremental changes, there

is always more work to be done, and I believe that we have more than enough talent to make our dreams a reality.

If elected, I will support organizational change through process improvement as it applies to implementing the Pivot Plan, Operating Agreement, and bylaws revision. The ALA Council and Executive Board have done a lot of work in listening to members and reviewing the governing documents. It is time to implement those moving parts to secure a strong Association for all.

Access. As knowledge keepers, we have a lot to be thankful for. We are called upon as guardians of records and protectors of data who provide accurate information and connect library users to shared resources. We also have a lot to learn from our communities as we respond to societal needs, and this is an opportunity for us to recognize, research, and respond to areas of growth that are needed to move the profession forward. We will continue to

ensure equal access for all and champion library services on a global scale.

Belonging. As a Spectrum Scholar, I use a lens of inclusion with the goal of celebrating our diversity by acknowledging how our differences make us stronger. This work is both challenging and necessary to reinforce the foundation of this community. It is the role of leaders to commit to this charge while taking action to build sustainable plans using tools of data analysis and policy review to provide literacy resources for all.

Core values. The challenges faced by the profession require our full attention. And while we have been planning to make the necessary changes, it is time to implement them. We are stronger together, and I will continue to uphold our values as we forge a path forward.

Diversity. There has never been a better time to be a librarian. We are committed to upholding the work of this noble profession by recognizing our differences and celebrating our growth to create a welcoming space for everyone to feel heard across our public, academic, school, special, and tribal libraries. I will listen to your feedback and offer my support.

It is an honor to serve, and I respectfully ask for your vote. **AL**

I am proud of our
fierce spirit to
stand up for what
is right in the face
of censorship.

ALA ELECTION: March 13–April 5. More information at bit.ly/ALA-election23

Eric D. Suess

Director of Marshall Public Library in Pocatello, Idaho



CANDIDATE FOR ALA PRESIDENT

Together we succeed.”

I have never been particularly fond of slogans. They are often too simple, too trite, and unnecessary.

Sometimes, however, they are useful at getting to the heart of the matter. In my 35 years as a professional librarian, I have found my opening statement to be apt in describing my leadership style, my path forward, and my hope for further action: Together we succeed.

I started my career in academic library acquisitions, worked for a vendor, and, for the past 27 years, have directed public libraries. I consider the varied experience quite helpful, especially during the dozen years I spent as an at-large councilor with ALA. While on Council—although I was a public librarian—my constituency was the membership as a whole. School libraries, as well as academic, public, special, and other library settings, are not at their best as individual silos. While each has its own concerns, it is when we act as a whole that we are most successful. School and public libraries have long had close relations. Public libraries regularly cooperate with academics. Vendors underpin all the above. It is by understanding and valuing one another that we can reach our potential.

Libraries, especially public and school libraries, are facing a significant threat of censorship in a manner that has not been seen in many years. This threat has not developed naturally; it is a politically motivated, highly coordinated, very vocal attack on our values by those who see diversity as a threat. Despite the virulence of the effort, such a desire to control speech is still a minority opinion. ALA's Unite Against Book Bans campaign has exactly the right idea. If those supporting our values are equally organized, equally politically active, and equally vocal, the power of the majority can be harnessed. It is, of course, a difficult task to do this well, yet one I am strongly in favor of supporting and leading. Concerted, organized advocacy is possible, and together we can succeed.

ALA is facing slow reduction in membership, and the need is great to work toward sustainable financial

Censorship attempts are very vocal attacks on our values by those who see diversity as a threat.

strength as well as a viable Operating Agreement. Whether or not a new governance model is voted into place, it will be critical that we maintain a broad diversity of experience in leading the Association, and most importantly, build a sense of inclusion among our members—that they feel their opinions matter, that leaders understand their concerns, and that there is a well-established communications pipeline that allows their voice to be heard. I have always tried to lead in such a way that everyone I work with can share in and contribute to the success of the organization. It is by working together toward a clearly defined and mutually shared goal that we succeed.

I hope to become ALA's next president-elect. I have 35 years of financial operations experience in libraries. I have a deep understanding of ALA's structure and operation. I have the energy and resolve to work in partnership with ALA's incredible staff. I have nurtured relationships with library leaders both within ALA and beyond. I wholly support and desire to lead the equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts of the Association. I am passionate about our values and ethics, and I hope to work tirelessly to help libraries achieve their fullest potential. I ask for your vote. Together we succeed. **AL**

ALA ELECTION: March 13–April 5. More information at bit.ly/ALA-election23

TRENDS



Patrons of Thomas County (Ga.) Public Library System use litter cleanup kits they checked out. The initiative, launched in 2020, has been popular with groups of all sizes.

While the chapter had previously held group cleanup events, the pandemic naturally encouraged more independent, socially distanced efforts. As a result, KTCB partnered with the library to create kits for patrons to check out.

Each kit contains items such as trash bags, gloves, reflective vests, and a laminated sheet with guidelines and suggestions for where to clean up in the community. Litter kits are housed at the library system's main branch in Thomasville, but patrons can request they be sent to their local branch for pickup.

Hanchett estimates that kits are checked out between 30 and 45 times each year, noting that they are most popular with groups and grade school students. "People like the convenience of the kits because it's something they can do on their own time," she says. "It's a laid-back way of getting involved instead of having a prescribed time in which you partake in the activity."

Talking Trash

Libraries lend cleanup kits to help beautify communities

BY Cass Balzer

Nearly 50 billion pieces of litter are scattered along US roadways and waterways, according to a 2020 study by the nonprofit Keep America Beautiful (KAB). That estimate includes more than 800 million pieces of fast-food packaging, 2.6 billion food-packaging-film items, and 207 million pieces of personal protective equipment, like masks and gloves.

To alleviate the country's ongoing litter problem, some public libraries

are creating kits to help patrons clean up their neighborhoods.

"We want people to be involved in the community," says Samantha Hanchett, marketing coordinator at Thomas County (Ga.) Public Library System (TCPLS). "Doing something that benefits everyone, even though it's quite quiet, is really what a library does all the time."

The library system launched a litter cleanup program with Keep Thomas County Beautiful (KTCB), the local KAB chapter, in 2020.

To catalog or not to catalog

While TCPLS has made litter kits available to all patrons, they have not been added to the library's cataloging software. "The kits just have so many different pieces," Hanchett explains. "We weren't sure if [putting them in the catalog] would be worth all the extra work."

Instead, the library has an analog checkout system for the kits. Reservations aren't required, but patrons can call ahead to ensure they are

“Doing something that benefits everyone, even though it’s quite quiet, is really what a library does all the time.”

SAMANTHA HANCHETT, marketing coordinator at Thomas County (Ga.) Public Library System

available. Some libraries have been able to add litter cleanup kits to their cataloging software, which can streamline the patron experience. Newport News (Va.) Public Library (NNPL) took this approach, but not without difficulty.

“Cataloging them was a little challenging,” says Anita Jennings, NNPL director. “[We] had to come up with a unique way of how to catalog the kit, where they would put the stickers, because there are multiple items in each kit.”

Jennings notes that cataloging them was a good decision for her library. When a kit is returned, staffers are easily able to check which items are inside and which ones need to be replaced. Each kit includes a bucket, five safety vests, five litter grabbers, five pairs of latex-free gloves, 10 trash bags, and hand sanitizer. The safety vests, litter grabbers, and hand sanitizer are expected to be returned, but patrons are responsible for disposing of their own trash. All four NNPL branches have four litter kits each.

NNPL also requires patrons to sign a waiver indicating that they

have reviewed safety guidelines, which are also included in the kits. The kits cost approximately \$127 each and are funded with grant money from the city’s public works department.

NNPL’s initiative has been successful, according to Jennings. The kits are especially popular in the spring and summer months, when temperatures are more conducive to being outside. “There has been a sustained interest, and the community expects to have them here,” she says. “It would be difficult to say, ‘Okay, we’re no longer doing this.’”

Weather wise

Time of year and weather considerations have proven to be important factors for kit success. Findlay–Hancock County (Ohio) Public Library (FHCPL) made litter kits available for one week in October, centered around National Litter Cleanup Day, but none were checked out.

“That week was the first time that it got really chilly,” says Joel Mantey, FHCPL assistant director. “It was a disappointment for sure. We were really excited about the project and having these kits available for people.”

The library made litter kits available with the help of the Blanchard River Watershed Partnership (BRWP), which assembled and currently stores the kits. Mantey says that space constraints make it difficult for the library to house the kits full time; they’re more available to the community if kept with BRWP. The 10 kits, each of which includes

BY THE NUMBERS

Humor

1976

Year that author Larry Wilde founded National Humor Month, held annually in April.

70

Number of oral history interviews available online through the American Comedy Archives, housed at Iwasaki Library at Emerson College in Boston. Interview participants include Margaret Cho, Dick Van Dyke, Betty White, and “Weird Al” Yankovic.

628,300

Number of print materials contained in the Bob Hope Collection at the Library of Congress (LC). Comedy legend Hope, who died in 2003, donated his personal archive to LC in 1999. The collection includes his Joke File, a repository of used and unused material created throughout his career for television, radio, and live shows.

265

Number of jokes found in *Philogelos*, the world’s oldest surviving joke book. *Philogelos*, commonly translated as “the laughter-lover” or “the joker,” is believed to date back to 4th or 5th century Greece.

5

Number of minutes each performer receives at Dobbs Ferry (N.Y.) Public Library’s Comedy Open Mics. The library’s “Comedy on the Hudson” program offers monthly open mic nights and a few larger showcases every year for local performers. ●



Continued on page 15 ▶

A Checkup for Checkout

Medical kits aim to target community health issues

BY Emily Udell

Julie Lepore noticed that many of her patrons were feeling isolated following COVID-19 exposures, positive tests, or caring for sick family members.

“We’re a fairly tight-knit, smaller community, so we get to know our patrons very well and we hear a lot of different challenges that they’re facing in their everyday lives,” says Lepore, director of North Scituate (R.I.) Public Library (NSPL).

She and library staffers began searching for ways to address pandemic recovery with a focus on health and wellness for their community of roughly 5,400 residents.

With a \$6,000 grant through the state’s Office of Library and

Information Services, NSPL combined programming with health-based kits that patrons could check out, Lepore explains.

“Hopefully, some of our kits can ease a bit of that [pandemic-related] discomfort,” Lepore says.

In early 2022, a small group of NSPL staff—with input from community health experts—assembled 15 different kits for adults and children. Placed in colorful totes, the kits focus on a range of health issues, including dementia, joint health, and mobility, and healthy practices like yoga and meditation. Equipment in NSPL’s medical care kit includes a blood pressure monitor, pulse oximeter—which measures blood oxygen levels—and infrared thermometer.

Libraries like NSPL, often with guidance from local medical providers or agencies, have begun circulating health kits for patrons. The goal of these kits, which often include medical devices and other items addressing

various aspects of physical and mental health, is to equip patrons with needed tools and information.

“It’s a way for patrons to try out different [devices] without having to purchase them first,” Lepore says. For example, blood pressure monitors can range from \$40 to \$200, and many pulse oximeters can cost \$15 or more.

Improving community health and wellness

Nearly half of American adults have hypertension, the medical term for high blood pressure, and only one in four of those have their condition under control, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Having high blood pressure poses a risk for heart attack and stroke.

As a way of responding to this nationwide health epidemic, Racine Public Library (RPL) in southeastern Wisconsin began offering kits last June that include a blood pressure monitor and information about community resources.

RPL was one of several Wisconsin libraries approached by a local chapter of the American Heart Association to partner on blood pressure kits. In collaboration, RPL created five kits, including one in Spanish, to help address the county’s comorbidity rates. Racine County is among the least healthy counties in the state, according to recent data collected from the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.

RPL’s social worker Ashley Cedeño says adoption of the kits has been slow, but staff members hope checkouts will increase as more patrons learn of their availability. Staff has promoted them on their website, in local media, and at a local health fair.

The long-term goal, Cedeño says, is to empower patrons and improve their community’s well-being.

With a grant from the National Library of Medicine, Pickens County (S.C.) Library System created medical wellness kits, including blood pressure kits, for checkout.



“We [are always] trying to think of ways we can offer these resources when there are so many people who can’t afford health care.”

ASHLEY CEDEÑO, social worker at Racine (Wis.) Public Library

Local nurses in training also regularly come to the library from Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin, to perform basic health screenings, including checking vision, blood sugar, weight, and blood pressure.

“A library is no longer just a book repository; we are a hub,” Cedeño says. “We [are always] trying to think of ways we can offer these resources when there are so many people who can’t afford health care.”

‘We’re here for them’

At Pickens County Library System (PCLS) in northwestern South Carolina, Margaret Holder, manager of the Village Library branch, was looking for a way to address specific health concerns in her community.

“Different things I would see made me think: ‘How can we get information to our patrons?’” Holder says, referring to news stories about the opioid crisis or reference questions about health issues like diabetes, for example.

The library applied for a grant in October 2021 from the National Institutes of Health’s National Library of Medicine (NLM) and was awarded \$5,000 to create medical

wellness kits. PCLS’s kits focus on issues like diabetes, blood pressure, weight management, and substance use disorders, with some including medical tracking devices, such as a digital BMI monitor and pedometer. All include envelopes of resources for patrons to keep. PCLS also has several kits for kids on the human body and teen health.

Clear bags visibly display the contents of the kits and are available for checkout for four weeks. To help introduce the kits, NLM hosted several library events with a local nutritionist. The project also promotes NLM’s MedlinePlus database, a clearinghouse for recipes and other health information for the general public.

“[The kits are] something that will need to be monitored for relevance,” says Holder, who plans to track items to see if they need updating or replacement.

Some libraries offering these kits have emphasized that devices like blood pressure monitors do not substitute professional medical care. They note that blood pressure kits are not for diagnostic or emergency use and that library staff cannot provide medical advice.

Staffers may have a difficult time cataloging these kits, because each contains several items. Additionally, popularizing the kits among patrons and training employees to restock the kits’ free resources after they’re returned to the library may present challenges. But staffers offering these kits, including NSPL’s Lepore, say that making health devices and information accessible to their users is worth the effort.

Says Lepore: “We’re trying to give the community one giant hug and let everyone know we’re here for them.” **AL**

EMILY UDELL is a freelance writer based in Indianapolis.



Newport News (Va.) Public Library litter cleanup kits include a bucket, safety vests, litter grabbers, latex-free gloves, trash bags, and hand sanitizer.

◀ Continued from page 13

a backpack filled with trash bags, nitrile gloves, sanitizing wipes, a safety vest, and a litter grabber, cost about \$600 total.

But while FHCPL’s first attempt at distributing cleanup kits didn’t succeed, it has additional programming planned for warm-weather months. It will reintroduce the kits for Earth Day (April 22) and tie the cleanup project into summer programs. Mantey says he hopes nice weather will lead to greater demand for the kits.

All three library systems note the importance of partnering with environmental organizations to kick-start litter cleanup initiatives. Those organizations often have dedicated budgets for community projects. Partnering with municipal departments can also ensure that funding does not fall solely on the library.

Once the projects are funded, libraries agree that litter cleanup kits are a boon to the community.

“A lot of people check out the kits because they want to make a difference,” Jennings says. Cleaning up an area provides “a sense of ownership,” she adds, and libraries are uniquely equipped to provide materials and information to empower residents. **AL**

CASS BALZER is a writer in Chicago.

Libraries on Call

Smartphone lending program bridges technology gaps

When Las Vegas–Clark County (Nev.) Library District (LVCCCLD) closed its doors at the start of the pandemic, the technological barriers that existed within the community were laid bare, particularly those affecting people facing homelessness. Last April, LVCCCLD launched its Cellphone Lending Program, an innovative approach to providing hundreds of unhoused individuals with access to needed services and social connection.

BY Kelvin
Watson

Access to technology is key to unlocking opportunities for underserved populations. But when it comes to connecting residents in need with technology, library workers have something else to offer: compassion. Drawing in and establishing trust with people who could benefit from our services is an important way of building community.

At LVCCCLD, we have taken this idea to heart.

In April 2022, we launched a Cellphone Lending Program, which has since provided more than 400 smartphones to people who are currently unhoused, offering them a lifeline to family, support systems, and critical social services.

When our library buildings were closed during the pandemic, we saw an increase in residents visiting our parking lots to use our Wi-Fi to access public services. It dawned on district management that smartphones could be an easy, cost-effective bridge for the information gulf.

We applied for a \$200,000 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Nevada State Library, intended for improving broadband access for the community. We combined this with funds from the American Rescue Plan Act and, later, the American Library Association's COVID Library Relief Fund. To launch the program, LVCCCLD worked with T-Mobile to secure phones and two local organizations—Nevada Homeless Alliance and Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth—on outreach.

Each phone in Las Vegas–Clark County (Nev.) Library District's Cellphone Lending Program was loaded with more than 50 social service provider contacts.

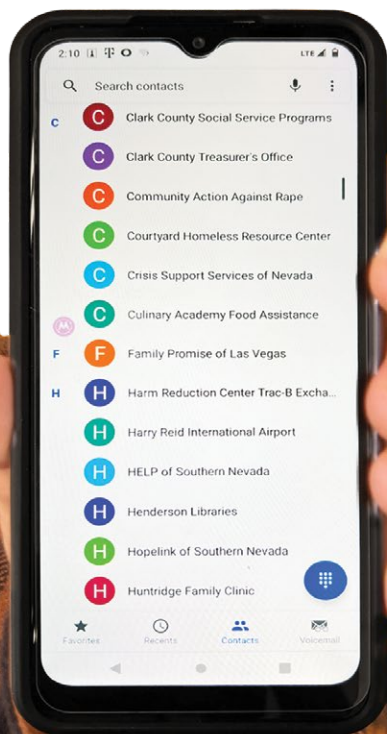
The phones, which are being loaned for an 18-month period, have unlimited calls and 5G hotspot capability. Each phone was programmed with more than 50 social service provider contacts, offering easy assistance for food, health care, housing, and other general services, as well as five of the most used library apps. For those who needed help with their smartphones, LVCCCLD and our partners organized a vendor fair alongside the phone distribution, which included training, a Q&A session, and other resources.

At the end of the lending period, recipients will be able to keep their phone and phone number and arrange a contract with any telecom provider at their own expense. To maintain privacy, LVCCCLD does not track usage of any pre-installed software.

The idea behind this program is simple: All the outreach and support programs in the world can't provide people with opportunities if they can't reach you and you can't reach them. Many people may not realize the barriers that individuals experience without access to a phone or Wi-Fi. This became especially true during the pandemic, as services are now predominantly accessed via the internet and platforms like Zoom.

A smartphone also promotes safety and stability, enabling users to communicate with case managers, employers, and housing providers. Several participants have reported that after previously losing housing opportunities because they were unreachable, they've secured housing thanks to having a call-back number. Phones also provide easier access to health care, including mental health services, via telehealth.

In a December 2022 survey with nearly 50 program participants



All the outreach and support programs in the world can't provide people with opportunities if they can't reach you and you can't reach them.

responding, 82% of respondents reported their new phone is their only way to access the internet; 80% said they use the phone to access social services; and 78% said they use it to apply for jobs. Respondents described the phones as a "priceless" and "much-needed" resource. Another said, "I would have never been able to function effectively and efficiently" without the phone.

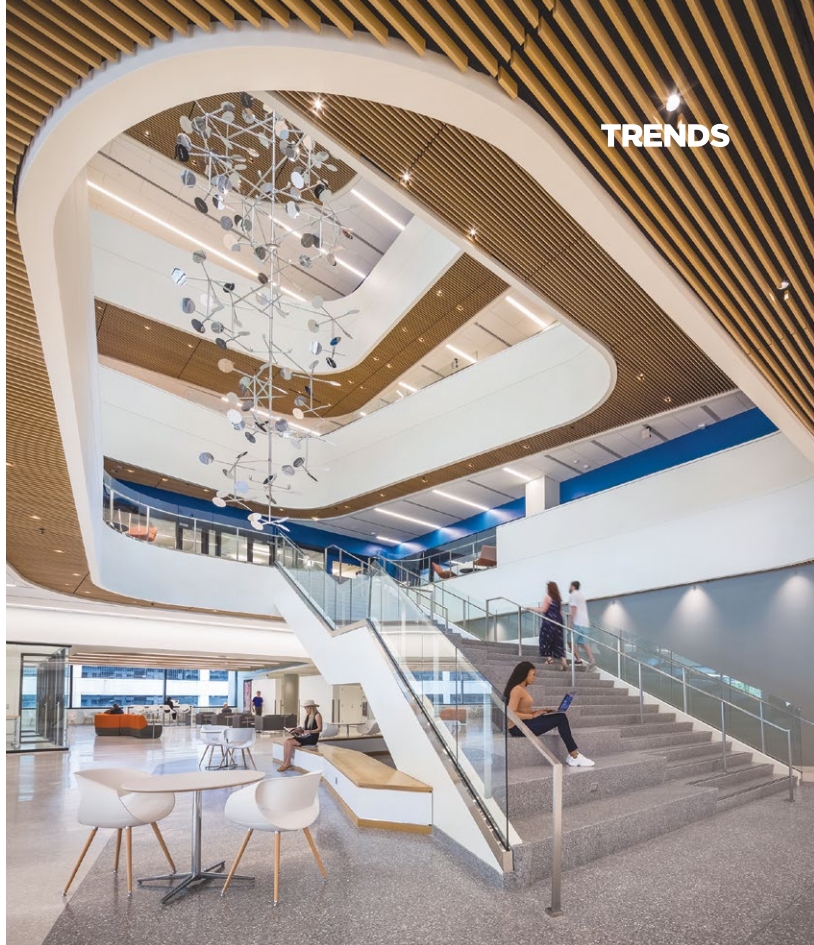
Access to technology is a basic human right. Our Cellphone Lending Program is an example of how public libraries empower and uplift members of underserved communities by finding innovative ways to expand that access.

We hope this program will continue to grow as we establish future funding and that it can serve as a model for other library systems across the country. Our role is to do what libraries do best: serve as a community hub and bring together the expertise of the partners needed to create a successful program.

The additional ringtones heard in our library parking lots and hallways are the sounds of compassion in our communities, and we are thrilled to have answered that call. **AL**

KELVIN WATSON is executive director of Las Vegas–Clark County (Nev.) Library District.

Photo: Jonathan Hillyer



TRENDS

Fulton County (Ga.) Library System's Central Library in Atlanta

Show Us Your Beautiful New Library

American Libraries is now accepting submissions for the 2023 Library Design Showcase, our annual feature celebrating new and newly renovated libraries of all types. The showcase will appear in the September/October 2023 issue.

We are looking for examples of innovative library architecture that address patrons' needs in unique, interesting, and effective ways. We are also interested in submissions from libraries that are approaching building design and renovation with sustainability in mind.

If your library is on the cutting edge, we want our readers to know. To be eligible, projects must have been completed between May 1, 2022, and April 30, 2023. The submission deadline is

May 31, 2023. Unfortunately, not all submissions can be featured.

To have your library considered, send a completed submission form (bit.ly/23DesignShowcaseForm) and at least five high-resolution digital images with photographer

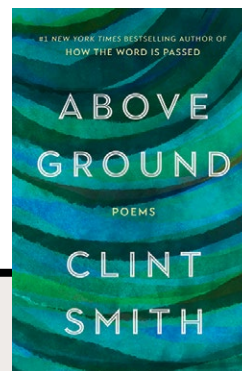
credits to americanlibraries@ala.org via Dropbox or another file-sharing service.

View last year's showcase at bit.ly/2022DesignShowcase. For more information, email americanlibraries@ala.org. •

**LIBRARY
DESIGN
SHOWCASE**

Clint Smith

Award-winning author and poet on the multiplicities of life



Few details go unnoticed by Clint Smith: His child's first hiccup. The way his grandfather's house still smells like his late grandmother's hair. The eroding coastline in his home state of Louisiana. His poetry collection *Counting Descent* won the 2017 Literary Award for Best Poetry Book from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association and was a finalist for an NAACP Image Award. Now with *Above Ground* (Little, Brown and Company, March), Smith—also a staff writer at *The Atlantic*—uses poetry to examine life's big and small moments.

American Libraries spoke with Smith ahead of his appearance at the American Library Association's 2023 LibLearnX conference in New Orleans, about how the city has influenced his identity and how fatherhood has shaped his writing.

anxiety in the same body. Our lives are full of multiplicities: things that are happening simultaneously, things that are happening all at once. I wanted to begin the book with a declaration of that multiplicity; this

collection is an attempt to hold all that together.

Some poems in your new book read like personal letters to loved ones and yet there are details in them that feel universal. There are universalities in the granular. If a poet attempts to focus singularly on “universal themes” that they think might resonate with the most people, you risk losing that sense of intimacy and emotional proximity. I just wanted to be as specific to my experiences as I could, because as much as these poems are in a book that other people will read, they also are a time capsule of these moments that I want to hold on to, that I want my kids to be able to read years from now. There's always the hope that other people will find meaning in that.

What role have libraries played in your life? I loved walking to our local library in New Orleans with my mom. The books felt so endless, the ideas felt so endless. At a moment in which things feel increasingly means-tested, it's a space that's emblematic of the democratic and egalitarian values that so many of us want the larger world to look like. If public libraries were to be reimagined, or if people came up with them today, I'm not sure they would be as egalitarian and open and as magical as they are. I feel enormously grateful for them on a personal level. **AL**

BY Diana Panuncial

You're a New Orleans native. What impact has the city had on your work? There's obviously the food and the art and the music. I didn't realize that not everybody had gumbo and jambalaya and crawfish étouffée for Thanksgiving dinner.

I remember being like,
“Turkey? Mashed potatoes?
Where's the good stuff?”

New Orleans is everywhere in my work. I was 17 years old and a senior in high school when Hurricane Katrina hit, and I'm 34 now. It's the thing that bifurcates my life. I have not lived in New Orleans permanently or in a sustained way since the storm. Being torn away from the city so suddenly has made me reflect more deeply on the ways that it has shaped me.

***Above Ground* begins with “All at Once,” a poem about events that can be both blessings and tragedies. Why did you choose this poem to begin your collection?**

So much of the last several years has been holding a set of seemingly emotionally dissonant realities together. We have seen a rise of white supremacist violence, authoritarian and neofascist regimes, the climate crisis accelerate, war break out. I've married my best friend. She's given birth to two remarkable children. I feel closer to my family and my friends than I maybe ever have. What I have been wrestling with over the course of the last several years is how to hold despair and joy at once, how to hold immense gratitude and immense





“Nobody likes to throw a book away. Nobody likes to see it go into a bin. Books represent a significant investment of time and intellectual effort in our lives. They’re more like friends than objects. You’ve had a lot of conversations with the book. You want to remember the experience. They’re echoes of what you’ve read.”

MICHAEL POWELL, former owner of Powell’s Books, in “We’re Drowning in Old Books. But Getting Rid of Them Is Heartbreaking,” *The Washington Post*, December 19, 2022.

“If the public library did not already exist as a pillar of local civic engagement in American towns and cities, there’s no way we would be able to create it. It seems like a relic of a bygone era of public optimism, a time when governments worked to value and edify their people, rather than punish and extract from them. In America, a country that can often be cruel to its citizens, the public library is a surprising kindness. It is an institution that offers grace and sanctuary, and a vision of what our country might one day be.”

Columnist **MOIRA DONEGAN**, “This Year, I’m Thankful for US Public Libraries—Beautiful Icons of a Better Civic Era,” *The Guardian (US)*, December 28, 2022.

“SINCE 1904, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE’VE HAD A BOOK CHALLENGE AT ALL, ACTUALLY.”

Former interim library director **JOSH BARTELS**, in “Barnes County Library and Residents Meet to Discuss Controversial Book for Young Adults,” KVLV-TV (Fargo, N.Dak.), January 5.

“The children inside [the library] had nothing to fear from the drag queens who were reading to them. The only people they had to fear, frankly, were the right-wing, transphobic white supremacists outside trying to disrupt the event.”

LGBTQIA+ activist **PAULINE PARK**, in “Drag Story Hour in Jackson Heights Draws Hundreds,” *Queens (N.Y.) Chronicle*, January 5.

“As libraries become battlegrounds, teens notice which books, and which identities, are under attack. Those who share identities with targeted authors or characters receive a powerful message of exclusion: These books don’t belong, and neither do you.”

Author **ASHLEY HOPE PÉREZ**, “Ashley Hope Pérez: ‘Young People Have a Right’ to Stories That Help Them Learn,” NPR, December 14, 2022.



March 11, 2020

Date the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, after more than 118,000 cases in 114 countries and 4,291 deaths

THREE YEARS LATER

How the pandemic has reshaped libraries

This March marks three years since COVID-19 brought the country to a standstill. While the pandemic is still ongoing—tens of thousands of cases continue to be recorded daily in the US—the effects it has had on our everyday lives, and our libraries, have abated and become somewhat normalized.

In those early days, libraries grappled with the same issues as everyone else: closed buildings, plans put on hold, and diminished access. With this special report, we take a look at some libraries' behind-the-scenes decisions to keep their communities connected and missions fulfilled.

On the following pages, you'll find stories about:

- early-pandemic adaptations and innovations that have stuck around—and those that fell by the wayside—as library workers learned more about the virus and their patrons' needs (p. 22)
- libraries that were forced to change their approaches to fundraising and advocacy, from virtual galas to campaign pivots, in order to achieve their vision (p. 26)
- unique obstacles faced by communities simultaneously coping with COVID-19 and the effects of natural disasters, and how their libraries secured and spent much-needed relief funding (p. 30)

This report offers a brief look at the choices and challenges the profession faced, as well as the resilience and dedication of its workers. For a deeper understanding of how libraries were affected by COVID-19, read our archived and ongoing coverage at bit.ly/AL-COVID-19. **AL**

Illustration: Gabby FeBland





CURBSIDE SERVICE IS HERE TO STAY

Perhaps no institution has been associated with curbside pickup more than Harris County (Tex.) Public Library (HCPL), the system that gave us Curbside Larry, a used car salesman-type character (played by HCPL Program Production Specialist John Schaffer) who went viral for advertising this novel innovation (bit.ly/AL-CurbsideLarry).

“The attention was wonderful, and we definitely appreciate that,” says Nancy Hu, design and communications manager at HCPL. She notes that with Curbside Larry going viral, the library was able to show its playfulness while shedding light on the work all libraries were doing to maintain services.

Larry’s days in the limelight may be over, but curbside pickup of books, media, crafts kits, and even mobile print jobs continues across the country. It’s still offered by request at each of HCPL’s 26 library locations; though demand has declined since 2020, Hu says there’s still an audience.

“Now it’s more about accessibility and just convenience,” Hu says. “I would say it’s not as much fear of the virus.”

Palatine (Ill.) Library District (PLD) has seen a similar trend: Curbside requests dropped from 9,600 in 2020 and 7,400 in 2021 to 623 in 2022. Even so, PLD Member Services Manager Rosalie Scarpelli says that older adults, people with disabilities or who are immunocompromised, parents who don’t want to get their children out of the car, and those trying to avoid inclement weather



FROM MAKESHIFT TO MAINSTAY

What pandemic adaptations taught libraries about community needs

by Terra Dankowski

When COVID-19 shuttered businesses, schools, and public spaces in March 2020, we knew little about the virus and how long it would last. But even in the absence of answers, library workers did what they do best: shared information, pivoted programs and services, and tried to plug noticeable equity gaps.

Three years on, which early-pandemic adaptations have stuck around? Which trends went by the wayside? *American Libraries* asked public, academic, school, and special librarians to reflect on how COVID-19 changed their work in the short and long term, and what these innovations taught them about their workplaces and users.

are among the users who continue to sign up for one of the library's 72 pickup slots per week.

"The phone calls come in—I'm here"—and then we run out with their bag," Scarpelli says. "It's very efficient."

Employees match the make, model, and color of the vehicle to the user and pack materials in the backseat or trunk. Though it's rare, "some of our [patrons] still don't want us to be touching any surfaces," Scarpelli says.

Neither HCPL nor PLD plans to phase out curbside pickup anytime soon. "It's not that it's expected, but it doesn't seem like a special accommodation—it's just a regular service," Hu says.

"I don't see us taking it away," Scarpelli says. "There are a handful who use this every week and don't come in the building anymore."

PARKING LOT WI-FI REMAINS POWERED ON



Two weeks after the world shuttered in March 2020, the American Library Association's (ALA) Executive Board issued a recommendation that libraries keep their Wi-Fi on while their buildings were closed (bit.ly/AL-ParkingLot). So-dubbed parking lot Wi-Fi became the norm, and many libraries still see it as an essential service for those most affected by the digital divide.

Hu says increasing the range of HCPL's Wi-Fi was the first step in making broadband more accessible in the pandemic's early days. The system installed antennas on top of its buildings that extended the library's network. (Not long after, HCPL received an Emergency Connectivity Fund grant to provide

mobile hotspots and Chromebooks for checkout—two services it hadn't offered before COVID-19.) To this day, Hu says people are still connecting to HCPL's Wi-Fi from their cars.

Noting that residents needed internet to connect with work and school and apply for social services, Miami-Dade Public Library System (MDPLS) used district funds to launch its Drive-Up Wi-Fi program at 24 of its 50 locations in June 2020. It proved an effective way to offer connectivity when the library was enforcing building occupancy limits, says Rafael A. Costa, MDPLS's assistant director of library and public technology service.

Because the program was so popular—"we started to get requests for the service at other branches where it was not available," says Costa—MDPLS applied for an American Rescue Plan Act grant in 2021 to expand it. Through Florida's Division of Library and Information Services, MDPLS was awarded \$275,000, which has enabled the system to add 12 new locations and amplify the Wi-Fi signal at 13 of its original locations. In total, MDPLS has created 1,660 Wi-Fi-accessible parking spaces at 36 locations across the county.

'STEPPED-UP' SANITATION STEPPED DOWN

The Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) in Andover, Massachusetts, was among the first

"Once people were able to get vaccinated and had that protection, some of these stepped-up measures felt less necessary."

BEXX CASWELL-OLSON, director of book conservation at the Northeast Document Conservation Center in Andover, Massachusetts

agencies to provide guidelines on disinfecting collections in spring 2020 (bit.ly/AL-NEDCC).

"There was a lot we did not know specifically about how the virus spread and what sorts of risks there were to people handling collections," says Bexx Caswell-Olson, NEDCC's director of book conservation. But experts seemed to agree in those early days that time was the best disinfectant—letting books sit in quarantine rooms before recirculating them—whereas using ultraviolet lights, fogging (dispersing disinfectant in a space), and strong cleaning agents came with risks.

"If you're not using [these methods] correctly, they not only can damage collections but can be harmful to human health," Caswell-Olson says.

The leaflet and webinars NEDCC created were not meant to be prescriptive, she says, but intended to give people information to help them make their own decisions. Still, those initial guidelines continued to evolve, and many libraries have since stopped using quarantine rooms.

"When that CDC guidance came out [in 2021] that said the risk of fomite transmission is low, I think a lot of people breathed a huge sigh of relief," Caswell-Olson says. "Trying

111

Weekly US
COVID-19
cases on
March 4,
2020



280,911

Weekly US
COVID-19
cases on
February 1,
2023

65% Percentage of public libraries that added more digital materials in response to the pandemic



to clean everything, and even quarantining materials, is a lot of extra work.” Having a dedicated space and tracking system for what cycles in and out of quarantine was a burden on overextended staff, she adds.

“Once people were able to get vaccinated and had that protection, some of these stepped-up measures felt less necessary,” Caswell-Olson says.

SCHOOLS HAVE CONTINUED THEIR BOOKMOBILE JOURNEYS

In 2020, three school librarians from Goochland County, Virginia, bootstrapped a bookmobile for the students in their district. They secured a van and book donations and drove across their 290-square-

mile rural county with the goal of preventing learning loss that first pandemic summer.

Since then, the bookmobile has completed its third year, garnered attention via social media, and has attracted new

partners—such as women’s groups, churches, and National Night Out.

“We wanted to do whatever we could to keep it going,” says Zoe Parrish, library media specialist at Goochland County Public Schools. Though Parrish and cohorts Sarah Smith and Susan Vaughan have pared down the route from six to three stops, students still get to choose up to four books to take home—and an ice pop.

Nearby Chesterfield County (Va.) School District and Richmond



(Va.) Public Schools also launched bookmobiles during the pandemic, marking a growing trend of school librarians trying to reach their students over the summer.

Parrish says the mission of her bookmobile has somewhat changed. In 2020, the focus was on getting books into the hands of kids. Today, internet access has greatly improved in Goochland County and the reopening of schools and libraries has better curtailed summer slide, she says. Parrish now sees the bookmobile as an advocacy tool.

“It’s a way to remind kids they have a school system that loves them, that is there for them, that wants them to have things,” Parrish says. “Especially with the way libraries seem to be portrayed in recent news and in light of everything that’s going on with book banning.”

ANALOG ADOPTION DEPENDS ON THE COMMUNITY

During the pandemic, libraries turned to more analog adaptations—such as television, radio, and fliers—to disseminate information and host programs. Not all of these ideas stuck, but one is still thriving: *Radio Storytime* on KBBI-AM, the public station that serves Homer, Alaska.

Cinda Nofziger, youth services librarian at Homer Public Library (HPL), took over hosting duties in 2021, and the frequency changed



from weekly to monthly when in-person programming resumed. “We still get good solid numbers,” Nofziger says, noting an average of 620 listeners per episode.

The program works especially well in this rural area, where radio was already part of the infrastructure.

“There are portions of our service area [of 12,000 residents] that are across the bay, people who are living out in the mountains and don’t necessarily get into town with any regularity,” Nofziger says. “Radio has a long history in this community. It’s low-tech. You don’t need Wi-Fi.”

Nofziger believes the program is reaching its intended audience—the early literacy crowd—but notes that another unexpected demographic has come to follow the show: older adults. Seniors will call to tell her how much they appreciate hearing a story or a song from their childhood.

HPL doesn’t have any plans to sunset the program, Nofziger says, even though the library runs both in-person and Zoom storytimes: “It’s a little something different than what [KBBI] usually has on there, and it continues to be positive.”

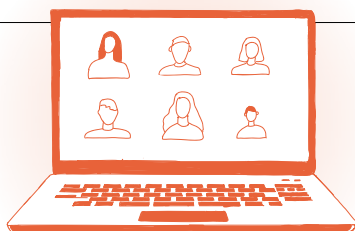
VIRTUAL AND PASSIVE PROGRAMMING SUCCESS WAS HARD TO PREDICT

In spring 2020, media outlets were already writing about *Zoom fatigue*, or the burnout people were experiencing from a mostly virtual existence. While almost every library pivoted some aspect of their services online, predicting what would take off was another story.

“Virtual audiences are rather fickle, so we had to do a lot of

“Virtual audiences are rather fickle, so we had to do a lot of testing.”

NANCY HU, design and communications manager at Harris County (Tex.) Public Library



testing,” says Hu at HCPL. Her library still hosts virtual programs, but only for categories that have performed well, such as gardening classes, book clubs, and an online high school program. She says HCPL tries to keep virtual programs evergreen, so they can be archived on the library’s YouTube channel.

Tamara Lyhne, head of children’s services at Fairfield (Conn.) Public Library, agrees that not all programs work in a virtual environment, especially in 2023. “While certain things—paint-alongs, cooking classes, parent programs, and digital escape rooms—have remained in Zoom, my patrons expect all other programming in person,” she says.

But in more remote areas, virtual programs can be a lifeline. “Sometimes it’s hard to get into town because of the snow,” says Nofziger at HPL. “Having a Zoom option is really nice for [families].”

One of HPL’s most popular programs is a Little Makers series, where patrons stop by the library to pick up a kit of materials and spend four weeks attending online sessions to learn how to use them. By contrast, take-home crafts aren’t as popular: “We end up with bags of stuff that don’t get taken,” Nofziger says.

At Brownsburg (Ind.) Public Library (BPL), take-and-make kits continue to have broad appeal. “Those passive options always fill up,” says Robbi Caldwell, information services manager.

More surprising is that BPL’s Itty Bitty virtual storytime is still a massive hit. One ocean-themed episode

from 2022 has 56,000 views on YouTube.

The takeaway? Virtual and passive programming success depends on community interests and needs. “We definitely learned that, in order to really capture and retain our audience, virtual programming has to be pretty entertaining,” Hu says.

PPE PRODUCTION WAS A UNIQUE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

With a massive personal protective equipment (PPE) shortage in early 2020, many libraries began producing their own gear with 3D printers and technology in their makerspaces.

Using a fleet of more than 40 3D printers, University of Utah’s Eccles Health Sciences Library (EHSL) in Salt Lake City was among the most prolific manufacturers, leveraging cross-disciplinary expertise to produce more than 1,200 face shields. Face shields were then distributed to the university’s hospitals, clinics, dentistry school, student organizations, and other system affiliates. Distribution was limited to campus-connected departments because of liability concerns, says T. J. Ferrill, head of creative spaces at University of Utah’s J. Willard Marriott Library.

This undertaking supported frontline workers, but it was also a way the community “could better understand [how] things like 3D printers can belong in places like libraries,” says Brandon Patterson, technology engagement librarian at EHSL. “It brought some awareness.”



By summer 2020, the demand for face shields came to a halt. “[They] kind of fell out of favor as more was understood about how COVID transmits through spaces,” Ferrill says.

But EHSL’s pandemic prototyping didn’t stop with face shields. The library was asked by other departments to produce door pulls that people can operate with their elbows; nose pieces that keep mask-wearers’ glasses from fogging; and even a device that mounts iPads to microscopes, so students don’t have to remove PPE to look down the tube.

The university’s time as a face-shield producer taught those involved a valuable lesson: “The library isn’t a manufacturer, and we’re not set up to mass-produce,” Patterson says.

But the project did inspire the university to automate its 3D-printing operation. “As we’re printing thousands and thousands of copies of things, the rapid-prototyping aspect of 3D printing felt less rapid,” Ferrill says. His team created a solution where any student or faculty member can send a 3D-print job to the next available printer in the university’s corral; the only handling required is removing the object.

Ferrill and Patterson say they hope they don’t have to make PPE again, but they don’t discount the possibility of another crisis. “Going forward we may need to do something like this again,” says Ferrill. “We wanted to be ready.” **AL**

TERRA DANKOWSKI is managing editor of *American Libraries*.

\$50 million

Amount allocated to the Institute of Museum and Library Services through the CARES Act, the \$2.2 trillion economic stimulus bill signed into law on March 27, 2020





GETTING BACK TO GIVING BACK

How the pandemic left a mark on library fundraising efforts

by Diana Panuncial

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ari Brooks wasn't sure how to move forward with her library's fundraising efforts.

In a milieu of uncertainty caused by worldwide shutdowns, Brooks, executive director of Friends of the Library, Montgomery County (FOLMC) in Maryland, didn't know if it was insensitive to ask the community to support the library with donations. She attended a workshop in 2020 on fundraising during a crisis, and there she learned a mantra that has anchored

her throughout the pandemic: "You have to keep fundraising. You can't stop. You need to sustain your mission."

The pandemic has forced Friends groups, foundations, and other fundraising cohorts to adjust their strategies of raising money for their local libraries. Some have had to pause projects or completely scrap ideas. But their creativity and perseverance in the wake of COVID-19's many challenges have kept the importance of supporting libraries at the forefront

of donors'—and the broader community's—minds.

'A SCREECHING HALT'

At the beginning of the pandemic, most libraries' short-term and long-term fundraising projects and programs had to suddenly change. For example, FOLMC owns and operates two donation-run bookstores, which bring in about \$900,000 of the \$1.5 million it raises annually for the county's 21 libraries. But when the pandemic hit, those stores closed for 18 months.

"Our large income-generating machine came to a screeching halt," Brooks says. "Those bookstores [had been] open every single day. So that was scary." FOLMC instead relied on donations, bequests, grants, and funding from United Way and other philanthropic organizations. These funding streams had supported FOLMC in the past, but for only a portion of its revenue.

FOLMC was also working on a campaign with the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, a local arts agency and nonprofit organization, to raise funds for a truck that would help collect donations to bring to the bookstore. FOLMC shifted priorities and canceled that fundraiser.

Nationally, larger projects were also sent into flux, including proposals for a new, permanent building for a Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Public Library (CRPL) west side branch and a new outdoor plaza at Santa Barbara (Calif.) Public Library's (SBPL) Central Library.

In 2008, a flood had left CRPL's downtown branch unusable and forced library services to move to a kiosk at a mall on the city's west side until the branch reopened in 2012. During that time, staff noticed high

usage of library services there, so the kiosk remained in operation.

Advocating for a permanent west side branch has been the work of the Cedar Rapids Public Library Foundation (CRPLF) and its executive director, Charity Tyler. “The neighborhood had the highest population of children under 5, non-English-speaking individuals, low-income families, [and] single-parent households,” Tyler says. “We knew we couldn’t just walk away.”

Lauren Trujillo, director of the Santa Barbara Public Library Foundation (SBPLF), says that when the pandemic began her library was in the process of launching a feasibility study for a new outdoor plaza at SBPL, answering the need for more public space and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

“The whole space had poor lighting and wasn’t ADA accessible or stroller accessible—really the antithesis of what a library should be,” Trujillo says. “This was a priority to fix to make the library more welcoming.”

“The biggest thing I took away from all of this was to build flexibility into everything that we do.”

KERRY BARNES, executive director of Tompkins County (N.Y.) Public Library Foundation

That feasibility study—and planning for the outdoor plaza in general—was pushed to May 2020 so the foundation could focus on more immediate needs, including assisting SBPL in securing \$300,000 for a hybrid van to provide mobile services throughout the city.

MOVING FORWARD

Seeking a solution, FOLMC designed a new fundraising campaign—alongside the arts council—that Brooks says reminded donors “our mission to support the library’s mission is still relevant.” The new campaign, which was to create a pandemic relief fund, pointed supporters to virtual resources and modified services the library was still providing despite COVID-19’s limitations.

“Libraries were with us before the pandemic, they’ll help us get us through the pandemic, and they’re going to be with us after the pandemic,” Brooks says. The relief fund campaign raised \$50,000, according to FOLMC’s fiscal year 2021 report.

When May arrived, SBPLF decided to move forward with its feasibility study. The foundation also sought community feedback on programming that could be done safely outdoors in the proposed space. “During a time where everyone was stuck inside, nobody was opposed to the idea [of the plaza],” Trujillo says. “It seemed like the perfect antidote.”

When the library decided in October 2020 to go ahead with the project, SBPLF campaigned mostly over Zoom, delivering online presentations to members

of local government, community leaders, volunteers from previous campaigns, and private donors.

As a result, the campaign raised \$5 million in 18 months, with about \$1.2 million contributed by the City of Santa Barbara once officials saw the donations that had

already been pledged. “It was really about having one-on-one Zoom meetings and painting the picture of what could be,” Trujillo says.

In Cedar Rapids, CRPLF sought funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), citing that the new branch would also double as a hub for the library’s existing Opportunity Center—a space where nonprofit organizations can conduct operations—as well as provide social services. Tyler and her team conducted virtual meetings with local government leaders, keeping them informed of the project and advocating for the use of ARPA funds when they became available.

In October 2022, Linn County Board of Supervisors allocated \$4 million of the \$13 million the county had received in ARPA funds to the new Cedar Rapids library project. The total cost of the building will be about \$25 million. “That we got such a great investment from the city was very, very helpful to our project,” Tyler says.

NAVIGATING THE VIRTUAL LANDSCAPE

Smaller fundraisers went a long way for public libraries during the pandemic as well, whether groups created new, socially distanced events and programs or adjusted existing ones.

FOLMC helped create take-home book bundles for donors to purchase. CRPLF sold tree saplings, spades, and garden signs not only to fund its Dolly Parton Imagination Library program but also to replant trees lost to an August 2020 derecho,

81%

Percentage of total US population that has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine



16%

Percentage of US population ages 5 and up who have received the bivalent booster dose

88%

Percentage of public libraries that provided outdoor services while buildings were closed



or straight-line windstorm. (For more information on how libraries recovered from natural disasters during the pandemic, turn to “A Perfect Storm,” p. 30.) “We tried to find creative but relevant ways to fundraise that would resonate with donors,” Tyler says.

The virtual landscape provided opportunities for donors to participate in new ways. Each year, many library foundations and Friends groups hold in-person galas for their donors, but galas that were forced to move online were still able to yield results.

In lieu of its recurring fundraiser Booked for the Evening, the Eugene (Ore.) Public Library Foundation (EPLF) hosted a virtual gala called Connecting Community in April

2021. It raised a total of \$102,000—including \$77,000 from individual donations and \$25,000 from a single grant—for a project that would offer free Wi-Fi hotspots for patrons, says former EPLF executive director Reed Davaz McGowan. In comparison, EPLF’s last in-person Booked for the Evening event in October 2018 raised \$103,000, says Madison Wilson, EPLF outreach coordinator.

Tompkins County (N.Y.) Public Library’s annual Readathon event, in which community members read snippets of their favorite books and share what the library means to them, moved to a hybrid format for 2022. The in-person component included prerecorded submissions from readers and was livestreamed for donors at home.

“The biggest thing I took away from all of this was the need to build flexibility into everything that we do,” says Kerry Barnes, executive director of Tompkins County Public Library Foundation (TCPLF). “Every single thing that we look at has to have an A scenario, a B scenario, a C scenario.”

LOOKING AHEAD

Like many other aspects of librarianship, the pandemic has shifted the way fundraising works as the profession defines its new normal.

Though Brooks describes the first few months of the pandemic as the worst of times, she also says that in hindsight, it showed how her team can persevere: “It definitely made us a lot stronger. [The pandemic

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revealed] that something that could be so horrible could actually create amazingly innovative experiences and [be] such a growth opportunity for my organization and for my team.”

The pandemic also showcased that there is value in meeting virtually. Trujillo notes that Zoom allowed for brevity in the usually long fundraising process, where it’s common to meet multiple times with potential donors and it’s often challenging to hold their focus. “You can spend years meeting with people one-on-one and getting to know them,” she says. “But a positive of Zoom was that they knew we had an hour, and we were able to present and get down to business.”

However, Trujillo also says virtual fundraising may make keeping donors involved long-term more difficult. “We have to look at engagement past the pandemic and make sure that those relationships are fostered as long-term connections to libraries,” she says.

And at times—for example, when virtual fundraising events are recorded for later viewing—Barnes says donors can potentially lose a sense of urgency to attend a library event and therefore lose interest in the cause. She says it has prompted her to rethink the way foundations and donors work together.

“It has required a strong look at what we do,” Barnes says. “Are we doing these things just because we’ve always done them? Or

because someone tells us this is how you have to do it? This is an opportunity for us to clear the decks and create a new way of interacting with each other.”

The key to ongoing fundraising in the pandemic landscape, Brooks thinks, may be to keep the mission at the forefront of the community’s mind. “I’ve never worked with as passionate advocates as I have in the library world,” she says. “People really, really, really love their libraries. And as long as we continue to understand the needs of the library system and make that connection to the donor, the donor will always come through.” **AL**

DIANA PANUNCIAL is an associate editor for *American Libraries*.

39%

Percentage increase in the number of patrons reporting using a library’s website or app after the pandemic started





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A PERFECT STORM

Libraries cope with combined tragedies of COVID-19, natural disasters

BY Megan Bennett

Tn September 2017, Hurricane Maria devastated the Puerto Rican coastal city of Humacao. Much of The Palmas Academy (TPA), a K–12 school serving kids from across the island, was left damaged or destroyed—including its library.

The library served as a hub for the school’s approximately 400 students and faculty. It had separate spaces for elementary and high school students to study, check out books, and use computers.

Maria and its aftermath claimed most of the library’s collections. Of an estimated 4,000–5,000 books, 90% were no longer usable.

“Everything was full of water, and we had to get rid of almost everything,” says Lilliam Morales, TPA’s interim head of school.

TPA was able to reopen after Maria, first online and eventually back in person, but the library remained closed. In March 2020, COVID-19 sent students and staff back home until November 2021—further delaying the library’s comeback. “It compounded all of our problems because we had to redirect our resources to other areas,” Morales says. “So, the library was kind of left behind.”

Libraries across the country, like TPA’s, have utilized COVID-19 relief funding to support recovery not only from the pandemic but also from natural disasters that have wounded their communities.

In March 2022, TPA reopened its library and hired a part-time librarian with support from a \$10,000 grant from the American Library Association’s (ALA) American Rescue Plan:

Humanities Grants for Libraries program. Later that year, a \$20,000 grant from ALA’s COVID-19 Library Relief Fund was awarded to help the school rebuild its book collection and purchase an interactive display board. “It’s a place people love,” Morales says of the library. “It’s welcoming to people. It’s beginning to be what it was.”

UPGRADES AND EXPANSIONS

Louisiana’s Lafourche Parish can relate to the devastation a hurricane can bring. In August 2021, staff members at Lafourche Parish Public Library (LPPL) were hopeful more patrons would start returning in person following months of pandemic-era services, recalls Lynette Fazzio, programming administrator.

Then, Hurricane Ida made landfall on August 29, destroying an estimated 14,000 homes as well as other structures, including two parish libraries.

Many residents are still rebuilding, Fazzio says. A native of the area, Fazzio recalls seeing family and friends lose homes in Ida’s wake. “Gutting to the studs,” she remembers. “There’s no way to describe that if you’re not there.”

LPPL reopened its seven remaining libraries about two weeks after Ida and launched bookmobile services in the hardest-hit areas. But the pandemic and the hurricane shrank LPPL’s budget by more than 40 percentage points compared with pre-COVID-19 levels, and its reserve funds were depleted from hurricane recovery. LPPL is also awaiting Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and insurance dollars to rebuild its damaged libraries, says Fazzio.

Illustration: Gabby FeBland

99% Percentage of libraries that reported limited building access in May 2020



Without grants, Fazzio says, LPPL would have had to delay important upgrades. The \$20,000 it received from ALA's COVID Library Relief Fund in 2022 went toward 25 new desktop computers for its two largest, still-open locations. The old computers then replaced even older ones at the parish's five smaller branches.

"We don't want to have old, old, old hardware for the people to use," says Fazzio. Computers and Wi-Fi are a vital resource for the parish, she adds. Many patrons don't have computers at home and use LPPL's for education or other basic needs.

"Just to be able to apply for FEMA or get your public assistance, the library is the place they come to do that," Fazzio adds.

"[The pandemic] compounded all of our problems because we had to redirect our resources to other areas. So, the library was kind of left behind."

LILLIAM MORALES, interim head of school at The Palmas Academy in Humacao, Puerto Rico

More than 2,000 miles away, Sonoma County (Calif.) Library (SCL) also used pandemic-era grants to grow its technology infrastructure. In 2019, SCL launched its SonomaFi program, offering hotspots for checkout, which has proved useful to a region ravaged in recent years by wildfires that have destroyed thousands of homes. In November 2021, the library expanded the program with a \$40,000 American Rescue

Plan grant, purchasing 15 portable network kits for staff to use across SCL's 12 branches.

The kits can power what Mike Dawe, SCL's acting co-deputy director and IT manager, describes as "pop-up internet cafés," connecting dozens to the internet at once. Staff also use them to offer Wi-Fi at countywide programs like emergency preparedness events, farmers' markets, and other library initiatives.

SCL leaders say these programs fill digital gaps for patrons who lack reliable internet service for various reasons—whether they are still displaced from disasters or their home is in a remote area with little or no service. It also could support residents in future emergencies, Dawe adds.

Meeting patrons where they're at, Dawe says, was a priority for the expansion.

"There's still a lot of posttraumatic stress, and then you throw the pandemic in there," says Dawe. "They're still shy about coming into the libraries.

However, we can provide access through other means, where they're comfortable, and we can still make a positive impact."

KEEPING MOMENTUM

Because most COVID-19 relief funding sources are one-time allocations, libraries will likely need to pursue diverse funding streams to build on their initiatives, including other grants or community partnerships.

TPA's leaders are hopeful that grants and local support will continue the library's restoration. Over the past year, the school has raised \$30,000 through fundraisers, and enrollment has grown by 100 students—breaking even with its post-Hurricane Maria enrollment drop—which will help sustain its library, says Wendy Driscoll, a TPA parent and board of trustees member.

The goal is to eventually open the library to the greater community. Most public libraries that existed in the area haven't reopened since Maria.

"It's a way to get the community into the school and promote learning, interaction, and people getting to know each other ... around a place that's sorely needed in this part of Puerto Rico," Driscoll says.

The "dark cloud" of tragedy still comes with silver linings, says LPPL's Fazzio. There is anticipation around the libraries that are set to be rebuilt, she says, and she sees a new resolve within patrons—a greater appreciation for convening and supporting one another. Attendance for summer 2022 programming, Fazzio says, exceeded pre-pandemic numbers.

"There's hope in the fact that we're all still here," Fazzio says. "Once the dust settles and you say, 'Okay, I survived, I'm still here, now let's move forward and do something good with it.' There's positive if you look for it. And being able to be a library worker and serve the community is a blessing." **AL**

MEGAN BENNETT is an associate editor for *American Libraries*.

\$2.8 million

The combined amount of COVID-19 relief grants ALA provided to 111 libraries in 2021 and 2022



ON THE CUTTING EDGE

Innovative solutions allow for more inclusive approaches in medical librarianship

by Terra Dankowski
and Diana Panuncial

The work of medical librarians is essential and varied. Housed within academic medical libraries, hospitals, corporate libraries, and insurance companies, medical librarians provide information and resources to improve patient care, promote public health, and support medical education and research. Responsibilities are constantly evolving with technology and new programming.

American Libraries spoke with the creators of two initiatives—virtual reality programs for medical students at Greenblatt Library at Augusta (Ga.) University (AU) and a specialized book club for pediatric staff at Children's Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA). Both innovations were presented at the 2022 Medical Library Association's Annual Conference and demonstrate the impact of medical librarianship.

ENTERING A VIRTUAL WORLD

Virtual reality (VR) was brought to Greenblatt Library in part by Jennifer Davis, instructor and scholarship data librarian at AU; Lachelle Smith, health sciences librarian at AU; and Gail Kouame, former assistant director of research and education services at AU and now director of Charles M. Baugh Biomedical Library at University of South Alabama in Mobile. The three



Extended versions of these interviews were featured in Episode 77 of the *Call Number* podcast.

Listen at
bit.ly/CN-Ep77

collaborated to create two VR programs and a designated room for VR technology at the library with the help of AU's School of Computer and Cyber Sciences and the Computer and Game Design and Development program at Kennesaw (Ga.) State University.

Can you tell us more about the VR projects you collaborated on?

DAVIS: Lachelle and I collaborated on a pilot project creating a VR escape room game that would teach data management skills to health sciences students, particularly doctoral students—but anybody could play and use the game. We collaborated with undergraduate senior computer science students at AU.

KOUAME: There were also VR experiences that emulated vision deficits, from things like macular



JENNIFER DAVIS



LACHELLE SMITH



GAIL KOUAME

degeneration or diabetic retinopathy, as well as the effects of Parkinson's disease. Students are asked to virtually do certain tasks like open a pill bottle, open a shampoo bottle, turn on the shower, those kinds of things. There was also a simulation for post-stroke rehabilitation. The idea of those projects and experiences was to build empathy in health sciences students who would be dealing with patients with those issues.

How did the idea for creating VR programs come about?

KOUAME: I was approached by some folks from our medical college; they had already started working with virtual reality. AU's computer science school asked if we might be willing to designate a virtual reality space in the library as a way to expand that program and that project.

DAVIS: Research and data management principles are not always the most exciting things to learn about, so we wanted to create something that would get the

students more engaged, and it was a fun project—something new for us to do. I have no VR experience; it was a very new thing for me to develop those skills.

What makes VR ideal for teaching students these concepts?

KOUAME: The advantage of VR is it's very experiential and very immersive. It allows a person to experience a situation as though it were almost real. It's 3D: You're in a space or in a room that is very close to being in a room with a real pill bottle or a real shampoo bottle. To me, it's as close as you can get to sending somebody into, say, an elderly person's apartment and having them open a pill bottle.

SMITH: VR provides a lifelike scenario that students can actively explore and work with as opposed to passively listening to lectures.

What were the logistics of dedicating a whole room to VR programs at the library? What did you consider in terms of policies?

KOUAME: The things we had to think about were: Who's going to be in charge? Who's going to monitor this thing? Who's going to troubleshoot this thing? How are we going to get the equipment checked in and out? We had to work very closely with our access services department. It made a lot of sense for them to be involved because the room was very close to our information and circulation desk, and they would be the ones checking the equipment in and out. I have a colleague in Florida

“We wanted to create something that would get the students more engaged.”

JENNIFER DAVIS, instructor and scholarship data librarian at Augusta (Ga.) University

Photo: ©kite_rin/Adobe Stock (VR headset)

who had implemented something similar a couple of years prior, so I contacted him and asked him what they were doing in terms of policies and procedures. And I told him, “Imitation is the highest form of flattery.” So, we modified what he had already done at his library and came up with our own.

What feedback have you received from students?

SMITH: We did have students take a survey when we did the pilot program, and I can say it was well received by them. They did offer some suggestions, and that’s because we had them, at the time, playing the games in a different environment than they are now. We took their suggestions and presented them to the computer science students we were working with. Students appreciated that we thought of implementing virtual reality, especially as an escape room. They just thought that was really innovative. And it actually helped them engage with the content better as opposed to a lecture.

Do you have any other tips for librarians who want to incorporate VR in their programming?

SMITH: I just want to stress the power of partnership and leveraging the relationships that you have. Gail was instrumental in connecting Jenn and me with a computer science faculty member, but we had to first reach out to Gail to share our ideas. Don’t be afraid to share your ideas with other colleagues.

KOUAME: Both projects were funded from an outside source through the network of the National Library of Medicine’s regional office, so we also had to go through our Sponsored Programs Administration. It always takes longer than you think when you’re involved with external funding sources, so allow time for all of that when you’re considering doing something like this.

STRENGTHENING STAFF CONNECTIONS

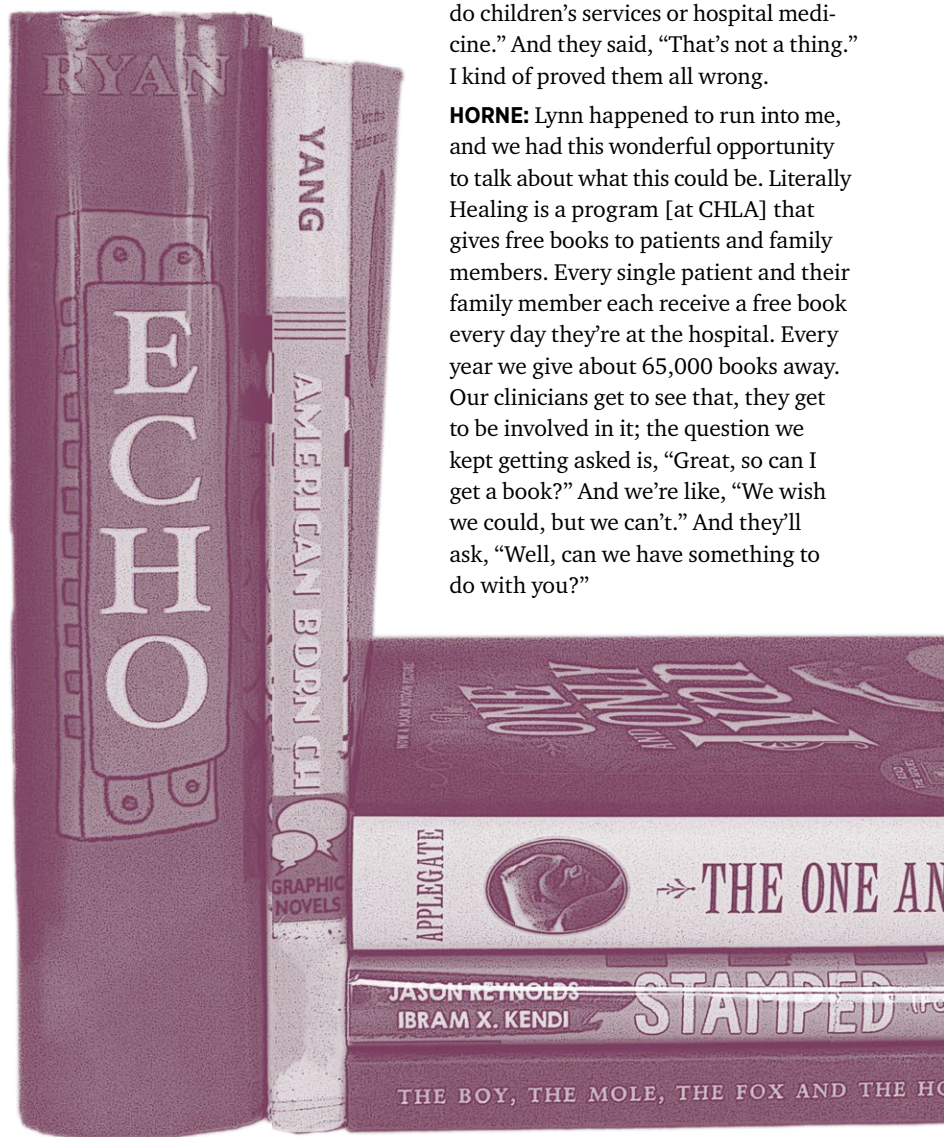
Pediatric hospital staff undergo many stressors serving their young patients. To alleviate that stress, CHLA’s clinical and research librarian Lynn Kysh and Literally Healing program manager Kyle Horne created Hardback Life, a book club for pediatric staff with a goal of creating empathy and fostering connections. The pilot program saw success as staff found a way to bond through reading children’s literature such as *The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate

and *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* by Charlie Mackesy.

How did the idea for Hardback Life come about? What goals did you have in mind for the pilot program, and what outcomes were you envisioning for participants?

KYSH: This came as a twinkle in my eye. I usually tell people I’m a medical librarian with the heart of a children’s librarian. When I was in library school, it was that question of, “What kind of librarian do you want to be?” And I’m like, “I want to do children’s services or hospital medicine.” And they said, “That’s not a thing.” I kind of proved them all wrong.

HORNE: Lynn happened to run into me, and we had this wonderful opportunity to talk about what this could be. Literally Healing is a program [at CHLA] that gives free books to patients and family members. Every single patient and their family member each receive a free book every day they’re at the hospital. Every year we give about 65,000 books away. Our clinicians get to see that, they get to be involved in it; the question we kept getting asked is, “Great, so can I get a book?” And we’re like, “We wish we could, but we can’t.” And they’ll ask, “Well, can we have something to do with you?”



**“These are books
that reflect the
experiences of
our patients
and families.”**

LYNN KYSH, clinical and research
librarian at Children’s Hospital
Los Angeles

We have these clinicians, and staff members in general, who have a real interest in engaging in this space. The opportunity to give this book club to our staff—who are really going through a lot here at the hospital, even before COVID-19—was really such a wonderful opportunity.

KYSH: It truly was, “Will anybody show up? And if people show up, will they come back?” We also envisioned it being for everyone who works in the hospital. We tend to think about our clinicians the most, but it’s not just clinicians at our hospital. We have researchers who do amazing work, but they don’t always feel connected to the patients and families in the hospital. A security guard once

stopped by our tabling event, and he was like, “Can I participate?” This isn’t just for physicians; this isn’t just for clinicians. If you’re coming into the pediatric hospital and providing service, we want you in this book club.

Pediatric hospital staff deal with so much stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout. How did you encourage staff to participate and engage with the book club?

HORNE: What we found was selecting good stories is key to setting this up—making sure that you have formats that will meet people where they are. We primarily offer print, but we also have ebooks and audiobooks on offer as well. Thankfully, we do already have a system in place since we gift so many books to patients and families. We did have a cap, and because we’ve been growing, we keep increasing the cap every single time.

KYSH: We really structure book club meetings. It isn’t like, “Let’s sit in a circle and talk about the book.” We provide polls at the very beginning that are anonymous to get the conversation going, we have them do small group activities. Our very first meeting had a gallery walk with prompts that they added sticky notes to. We’ve been ending with a reflective individual activity, and we’re also making sure we’re doing both online and in-person meetings.

Your club honors the concept introduced by professor Rudine Sims Bishop that multicultural children’s books serve as “mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors.” How did you decide that you would cover literature geared toward young people in a book club for adults?

HORNE: These values are intrinsically already embedded in both Literally Healing and CHLA. Los Angeles is such



KYLE HORNE



LYNN KYSH

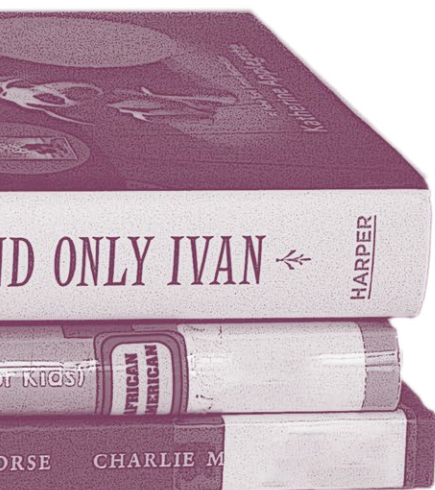
a wonderfully diverse city and county; California is such a diverse state. And then as a hospital, we really do serve not only our local population but also a global population as well.

KYSH: Our participants were looking for diverse voices and stories, and I feel like we’ve been able to provide that. We have three reasons for choosing these books. One is, these are accessible books. When you’re a tired clinician, the last thing I want to give you is Dostoevsky to perk you up. So, the fact that they can tell us, “I’ve read a whole third of this book in one sitting”—there’s still that joy of accomplishment. Our second reason is relevance. These are books that reflect the experiences of our patients and families. And lastly, these are beautiful books that we’re selecting. I think almost every single one we’ve chosen so far is an award winner in some way.

What recommendations do you have for health care workers who want to start a book club in their own community?

KYSH: Just because you don’t hear from everybody doesn’t mean the book club was a failure. The big, big thing I would tell everyone is, in the hospital setting, you have to plan for attrition. It isn’t that people don’t show up to your book club because they don’t want to. Sometimes it’s simply, “I gotta help out in my unit. I gotta get to this grant deadline.” Looking at our data over a couple of years now, attrition is just a matter of fact for the setting. There are things you can do to minimize it, but it’s not a sign of failure—it’s a sign that you work in a hospital. **AL**

TERRA DANKOWSKI is managing editor of *American Libraries*. **DIANA PANUNCIAL** is an associate editor for *American Libraries*.





At the Center of Learning

School libraries foster thoughtful, independent learners with learning centers

BY Maura Madigan

The world needs learners who can think for themselves and solve problems in creative ways, not blindly accept and reproduce facts. A good school librarian can use learning centers to help young people develop these attributes.

Learning centers, or stations, aren't a new concept in education. Many classroom educators already use them, often to teach math and literacy. Learning centers provide focused, self-directed activities where learners work independently or collaboratively. In some classes, the learner chooses which center to visit, but in others the educator assigns them.



Learning centers also work well in the school library, where makerspaces have similarly paved the way for innovative library instruction. Makerspaces can vary according to setting, participant grade level, budget, and purpose. In general, they're places where learners have choices and where learners make something. Many learning centers share these qualities. The difference is that learning centers are often more narrowly focused, allowing learners to engage in hands-on, often open-ended challenges.

Each learning center offers a different activity or challenge. Learners may choose a center, complete the task, share their work, and clean up. Learning centers are flexible and easily adaptable to different schedules, grade levels, and content.

Learning centers that we have created for our own library cover a lot of territory. A few you might want to try include:

- **Simple machines.** Learners build models of playground equipment that feature simple machines (pulley, screw, wheel and axle, wedge, lever, and inclined plane). They can analyze simple machines already in use and brainstorm ideas for new equipment.
- **Lego story.** The emphasis here is on creating and sharing a narrative video. Storytelling is an advanced skill. Learners use Lego bricks, characters, and props to build a scene before filming themselves narrating the story.
- **Matchbox car engineering.** Learners use Matchbox-style tracks to test how different factors affect the distance

a toy car travels, incorporating math and science standards and engaging in the engineering process with its cycle of planning, implementation, reflection, and adjustment.

- **Blackout poetry.** Learners use pages from discarded books and magazines to create poems by blacking out unwanted words with markers. If time allows, learners can share their poems by reading them aloud.
- **Endangered books.** Learners choose a book that is under consideration by the librarian for weeding, read it, evaluate the book's merit, and answer a series of questions. School librarians can use these recommendations when deciding whether to discard, reorder, or keep the books.

Learning centers benefit school librarians as well as learners. When learners are working independently, the school librarian is better able to work with individuals, conduct readers' advisory, and facilitate book checkout. But of course, learners are the main beneficiaries. Learning centers offer differentiated instruction, encourage independence and collaboration, and build competencies and resiliency in learners. They're also fun.

PROVIDING OPTIONS

Choice is one of the most important features of learning centers. It empowers learners to take an active role in their education and increases their buy-in. Learners are more likely to work hard at a task they've selected. Responsive Classroom—a learner-centered,

social-emotional approach to teaching and discipline—stresses the power of academic choice in both the classroom and special-area subjects, like during library instruction. Offering choices encourages learners to “develop intrinsic motivation to learn” and “take greater responsibility for their own learning,” according to the book *Responsive Classroom for Music, Art, PE, and Other Special Areas* (Center for Responsive Schools, 2016). Isn't this what all educators hope for? Thoughtful, independent learners will be able to use these skills throughout their lives.

For some learners, too many options can be overwhelming rather than empowering. Consider your audience when selecting which centers to offer. Younger learners or those with special needs may appreciate more limited options.

RESILIENCY

One of the most important attributes for academic success is resiliency. No matter how intelligent a person is, they will eventually face challenges and setbacks. How a person deals with these obstacles is what matters. Some advanced learners can become so used to everything being easy that they're reluctant to persevere. If something doesn't work out as planned or if they struggle with a new task, they give up. The school library presents the perfect environment to learn that it's okay to make mistakes. Everybody fails sometimes. Often, that's how progress happens. We may learn more from our mistakes than our successes.

In her book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Carol S. Dweck



writes about the importance of having a *growth mindset*, or the belief that change is possible. Learners might not be able to complete a specific activity yet. That *yet* is hugely significant and hopeful. It suggests the promise of mastering that skill sometime in the future. Learners who embrace a growth mindset are generally more positive and willing to tackle challenges.

The American Association of School Librarians' (AASL) 2018 Standards framework also stresses the importance of resiliency and a growth mindset. The key commitment of Explore—one of the six Shared Foundations that anchor the AASL Standards—is that learners will “discover and innovate in a growth mindset developed through experience and reflection.” Having a growth mindset makes it easier to be resilient. Although a growth mindset, reflection, and resiliency feature prominently in the Standards, not many other sets of national standards directly address these essential attributes for learning. Perhaps this omission is because resiliency is more a disposition than a skill. It's trickier to teach than long division.

However, learning centers provide the opportunity to practice resiliency. For example, if you're building a bridge and it falls, you need to start over. Becoming

frustrated is part of the learning process. Being able to work past that frustration and start again is something learners will need to master. Learning centers provide a fun context in which to do so, making it even more possible for learners to persevere through setbacks toward genuine resiliency.

Most centers are set up for learners to work both independently or collaboratively, and educators may choose when or whether to intervene to facilitate learning. Instead of providing the answer, educators lead learners to consider other possibilities by asking key questions. To an adult, it may be obvious that no matter how much glue learners use, those heavy pieces of cardboard won't stay together. But educators shouldn't steal learners' struggle.

The finished product is not as important as how learners get there. Learners are working toward becoming self-sufficient.



This is an excerpt from *Learning Centers for School Libraries* by Maura Madigan (ALA Editions, 2021).

Experiencing small obstacles and failures in a safe environment prepares them to handle bigger obstacles on their own later.

PLAY

Fun in education is often underrated. When we enjoy an activity, it becomes play rather than work. We tend to stay engaged longer, focus more attentively, and retain what we've learned. Unfortunately, after kindergarten most learners don't have the opportunity to play in school outside recess. Modern education focuses heavily on testing and covering standards according to a timeline, both of which can cause stress and neither of which is very fun.

A visitor to your school library may question why learners are working with Lego bricks. They may see this as “just playing,” with an implicit message that play doesn't belong in school. Learning is a serious business. *Play*, however, is not a dirty word, nor should we be embarrassed to use it in connection to learning centers. This isn't an either/or; something can be fun and educational. Numerous psychologists and educational researchers—including Carl Jung, Jean Piaget, and Erik Erikson—have studied the role of play, demonstrating its effectiveness and importance in child development and education.

First, play helps facilitate brain development, and not just in early childhood. Second, play relieves stress. Learners today are often overscheduled both in and out of school. Many are engaged in so many extracurricular activities that they have little free time for fun, relaxation, and creativity. School days can often seem like a triathlon, rushing from one activity to the next, trying to cram it all in. Who wouldn't be stressed?

The school library is the perfect place for learners to experiment without the fear of failure, where they can simply play. Learning centers also enable an autonomy and independence that learners don't often have in school, where so much of their time is directed by adults.

LOGISTICS

A good amount of preparation goes into establishing learning centers in a school library. You must purchase or gather materials, make copies, and package them all together in a storage container, but that's a one-time chore. Once you've done the initial work, most of the centers require little upkeep.

Next, you need to establish the rules and routines and then introduce each center by modeling or explaining it. Limit the number of new centers introduced at the same time, especially the more complicated ones requiring adult support. Once learners are familiar with the routines and the options, learning centers tend to run themselves pretty smoothly.

When thinking of the number of centers to offer, consider how many learners can work at each center and the number of learners in the class. You want to ensure that even the last learner to pick has a few centers to choose from. Depending on class size, 10 or more centers is usually enough. In the beginning, consider offering more than one section of each center if you don't have enough variety.

All school librarians will set rules and routines specific to their situation and

Play is not a dirty word, nor should we be embarrassed to use it in connection to learning centers. This isn't an either/or; something can be fun and educational.

preferences. Although these may vary, establishing them at the beginning will help learning centers run more smoothly. Displaying a chart with these rules and routines and providing verbal reminders periodically are helpful. A review may be necessary when new learners arrive or when there's been a lapse between uses of a center.

Here are some rules and routines that have worked well in my elementary school library:

- Begin with all learners sitting or standing in one place (story area, big spot on the carpet, or lined up).
- List all the centers that learners can choose from that day and explain how many spots are available at each. Decide beforehand how many learners can work at each center at a time; two to four is usually appropriate. You want to ensure that enough materials are available for each learner to participate fully.
- Explain any new centers and briefly re-explain more complicated centers. If some centers require adult supervision, mention this.
- Select learners one at a time to choose centers. This could be done randomly, according to who has been listening most attentively, or according to a predetermined rotation.
- Learners may take their time choosing, but once they sit down, they cannot switch to a different center for at least 10 minutes. This limitation helps prevent chaos.

- Learners must work at their center for at least 10 minutes before requesting to switch. To do so, they must stay at the center, raise their hand, and ask to switch. They must clean up that center before switching unless they are working with a partner. In that case, learners should ask their partner if they want help cleaning up or if the partner will clean up all materials at the end.
- Once a center is full, it's full.
- Learning centers are not spectator sports. Everyone has to choose a center and participate.
- Reading is always an option. Some may choose to read books or magazines instead of choosing a learning center.
- If learners are not behaving safely and respectfully (with materials or partners), they will be asked to leave the center.
- The last class of the day can put the centers away.

It's important to consider how learners can share and save their work. Many learning centers ask learners to dismantle their creations at the end, which can be heartbreaking for some. Taking photos of the creations can help tremendously. You could periodically print these photos to share with learners or to display in the school library. You could also include the photos in a newsletter or on the school library website.

Learning centers are meant to complement rather than replace other types of school library experiences. They are ideal for those weeks when learners are particularly antsy, such as before and after winter break and at the end of the school year. Regardless of space, time, and budget constraints, learning centers can be adapted to fit any school library's needs. **AL**



MAUREN MADIGAN is a school librarian in Fairfax County, Virginia. She has worked in education for 25 years in the US, Japan, South Korea, and the United Arab Emirates.

Transforming Culture

Strategies for combatting workplace inequity

BY Ione T. Damasco



IONE T. DAMASCO is professor and associate dean for Inclusive Excellence, Engagement, and Operations at University of Dayton (Ohio) University Libraries.

Over the last couple of years, my newsfeeds have been filled with stories of school boards and state legislatures trying to ban books and curtail curricula that openly discuss issues of race, gender, and sexual identity.

These incidents make it more critical than ever that we examine how we center whiteness in our culture—and especially in our workplaces—in ways that erase and exclude certain groups of people. Academic libraries can start by examining how white supremacy culture is embedded in our work environments.

Author and racial equity trainer Tema Okun identifies specific characteristics of this culture that show up in organizations that uphold oppressive systems, perpetuate harm, and produce exclusionary outcomes. A few characteristics I would like to highlight are a sense of urgency, “either/or” thinking, overworking as an unstated norm, and a fear of conflict.

How can a sense of urgency be exclusionary? Consider what happens, for example, when a project with a tight deadline comes along, and only two choices are offered on how to proceed. Who presents those options, and who gets to make the decision? Are we failing to create timelines that allow for flexibility and adaptability? Are we inviting alternative approaches or regularly excluding people with marginalized identities because of time constraints?

Libraries can also demonstrate a tendency toward “either/or” rather than “both/and” thinking, which can lead to the oversimplification of complex issues. For instance, your library might host a film screening that is inclusive because the film is centered on the experiences of a specific underserved community, but it may also be exclusive because the film does not have closed captions that allow people with hearing disabilities to enjoy it. The opportunity to be truly inclusive was missed because of an oversimplified idea—that if a film is about diversity, then the event promotes diversity.

Consider these questions: Is there an unstated expectation that everyone takes on more work than is in their official job description? Are people regularly putting in extra unpaid time outside of work to complete tasks? Is “diversity work” assigned more often to employees with marginalized identities? How is conflict handled? Are people discouraged from challenging policies, processes, or other people’s harmful behaviors in the name of politeness or civility? The answers can illuminate how your workplace norms have created an environment that feels hostile or unwelcoming, making it difficult to challenge the status quo.

Here are some things to start doing: Set realistic timelines. Give everyone the space to address issues as they happen. Encourage alternative approaches when “either/or” language surfaces in decision making. Resist oversimplification of complex issues and cultivate critical inquiry. Ensure everyone has access to the same information and is given time to process it. Create an environment where anyone can raise questions around a decision or policy without fear of retaliation. Accept that discomfort is a natural byproduct of the learning process.

Actions are important, but so is naming why those actions are resisting historical practices of exclusion. It is not enough to say we will slow down; we should also say *why* we are slowing down. As we unpack our practices and policies, we should monitor whether we are centering some people’s emotional, psychological, and physical comfort over others’.

We often operate with an unconscious mindset that uses the term *professional* as coded language for specific ways of dressing, speaking, writing, feeling, and thinking that privilege white, cisgender, heterosexual, nondisabled, and upper-income class experiences over those of other people.

We need to transform the culture of our workplaces to ensure every person’s humanity is recognized and centered and to integrate diverse ways of knowing and being into the very core of our libraries. **AL**

It is more critical than ever that we examine how we center whiteness in our culture—and especially in our workplaces.

A Measured Method

Deciphering different bibliometric service models

BY Laura Bredahl



LAURA BREDAHL is bibliometrics and research impact librarian at University of Waterloo in Ontario.

Do you feel a bit late out of the gate when it comes to bibliometrics? You're probably not alone. *Bibliometrics* are the quantitative ways that scholarly books, journals, and other publications can be analyzed to show their impact in their respective fields, thus helping institutions decide what research to invest in. Investments in building technical skills, establishing new positions, hiring new staff, subscribing to expensive tools, or all the above require resources, governance decisions, and establishing partnerships. So where do you begin?

First, bear in mind that service models will depend on existing structures at your institution, but they are also fluid and can evolve. Your organization will have to consider both immediate and long-term needs. Second, be aware that bibliometrics services often take a long time to establish and even longer to become integrated into the way an organization functions. At University of Waterloo in Ontario, conversations about bibliometrics began as early as 2009. We're only now just finding our stride, and we still have a long way to go. Here are three bibliometric service models that may provide guidance:

Collaborative bibliometric services. Within this model, bibliometric work is often distributed across several units and can be characterized by (1) a shared governance or strong interconnectedness in decision making, and (2) a focus on institutional-level bibliometric analysis services rather than individual researchers' profile analyses. This model often forms out of a mutual understanding of the value and impact bibliometric services have within and outside of the individual units. This can encourage a collective commitment and responsibility, as well as collaboration on tools and expertise. Caveats include the risk of confusion around resourcing and potential territoriality of responsibilities.

Centralized bibliometric services in the library. This model still involves significant collaboration with other units, but these collaborations aren't often formalized through shared governance of a service. This model leverages the expertise of existing liaison librarians or specialized, team-based structures that focus on individual or departmental-level supports and analysis. Because bibliometric services tend to diffuse through an institution as they gain traction, a library with mature bibliometric services may see them distributed throughout the institution, regardless of model. As bibliometric analysis skills become recognized, the library can identify and capitalize on aligned values and priorities with other units. However, libraries engaging in this model will likely face familiar challenges, such as the need to repeatedly prove

the value of the service to the broader institution and clarify ownership of resources, decision making, and tasks.

Centralized bibliometric services outside the library. Although considerably more difficult to characterize because of the lack of publicly available information, this model includes individuals who are highly skilled in bibliometric analysis or have access to and administer bibliometric tools. Their roles are typically within units that are highly interested in tracking the outputs and impacts of research. They can be more reactive to specific operational goals, such as increasing

funding in a specific research area, increasing a university's performance in international rankings, or taking part in a larger industry integration or business intelligence service.

The bibliometrics service model that exists at your institution

should inform what tools you'll engage with. This may lead your library to consider expanding expertise, access to additional bibliometrics tools (such as SciVal, Dimensions, and InCites), and then services. Alternatively, deeper expertise and resource investment would be needed for broad, institutional-level bibliometric services. This is an area of growth for many libraries with an exciting road ahead.

Adapted from "The Current and Evolving Landscape of Bibliometric Tools and Technologies," Library Technology Reports vol. 58, no. 8. (Nov./Dec. 2022). AL

Bibliometric services take a long time to establish in an organization.

Behavior Policy Reboot

Revaluating policies through a lens of equity, compassion

BY Adrienne Doman Calkins



ADRIENNE DOMAN CALKINS

is manager of Sherwood (Ore.) Public Library and a member of the Oregon Library Association executive board.

When Sherwood (Ore.) Public Library (SPL) reopened its doors in spring 2021, our staff was reunited with a community navigating multiple traumas and injustices from the pandemic, an overlapping racial reckoning, and political division.

In preparing to welcome our patrons back amid a statewide mask mandate, library leadership realized our existing behavior policy was inadequate. Our policy lacked the nuances needed during a pandemic and didn't cover our expanded virtual services. It needed more consistent and empathetic oversight when we knew our community was dealing with polarized and heightened emotions, which most commonly resulted in mask noncompliance, hostility toward staff, and other disruptions. Not to mention, staff needed a better tool for tracking issues—a way to streamline our work when our own capacities had been diminished by the same traumas and injustices.

A behavior policy is a tool for fostering a safe and welcoming library. It is also a litmus test for some of our most difficult circumstances. For instance, employees may be called upon to build relationships with patrons even as we are revoking their access. We enforce these policies to create security, but we must balance this role with a responsibility to preserve the constitutional right to use a public library to the maximum extent possible.

SPL took a holistic approach making changes to:

Policy. Our revised behavior policy (bit.ly/SherwoodPolicy) expands our definition of threatening and harassing behavior to recognize incidents involving microaggressions, racism, and bullying. It also outlines tiered levels of consequences and alternative library services, such as curbside pickup and virtual programming, for those with revoked access. Our trauma-informed approach furthers equity by actively working to create safer spaces that honor diversity, promote inclusion, and resist retraumatizing visitors who have experienced personal and generational traumas.

Procedure. A new cloud-based form and log allows staff to track behavior concerns, warnings, and exclusions for a more unified and timely response. This allows staff at all levels to know what enforcement has already taken place and script responses for next steps, if needed.

Trainings. Staff participated in mental health first aid, suicide prevention, and bystander trainings. SPL has also partnered with local police to learn de-escalation techniques, increase knowledge of emergency and mental health services, and have conversations about bias toward historically marginalized groups. We learned that staff members can ask a

police officer to stop intervening if there is deviation from our mission and policies.

A revised policy was formally adopted in September 2022. These changes have so far helped SPL workers act more quickly, collaboratively, and confidently to create a more inclusive and equitable library space.

There have also been some learning curves. It can be hard to remember to offer alternative library services in the moment of asking someone to leave the building. It remains challenging to write exclusion letters, have conversations with caregivers of teens who break rules, and plan for ongoing concerns. We are fine-tuning our processes as we go.

The layers of this work can be daunting—such as collaborating with staff, a board, legal counsel, and others to revise procedures and implement change. But policy is at the core of what we do. It holds us accountable, shields us, and demonstrates our values. We must be watchful for any mismatch between our policies and

the progress we are trying to make.

For those looking to reevaluate library policies with an equity and trauma-informed lens, remember to examine and adjust your work frequently and extend grace more often. Policy is a process—not a

static product. Assume that both employees and users need things to be easier, more just, and more holistic. Together, we can create systemic change. **AL**

We must be watchful for any mismatch between our policies and the progress we are trying to make.

Life-Changing Learning

Libraries play a primary role in connecting with adults on their learning journeys,” said Jan Murphy. “Life-long learning is a growing segment. There is a breadth and depth of need.”

Murphy, product management director at Gale, part of Cengage Group, moderated “All Together Now: Changing Lives through Library Adult Education and Learning Resources,” a January 29 session sponsored by Gale at the American Library Association’s 2023 LibLearnX conference in New Orleans.

Joining her to discuss why adult learning programs are important and how libraries can help serve these patrons were panelists Michelle Jeske, city librarian at Denver Public Library (DPL); Kristen Sorth, director and CEO of St. Louis County (Mo.) Library (SLCL); and Robin Westphal, state librarian of Missouri.

Adult learning can be life changing. Sorth’s library has graduated more than 100 students from its online high school completion program. It now offers Gale Presents: Excel Adult High School and has nearly 40 students enrolled in the program. “It’s one of the most rewarding things I’ve participated in,” she said.

Jeske agreed: “It’s the highlight of my year,” she said about DPL’s program. “There’s not a dry eye in the house when grandma is getting her high school diploma.”

The panelists said that identifying current gaps can help libraries stay ahead. At DPL, Jeske and her team look at both qualitative and quantitative data to assess, among other things, changing consumption habits,

demographic shifts, growing disparities, and different ways people want to engage with learning, all of which drive the library’s strategic road map.

“It really helps us identify where we need to spend our resources,” Jeske said. For instance, the dropout rate across Colorado has increased for the first time since 2015, prompting DPL to invest in Excel Adult High School.

As a state librarian, Westphal connects the 160 libraries within the Missouri Library Association (MLA) to needed resources. Most MLA members are rural libraries, she said, and are seeking to “evolve and adapt” services. After running programs to help new Americans take their citizenship tests, for instance, the Excel Adult High School has been a natural next step for many of those same patrons.

“You have to think of ways to present a new program,” Westphal said.



Michelle Jeske (left), city librarian of Denver Public Library, and Kristen Sorth, director and CEO of St. Louis County (Mo.) Library, speak about adult learning at ALA’s 2023 LibLearnX conference.

At the state level, Westphal has extension agents in every county to help encourage libraries to form partnerships and learn about resources being offered. “It’s teaching [individual library directors] how to do their own advocacy,” she said, especially as budgets tighten and local funding resources diminish. “Once you learn to advocate and make those connections, it’s so much more than just about funding.”

Jeske said that growing research on happiness and social connections makes it imperative that libraries find ways to reach adults in their service areas. With a rise in mental crises and suicides, and other indicators of health declining in the country, “I believe a lot of it has to do with social isolation,” Jeske said.

Which makes adult learning all the more important these days. Even personally, Jeske said she pushes herself to say yes more often when invited to social events. “What can we do as libraries to encourage people to spend more time together?”

For the full LibLearnX session coverage, go to bit.ly/AL-adult-learning. ■

To read more about lifelong learning opportunities, visit gale.com/adult-education.

Demystifying Data

Using statistics to establish library goals and strategies



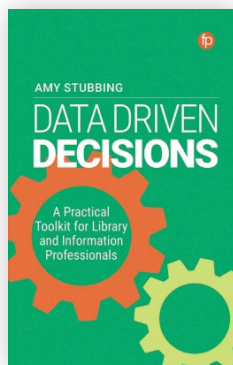
ARACELI MÉNDEZ HINTERMEISTER is knowledge manager at Uplift Education in Dallas.



Fundamentals of Planning and Assessment for Libraries

By Rachel A. Fleming-May and Regina Mays

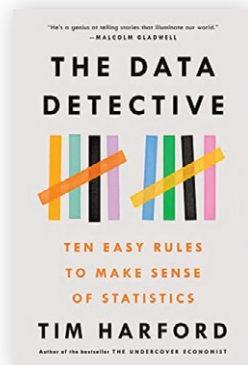
Part of ALA Publishing's Fundamentals series, this book helps to build understanding of planning and assessment cycles in a way that suits all library workers' needs, no matter their prior familiarity. Fleming-May and Mays detail different parts of the cycle, including how to design and execute an assessment and how to report and integrate your library's organizational efforts. The authors provide a series of templates and resources to assist readers as they continue their learning in this topic area or begin implementation. This book can support library workers as they develop a culture of assessment at their workplace and also in personal practice. ALA Neal-Schuman, 2021. 264 p. \$64.99. PBK. 978-0-8389-4998-6.



Data-Driven Decisions: A Practical Toolkit for Library and Information Professionals

By Amy Stubbing

This book will help you use data to deliver effective decisions that empower your next project or initiative. Stubbing shows how to collect and leverage data from daily business operations, guiding readers through creating a collection and review process for any new analysis. She offers easy-to-implement guidance regarding the different stages of data collection, from identification to action. A series of case studies helps illustrate how libraries have supported their initiatives through data-rich information. Facet Publishing, 2022. 200 p. \$71.99. PBK. 978-1-78330-478-3.



The Data Detective: 10 Easy Rules to Make Sense of Statistics

By Tim Harford

If the idea of analyzing and presenting numbers terrifies you, Harford's book will simplify and remove any confusion around statistics. His 10 easy rules can help you to demystify data and use it as a tool to understand the world. Stories about how statistics have been used to both mislead and change people's behavior for the better illustrate how even complex data can become a tool that brings context and perspective. Riverhead Books, 2021. 336 p. \$18. PBK. 978-0-59308-459-5. (Also available as an ebook.)

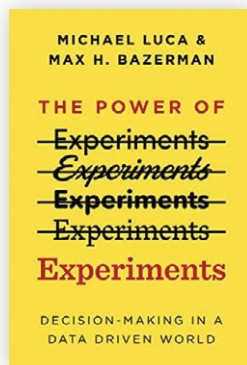
BY Araceli Méndez Hintermeister



Using Digital Analytics for Smart Assessment

By Tabatha Farney

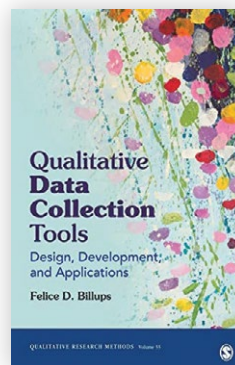
Whether your library has an abundance of digital offerings or not, patrons are interacting with your digital spaces in more ways than ever. Farney illustrates how to access, use, and analyze data collected from library websites, electronic resources, and digital tools. The first section of the book dives into the basics of digital analytics while helping you understand the organizational impact of digital tools. The second section presents stories on how libraries have used digital analytics to develop services and identify areas of growth. Farney adeptly shows you how to find constructive feedback within your digital analytics. ALA Editions, 2018. 168 p. \$65. PBK. 978-0-8389-1598-1. (Also available as an ebook.)



The Power of Experiments: Decision Making in a Data-Driven World

By Michael Luca and
Max H. Bazerman

When it comes to new initiatives, we often find ourselves wondering what could work. Luca and Bazerman argue there's no need to wonder when you can experiment. Here, they aim to convince readers of the power and importance of experimentation in decision making by sharing stories of how it helped multimillion-dollar companies as well as organizers of public projects find gaps in their initiatives and identify next steps. *The Power of Experiments* offers useful lessons as well as inspiration to help you navigate the unknown. MIT Press, 2021. 232 p. \$19.95. PBK. 978-0-26204-387-8. (Also available as an ebook.)



Qualitative Data Collection Tools: Design, Development, and Applications

By Felice D. Billups

Without the right assessment tool, evaluation efforts can fall short or even fail. This informative read helps you design, develop, and employ the qualitative tools needed to launch your next data collection. While qualitative research may be foreign to many readers, Billups provides practical guidance and easily adaptable resources to help identify the right approach for your project—whether it be focus groups, journal logs, reflective questionnaires, or one of the many templates included. SAGE Publishing, 2020. 240 p. \$30. PBK. 978-1-54433-482-0. (Also available as an ebook.) **AL**

PEOPLE

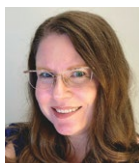
Announcements

ON THE MOVE

Ufuoma C. Abiola was named inaugural executive head and associate university librarian for diversity, equity, and inclusion at Princeton (N.J.) University Library, effective August 29.



In July **Dianne Aldrich** started as assistant director of the Frank Ritchel Ames Memorial Library and assistant professor of evidence-based medicine at Rocky Vista University's campus in Ivins, Utah.



In December **Drew Cooper** joined Chickasha (Okla.) Public Library as youth services librarian.

Essex County (Ont.) Library appointed **Adam Craig** chief librarian effective September 12.

February 1 **Rebecca Crist** started as program coordinator for shared collection resources at the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries, based in Atlanta.



Stacy DeBole was appointed state librarian of Massachusetts in December.

Aryn Keeney started as youth librarian at St. Helens (Ore.) Public Library November 22.

John LaDue joined University of Tennessee at Martin's Paul Meek Library as information literacy librarian and assistant professor in October.

January 17 **Aaron B. Mason** became director and CEO of Mid-Continent Public Library in Independence, Missouri.



Kudos

Roxbury (N.J.) Public Library Director **Radwa Ali** received the Roxbury Area Chamber of Commerce's Earl J. Chrystal Memorial Business Person of the Year Award December 14, in recognition of the library's innovative services.



Ben Carman, children's librarian at Plattsburgh (N.Y.) Public Library, received the key to the city in November and was named grand marshal of the city's holiday parade in honor of his work with families in the community. ●

September 6 **Catherine Mayfield** started as associate director of special collections and university archives at University of Maryland Libraries in College Park.

In August **Lauren McDaniel** joined Chapman University's Leatherby Libraries in Orange, California, as coordinator of special collections for history and art.

In November **Laura Pieper** became youth services librarian for Perry (Iowa) Public Library.

Erica Rogers started as technology and teen librarian at Grand Island (Neb.) Public Library in November.

In January **Monica Smodic** became director of Delmont (Pa.) Library.

In December **Lori Smoker** was named director of James E. Shanley Tribal Library at Fort Peck Community College in Poplar, Montana.

Tiffany Verzani became executive director of Waukegan (Ill.) Public Library in August.

In October **Savanna Waddle** joined Live Oak Public Libraries in Savannah, Georgia, as regional social services coordinator.

In September **Gloria Willson** joined the Levy Library, located at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, as director of education and research services.



PROMOTIONS

Heather Szaley Aronson was promoted to head librarian at Southbury (Conn.) Public Library in November.

Liz Cedarbrook was promoted to librarian at Enterprise (Ore.) Public Library in November.

In December **Jennyfer Cordova** was promoted to communications and community engagement manager at Waukegan (Ill.) Public Library.

Normal (Ill.) Public Library promoted **John Fischer** to director January 3.

Milford (Conn.) Public Library promoted **Ashley Hemming** to children's librarian December 17.

December 29 **Brent Reidy** was promoted to Andrew W. Mellon director of research libraries at New York Public Library.

Live Oak Public Libraries in Savannah, Georgia, promoted **Lola Shelton-Council** to executive director November 21.



In May **Mark Simon** was promoted to teen services manager at Twinsburg (Ohio) Public Library.

Essex (Conn.) Library Association promoted **Ann Thompson** to executive director, effective November 19.

RETIREMENTS

March 1 **Cheryle Cole-Bennett** retired as program coordinator for shared print programming at the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries, based in Atlanta.

Twyla Gaylord retired as children's librarian at Natrona County (Wyo.) Library in December.

December 31 **Denni Grassel** retired as director of Delmont (Pa.) Library.

J. Leon Hooper retired as director of Georgetown University Library's Woodstock Theological Library January 15.

August 30 **Gay D. Patrick** retired as director of libraries at Dallas Independent School District.



Denine Rautenstrauch retired in November as librarian at Enterprise (Ore.) Public Library.

In September **Anita Scheetz** retired as director of James E. Shanley Tribal Library at Fort Peck Community College in Poplar, Montana.

Shirley Thorson retired as head librarian at Southbury (Conn.) Public Library November 14.

AT ALA

May 16 **Alison Armstead** became program coordinator for continuing education for the Public Library Association (PLA).

In Memory

Suellen Adams, 66, formerly a professor of library and information studies at University of Rhode Island in Kingston and University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, died November 1. Adams also taught for many years at Madison (Wis.) Business College and through online programs.

Jocelyn Bates, 44, electronic resources manager at Las Vegas–Clark County (Nev.) Library District, died November 12. She had previously held library positions at Yuma County (Ariz.) Library District, Arizona Western College in Yuma, and Pima Community College in Tucson.

Jeane G. "Sue" Fontaine, 98, who during her career served as public relations director for Louisiana State Library, Tulsa (Okla.) City–County Library, Washington State Library, New York Public Library, and Queens (N.Y.) Public Library, died November 17. She was elected chair of ALA's Public Relations Section in the 1970s and was on numerous ALA and state chapter committees, including *American Libraries'* Advisory Committee. Fontaine received a Council on Library and Information Resources grant to study public relations in more than 30 libraries and presented her research at workshops.

Menahem Schmelzer, 88, chief librarian at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City from 1964 to 1987, died December 10. He worked to protect and grow the library's rare books collection, taking tremendous efforts to recover materials from a 1966 fire at the library that destroyed 70,000 books and damaged many more. Schmelzer also taught seminary students as a professor of medieval Hebrew literature and Jewish bibliography.

Yeen-mei Wu, 87, who served as Chinese studies librarian at University of Washington's Tatchell East Asia Library from 1969 to 2001, died November 29. She contributed significantly to building the library's collection, automating its catalog, and is credited with starting the library's Taiwan Collection from scratch. Wu established the Taiwan Collection Endowed Fund in 2001, shortly before her retirement. She also worked at University of California, Berkeley's Center for Chinese Studies from 1962 to 1967. ●

Mary-Clare Bietila started as PLA's program manager for programming initiatives May 23.


Sara Goek was promoted to project manager for data and research at PLA March 7, 2022.

PLA named **Steven Hofmann** digital product manager July 28.

May 23 **Katina Jones** became PLA's program manager for evaluation and assessment.

Brooke Morris-Chott, advocacy and equity, diversity, and inclusion program officer for Core, left ALA December 12.

November 28 **Hillary Pearson** joined the Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services as program manager for accessibility services.

Elizabeth "Elly" Serrano, membership and marketing specialist for the Association for Library Service to Children, left ALA December 23. 



Flipping the Script

It's hard to break into Hollywood. But anyone can make an appointment to visit the Writers Guild Foundation's (WGF) Shavelson-Webb Library in Los Angeles, a non-lending collection of more than 40,000 items dedicated to the craft and history of screenwriting.

The library's ephemera provides an illuminating look at Tinseltown and a record of the guild and its members: a Cold War-era FBI file on blacklisted screenwriting couple Hugo Butler and Jean Rouverol, two lifetime achievement awards given to seven-time Oscar recipient Billy Wilder, and screenwriter Linda Woolverton's correspondence related to the development of Disney's animated classic *Beauty and the Beast*—"there's a note that says 'Cogsworth needs a buddy,'" says librarian Lauren O'Connor (right).

The bulk of the collection comprises film and television scripts, including pilots for *Cheers* and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, handwritten drafts for *A League of Their Own* and *The Empire Strikes Back* (before Yoda was given

a name), and episodes of recent hits *Abbott Elementary* and *Succession*. "We are the only library in the world that actively collects current television scripts," says librarian Javier Barrios (left). "I love giving people suggestions for what to read based on their interests."

When the library had to close during the pandemic, it turned to Zoom to reach users—aspiring scriptwriters, book researchers, students, and guild members—with such classes as "Research Methods for Writers" (*Chernobyl* creator Craig Mazin was a guest) and "Script Breakdown" (Sian Heder discussed her Academy Award-winning screenplay for *CODA*).

"I learn something new each day," says archivist Hilary Swett (center). "And I get to help passionate people achieve a goal or make a connection, whether it's creative or professional." **AL**

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

Celebrate NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK

APRIL 23–29, 2023

There's More to the Story

Libraries are full of stories in a variety of formats from audiobooks to eBooks, and more. But there's so much more to the story. Libraries of Things lend items such as games and tools. Library programming brings communities together for entertainment, connection, and learning. Library infrastructure advances communities, providing internet and technology access. Use these materials to help convey your library's multi-faceted story!



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ALA American Library Association

Because all those

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ARTS, **BOOK CLUBS**, COMMUNITY DIALOGUES,
EXHIBITIONS, **MAKERSPACES**, CONCERTS, AUTHOR
EXHIBITIONS, **ESL COURSES**, COMMUNITY
S, AUTHOR TALKS, ART EXHIBITIONS, ESL
OR TALKS, **STORYTIMES**, COMPUTER CLASSES
CONCERTS, **COMMUNITY DIALOGUES**, ART

don't plan themselves.

PROGRAMMING
Librarian.org

a website of the American Library Association