

# american libraries

July/August 2023

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION



## 2023 **ANNUAL CONFERENCE** WRAP-UP

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**NEWSMAKERS:**  
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Cara Mentzel

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**PLUS:**  
International  
Innovators



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# Conference Connections



Sanhita SinhaRoy

**A**LA's 2023 Annual Conference and Exhibition in Chicago last month had a lively buzz to it. Whether or not you were among the nearly 16,000 people who made it to McCormick Place, check out our "2023 Annual Wrap-Up" (p. 8) for a snapshot of programs and author talks from the six-day event. For more in-depth stories, see our team's coverage at [bit.ly/AL-ALA23](https://bit.ly/AL-ALA23).

In "Trending Upward" (p. 20), library technology consultant Marshall Breeding is back with his annual evaluation of exhibit hall offerings. He notes that while vendors in the Library Marketplace were relatively quiet on new product launches, there were plenty of demos of "fresh and flagship products." (See "Electric Exhibits," our Bookend feature on p. 28, for images from the show floor.)

Also from Annual is our interview with actor Idina Menzel and educator Cara Mentzel (Newsmakers, p. 18). The sisters talked with Associate Editor Megan Bennett about their children's book series, collaborating with a sibling, and the latest wave of book bans and challenges. "Librarians are on the front lines," Mentzel says.

Among the many things I'm still thinking about from conference is author and historian Ibram X. Kendi's talk at the Rally for the Right to Read on June 22. Addressing 600 attendees, he drew a parallel between today's book bans and the history of punishing anyone who attempted to teach enslaved people to read, as well as later efforts to isolate and silence Black voices in the Jim Crow era. Kendi noted that ideological descendants of enslavers and segregationists continue to "legislate for ignorance" through these bans.

It's a painful connection. But as he also said, "the freedom fight has chosen us."

With this issue we are thrilled to welcome our new senior editor, Greg Landgraf. Greg is no stranger to *American Libraries*, where he was an editor more than 10 years ago and has since been a frequent contributor. He'll be overseeing the AL Direct e-newsletter and [americanlibraries.org](https://americanlibraries.org), where you can find a broad array of exclusive online content.

*Sanhita*

In this Annual Conference wrap-up issue, you'll find a snapshot of programs, events, and author talks from the six-day gathering in Chicago.

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# Making Trouble That Matters

We must mobilize on behalf of libraries and library workers



**Emily Drabinski**

**G**rowing up in Boise, Idaho, my dream was always to be a writer in New York City. Instead, in 2000, I found myself fact-checking at *Lucky*, a magazine about shopping. I wasn't penning trenchant essays on the state of the world for an audience of adoring readers. I was confirming the prices of handbags and counting the total number of bargains for the cover line. (If we said there were 158 bargains, there had to be 158 bargains.)

A few months into the gig, I made a mistake. I printed the number of bargains for one luxury department store on a two-page photo spread featuring a different luxury department store. I was in so much trouble. The magazine sent the store a huge bouquet of flowers as an apology, and I couldn't stop thinking about how much those flowers cost. Sleepless nights for a week. Shortly after that, I decided that if I was going to get in trouble, I was going to get in trouble for something that mattered to me. I applied for a job at New York Public Library and started an MLS program at Syracuse (N.Y.) University at the same time. I was going to get in trouble for working at a library.

Maybe this is your story too. You wanted work that matters and chose libraries like I did. Library workers like us teach people to read, give queer kids a safe place, and help people apply for jobs, connect to government services, and access broadband internet from our buildings and our hotspots. We facilitate scientific breakthroughs, shape research in the humanities and social sciences, and create information access tools. We structure systematic reviews, unjam staplers, read stories to children, drive bookmobiles, show people to the bathroom, program author talks, and build open access institutional repositories.

Our work matters. This is why we do it.

But it can be hard to do that good work. Some of us face hurricanes, floods, and fires that

devastate our buildings and collections as the climate rapidly changes.

Others are subject to organized pro-censorship attacks that force us to fight for the basic right to read. In Boise, for example, this meant all hands on deck in the most recent legislative session, organizing work that led to the governor's April veto of House Bill 314, a library bounty bill ([bit.ly/IdahoHB314](https://bit.ly/IdahoHB314)).

Many of us are asked to do more with less, working harder with fewer resources to meet growing community needs. In New York City, libraries fill social service gaps even as they face millions of dollars of budget cuts.

While none of this is exactly new—libraries have always been sites of social and political struggle—I'm sure I'm not alone in feeling like things are as hard and as scary as they've ever been.

This is why we need one another, and why we need the American Library Association (ALA). We need to make trouble—good trouble, the kind of trouble that matters, the kind of trouble I became a librarian to get into—and we need to make it together.

Since its founding in 1876, ALA has convened library workers from all kinds of libraries, from all over the country and world, to tackle the knottiest problems of the profession, creating tools for effective information retrieval and defending the core values that shape our field.

These coming months will ask even more of us as we organize and mobilize together on behalf of our libraries, our patrons, our communities, and, importantly, ourselves. We must build the collective power necessary to preserve and expand the public good. As your new ALA president, I can't wait to do that work with all of you. **AL**

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**EMILY DRABINSKI** is critical pedagogy librarian at the Graduate Center of City University of New York.

We need to make trouble—good trouble, the kind of trouble that matters, the kind of trouble I became a librarian to get into—and we need to make it together.



# Growing Our Own

Libraries must rethink who and how we recruit to the field



Tracie D. Hall

A key factor in libraries becoming an equalizing force in information literacy is serious and intentional workforce planning.

I recently attended an Institute of Museum and Library Services convening focused on the role of libraries in expanding information literacy. I was pleased to see that *community engagement* kept appearing as a vital component in combating the tide of misinformation (false information), disinformation (intentionally false information), and information withdrawal (censorship and book bans) that has intensified these last few years.

At a break, one participant and I agreed that a key factor in libraries becoming an equalizing force in information literacy is serious and intentional workforce planning. To reach individuals and communities that most need support, we need to grow capacity within the field, both in terms of skill set and demographics. This is especially true in light of recent US Supreme Court decisions that—regardless of where anyone stands on them—appear poised to make higher education less attainable and affordable for many.

Simply put, if we want those working in libraries to join and lead discussions about equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), intellectual freedom, and digital inclusion, then we must create more visible pathways to librarianship as a career.

As I travel to rural communities and meet committed library directors who do not have library degrees, I sense the urgency of this conversation. We need a national effort to accelerate formal LIS education as the information ecosystem becomes more sophisticated and public information access and literacy becomes more central to our democracy. We also need to smooth the entrance into the library profession for people who already possess the lived and professional experience most relevant to the work we do today.

I have been struck by how this conversation has played out in the peer sectors of K–12 education and nursing, and how these professions have begun to upskill and diversify their workforces rather than deprofessionalizing them.

One program I have observed from its inception is the Effective Teachers for Oakland task force in California. It has been led by Kimberly Mayfield, my college classmate, former dean of the School of Education and vice president of the city's Holy Names University (HNU), and now Oakland's deputy mayor. HNU's education program was able to make the connection between lags in student achievement noted at Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and the lack of teachers who understood the backgrounds and learning contexts of their students.

Just as political candidates are expected to have knowledge of the neighborhoods and cities they represent, the same must be true for educators, Mayfield says. "It is imperative for teachers to reflect the students they educate, not only racially and linguistically, but also with relation to lived experience and community knowledge," she says. Instead of following the traditional student-teacher pathway of four months of unpaid work, Mayfield recommends Oakland's intern-teacher model, which allows a candidate to earn a teacher's salary while earning their credentials.

"In urban environments like Oakland, where 70% of residents are people of color," she says, "the racial wealth gap makes it nearly impossible for them to work for free."

While OUSD still has a way to go to fill teacher shortages and meet its own goals for student learning outcomes, the effort to recruit a local and representative workforce has been an important step in that direction.

In my next column, I will look at what we can learn from the nursing field which, in the effort to diversify its ranks, upskill, and broaden pipelines to the profession, has also managed to dramatically increase sector wages. **AL**

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**TRACIE D. HALL** is executive director of the American Library Association. Reach her at [thall@ala.org](mailto:thall@ala.org).



# *Booklist's* Book Club

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### ALA to Distribute \$1 Million to Support Fight against Censorship

On June 22, the American Library Association (ALA) announced it will distribute \$1 million to expand its intellectual freedom initiatives. This comes as the nation grapples with rising censorship challenges and seeks a greater array of resources to protect the right to read.

ALA will use the funds to boost its current efforts to support members, library workers, libraries, and the communities they serve. These funds come from philanthropic organization Solidarity Giving.

“With book challenges reaching an all-time record high in 2022, I am grateful that [ALA] received this critical funding to support the library community,” said then-ALA President Lessa Kanani’opua Pelayo-Lozada in a June 22 statement. “Part of our mission is to ensure access to information for all, and I look forward to seeing the expansion of resources to

support intellectual freedom right when we need it the most.”

The funding will enable ALA to increase staffing in its Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF), expand the Lawyers for Libraries and Law for Librarians programs, support existing resources and new education initiatives, underwrite the commission of new intellectual freedom research, and convene a National Summit on Intellectual Freedom in Washington, D.C., in January 2024.

“I am thankful for the aid from this funding, which will help grow [OIF], along with the programs and resources that support library professionals across the nation at this critical time,” said OIF Director Deborah Caldwell-Stone in the same June 22 statement.

For more information, including the other initiatives being funded, visit [bit.ly/ALA-IF0623](https://bit.ly/ALA-IF0623). ●

#### Digital Literacy Initiatives Highlighted

The US Department of Education (DOE) highlighted ALA’s digital literacy initiatives during its Affordable Connectivity Program’s (ACP) Week of Action, June 14–22. These initiatives were also featured prominently during ALA’s 2023 Annual Conference and Exhibition, held June 22–27 in Chicago.

The conference featured several programs on digital equity and access. Speakers included Jessica Rosenworcel, Federal Communications Commission chairwoman, and Angela Thi Bennett, digital equity director of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

During ACP’s Week of Action, ALA highlighted its digital literacy resources and encouraged library staffers to enroll their patrons in ACP through the Public Library Association’s (PLA) DigitalLearn platform. ALA, along with Capital One, also announced that 30 rural public

libraries have been selected for the Community Connect: Fostering Digital Access program, which provides resources to help communities expand digital access. In addition, PLA announced that it has selected more than 200 public libraries to participate in ACP’s Digital Literacy Workshop Incentives program, thanks to a contribution from AT&T.

For more information, visit [bit.ly/ALA-ACPAC](https://bit.ly/ALA-ACPAC).

#### Dolly Parton Awarded Honorary ALA Membership

ALA gifted an honorary lifetime membership to world-renowned entertainer and literacy advocate Dolly Parton at its Annual Conference on June 23. Parton was recognized for her commitment to inspiring a love of books and reading.

The award-winning singer-songwriter, actor, entrepreneur, and philanthropist founded the Imagination Library, which mails free books to children from birth until age 5. In 2022, more than

2 million books were delivered globally per month.

Honorary membership is ALA’s highest honor, conferred upon a living person whose outstanding contributions have made a lasting impact on librarianship, libraries, and their communities.

For more information, visit [bit.ly/ALA-Parton](https://bit.ly/ALA-Parton).

#### Lappin and Schneider Join ALA Executive Board

On June 7, ALA announced that Amy Lappin and Karen Schneider were appointed by and to the ALA Executive Board, filling two newly created seats. They will each serve two-year terms beginning in July 2023.



Amy Lappin

Lappin is deputy director of Lebanon (N.H.) Public Libraries and has served on ALA Council since 2010. She has been chair of the



# White House Addresses Book Bans

On June 8, the Biden-Harris administration announced it would address attacks on the LGBTQIA+ community in the US through new actions, including appointing a coordinator to tackle the growing issue of book bans.

According to a White House fact sheet, the new coordinator will work in the DOE. They will provide new trainings for schools, which will emphasize that any book bans targeting communities and creating hostile school environments may violate federal civil rights laws.

“We are heartened by the Biden-Harris administration’s leadership to address the alarming rise in book bans and other attacks on LGBTQIA+ Americans that aim to stigmatize and erase the voices of the LGBTQIA+ community,” said then-ALA President Lessa Kanani’opua Pelayo-Lozada in a June 8 statement. “ALA is also proud of and defends the equality of the many LGBTQIA+ Americans who have chosen to serve as library workers, dedicating their lives to ensure the availability of equal and equitable access to libraries for everyone. They have the right to serve their communities without fear. ALA supports local libraries in resisting attempts to ban books by and about the experience of LGBTQIA+ persons.”

For more information, including access to the fact sheet, visit [bit.ly/ALA-WHBB](https://bit.ly/ALA-WHBB). ●

Transforming ALA Governance Task Force, chair of the Chapter Relations Committee, and a member of the ALA Nominating Committee. Lappin has a master’s in library science from University of Rhode Island in Kingston.



Karen Schneider

Schneider is library dean and interim executive director of the School of Extended and International Education at Sonoma State University in

Rohnert Park, California. She has served on ALA Council since 1997. Schneider holds a master’s in library science from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, a master’s in fine arts from University of San Francisco, and a PhD in managerial leadership in the information professions from Simmons University in Boston.

For more information, visit [bit.ly/ALA-EB0623](https://bit.ly/ALA-EB0623).

## Prison Libraries Act Introduced

On April 25, US Reps. Emanuel Cleaver II (D-Mo.), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Tex.), and Shontel Brown (D-Ohio), along with 25 cosponsors, introduced the Prison Libraries Act. The legislation would establish a grant program within the Department of Justice to provide library services to incarcerated individuals.

Grants from the Prison Libraries Act would help institutions establish libraries if they don’t already have them, update materials, hire qualified librarians, and support digital literacy and career readiness training. The legislation would be authorized at \$10 million per year through 2029. The bill’s

## CALENDAR

AUG. 21-25

**IFLA World Library and Information Congress** | Rotterdam, Netherlands  
[2023.ifla.org](https://2023.ifla.org)

OCT.

**TeenTober**

[ala.org/yalsa/teentober](https://ala.org/yalsa/teentober)

OCT. 1-7

**Banned Books Week**

[bannedbooksweek.org](https://bannedbooksweek.org)

OCT. 4

**Banned Websites Awareness Day**

[ala.org/aasl/advocacy/bwad](https://ala.org/aasl/advocacy/bwad)

OCT. 15-21

**National Friends of Libraries Week**

[bit.ly/ALA-NFLW](https://bit.ly/ALA-NFLW)

OCT. 19-21

**AASL National Conference**

Tampa, Florida

[bit.ly/AASL-NC23](https://bit.ly/AASL-NC23)

OCT. 23-29

**Open Access Week**

[openaccessweek.org](https://openaccessweek.org)

NOV. 10-12

**YALSA’s Young Adult Services**

**Symposium** | St. Louis

[ala.org/yalsa/yasymposium](https://ala.org/yalsa/yasymposium)


goal is to boost reintegration efforts, reduce recidivism, and increase educational opportunities.

For more information, visit [bit.ly/ALA-PrisLib23](https://bit.ly/ALA-PrisLib23).

## Theme for Banned Books Week Announced

The theme for this year’s Banned Books Week, to be held October 1–7, is “Let Freedom Read.”

Banned Books Week is an annual event celebrating intellectual freedom, uniting communities around the value of free and open access to information. It launched in 1982 in response to a surge of book challenges in libraries across the US.

For more information, including free “Let Freedom Read” downloads and materials, visit [bit.ly/ALA-BBW23](https://bit.ly/ALA-BBW23). 

2023

# Annual Wrap-Up

Library workers celebrate diversity,  
intellectual freedom in Chicago

by Sallyann Price

This summer marked a homecoming for the American Library Association (ALA), as thousands of library workers and advocates gathered in Chicago for the 2023 Annual Conference and Exhibition. The conference, which ran June 22–27 at McCormick Place, was the first held in ALA's hometown since 2017. A total of 15,851 people registered for the event, including 369 virtual attendees for the Digital Experience.



Simon & Schuster Senior Vice President and Publisher Justin Chanda (left) interviews author Judy Blume



The unprecedented rise in book ban attempts at schools and libraries across the country in recent years—particularly challenges against titles by and about the LGBTQIA+ community and people of color—was top of mind throughout the conference, imbuing a familiar topic with fresh urgency.

Participants continued to explore crucial questions for libraries: What do inclusive, accessible services look like in challenging times? How can library workers harness new technology? And how can they lead libraries into the future?

### The challenge at hand

Kicking off the conference was author and historian Ibram X. Kendi, who headlined the Rally for the Right to Read on June 22. “We must be freedom fighters,” Kendi told a full house. Also presenting at the rally were library workers and students who have been fighting book challenges in their communities.

At the Opening General Session on June 23, author Judy Blume recounted a story about a book challenge she experienced in 1970, the year she published *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. She had donated three copies of the title to her children's elementary school.

“The male principal took them off the shelf,” Blume said. “And he said, ‘We can't have these books here.’”

The bestselling novel, recently adapted into a film, has been included in most-challenged lists for decades, thanks to its frank depictions of puberty and



Clockwise from top: Author and historian Ibram X. Kendi; attorney and social media influencer Emily Amick; Val Edwards, library teacher leader at Madison (Wis.) Metropolitan School District; Erin MacFarlane, deputy director of Maricopa County (Ariz.) Library District

sexuality. Blume sees parallels between earlier waves of book challenges and the current one: “I don't have the answers, but I know we can't be complacent. What happened in the 1980s is that we weren't all together.”

“This is a bad direction,” said author James Patterson of the book banning trend in an interview with *American Libraries* at the conference. Patterson's young adult series, *Maximum Ride*, was removed from a school district in Florida earlier this year. “It's just dumb,” he said. He took umbrage with the notion that a single person could get many books banned without even reading them.

At “Changing the Narrative: ALA Policy Corps Takes on Book Banners,” panelists discussed intellectual freedom initiatives, including ALA’s Unite Against Book Bans ([uniteagainstbookbans.org](http://uniteagainstbookbans.org)). “Our voices alone are important,” said Erin MacFarlane, deputy director of Maricopa County (Ariz.) Library District, “but together we can be much louder.”

School librarians at “Is Your Library Challenge-Ready?” offered strategies for preparing for a book challenge before it arises. They recommended researching state statutes, articulating and disseminating clear policies, and connecting with community leaders and ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom. “We can’t just hope it doesn’t happen and not be prepared for it,” said Val Edwards, library teacher leader at Madison (Wis.) Metropolitan School District.

Attorney and social media influencer Emily Amick examined strategies employed by groups like Moms for Liberty that seek to restrict library materials. Amick spoke at “Fight Book Bans: Frame the Debate, Fill the Seats, and Create Connections,” the United for Libraries president’s program. “[The group makes] us look like we’re against parents instead of for freedom,” Amick said. “They maintain this atmosphere of constant crisis. They realize people are easier to mobilize when they fear a threat to their way of life.”

Graphic novels and manga are also targets for censorship, in part because they’re inherently visual. Jeff Smith, whose *Bone* series has been frequently banned, expressed support for librarians at “Comics in Libraries: Past, Present, and Future,” the Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table president’s program. “What’s going on is disingenuous at best,” he said. “Yes, there are parents with real concerns, but that’s not who’s doing this, screaming at librarians and demanding.”



Clockwise from above: Children’s book author Nikki Grimes; authors Mark Oshiro (left) and Rick Riordan; comedian Maysoon Zayid



### Featured speakers educate and inspire

Tony Award–winning actor and singer Idina Menzel collaborated with her sister Cara Mentzel, an author and former elementary school teacher, on *Loud Mouse* and *Proud Mouse*, two children’s books based on their lives and sisterhood. (See interview on p. 18.) *Proud Mouse*, to be released in September, focuses on a younger sister’s experience trying to find herself and her own interests separate from her older sister. “We wanted kids to feel like they didn’t need to choose [what they want to be when they grow up],” Mentzel said. “They just needed to be curious.”

Comedian Maysoon Zayid, who has cerebral palsy, talked about her forthcoming graphic novel for children, *Shiny Misfits*. “I am Palestinian, I’m Muslim, I’m a woman of color, I am divorced, I am disabled, and I live in New Jersey,”



she said. “But I don’t want anyone in this room to feel bad for me, because I got 99 problems and palsy is just one.” She called for librarians to improve the accessibility of their spaces and resources and ask patrons with disabilities about their specific needs.

Children’s book author Nikki Grimes and illustrator Brian Pinkney introduced their forthcoming collaboration, *A Walk in the Woods*. The book was a way to honor Pinkney’s father, Caldecott Medal–winning illustrator Jerry Pinkney, who started the drawings for the





title but died in October 2021. “Too few children’s books feature Black characters engaging with nature, and that was something [Jerry and I] were both interested in changing,” Grimes said.

Middle-grade fiction authors Rick Riordan and Mark Oshiro discussed their collaboration on the latest installment of Riordan’s Percy Jackson and the Olympians series, *The Sun and the Star*, which centers on a same-sex couple. “I felt that to do the story justice, I might not have the right toolset, sense of authenticity, nuance, and understanding of what [the

characters’] journey might be,” Riordan said of recruiting his coauthor.

Oshiro, who is queer and Latinx, also spoke at “Beyond the Middle School Rainbow: Intersectionality in LGBTQIA+ Middle-Grade Books,” a panel of LGBTQIA+ authors sharing their challenges and triumphs. “All I think about is queer me at 8 years old thinking, ‘I just want one depiction of me that looks nice, [who is] funny,’” Oshiro said.

Native Hawaiian teacher, author, and filmmaker Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, a transgender woman, joined then-ALA President Lessa Kanani’opua Pelayo-Lozada for the ALA President’s Program. Wong-Kalu discussed her new picture book, *Kapaemahu*, and what it means to be *māhū*—a descriptor for a third-gender person who occupies the space between *kane* (male) and *wahine* (female). “Back home you can be one, or the other, or both,” she said. “Western minds struggle with the understanding that there’s something beyond the physicality.”

Librarian of Congress Carla D. Hayden led a talk about the Obama Presidential Center currently under construction in Chicago. She interviewed Obama Presidential Center Museum Director Louise

Bernard and Chicago Public Library (CPL) Commissioner Chris Brown.

“Other leaders will see that this leader of our country [Barack Obama] is signaling the importance of libraries,” Brown said. Scheduled to open in late 2025, the center will house a 5,000-square-foot CPL branch on the city’s South Side, serving a predominantly Black and Latinx population.

Presidential inaugural poet Amanda Gorman and Caldecott Medal–honored illustrator Christian Robinson, who collaborated on the forthcoming children’s book *Something, Someday*, closed Annual on June 27 with a message of hope in the face of adversity. “Wherever I see darkness, I try to look extra hard for the helpers,” Gorman said, evoking children’s television host Fred Rogers. “How could I not feel like a small light could do anything?”

### Identity and authenticity

In the midst of recent book bans, harmful legislation, and outright violence targeting BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and other communities, authors and creators from marginalized groups celebrated their identities at Annual.



From left: Librarian of Congress Carla D. Hayden, Chicago Public Library Commissioner Chris Brown, and Obama Presidential Center Museum Director Louise



Presidential inaugural poet Amanda Gorman

During “Share Our Stories: Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Literature for Children and Young Adults,” Asian American authors discussed their work and experiences in the wake of widespread hate targeting the AAPI community since the onset of the pandemic. “When you look at all this hatred and prejudice and racism, really, what it boils down to is the profound failure of the imagination,” said Minh Lê, author of *Drawn Together*. “Because you’re failing to see the person in front of you as fully human. For us as writers, if we can put stories out there that celebrate the fullness of all our humanity—a book isn’t going to stop it all—maybe it will make that person pause and realize that these are real people.”

Panelists at “Uncovering Unsung Heroines: A Discussion of Women in Hip-Hop” shone a light on the legacy of Black women artists who helped shape the genre and faced compounded challenges in a male-dominated industry. “The genre, created by young Black and Brown kids, was born from a desire to keep the music going at a time when music was being taken out of school,” said Tamela Chambers, manager of CPL’s Beverly branch.

Authors at “A Novel Idea: Jewish Identity in Genre Fiction” shared how issues of cultural identity and belonging are deeply embedded in their work. “I think about this every single day when I sit down to write; is there a difference between a Jewish worldview on love and a non-Jewish worldview on love?” said Jean Meltzer, who wrote the novel *The Matzah Ball*. “And, for me, the hardest



part of writing Jewish romance for a broad audience is trying to navigate that question.”

The American Indian Library Association’s president’s program, “Food Is Medicine in Medicine Spring Library: Food Sovereignty Needs in a Tribal Library,” highlighted a community garden that’s helping people grow their own food and raise awareness of Indigenous libraries. “Many tribal members don’t realize they have a library,” said Aaron LaFromboise, director of library services at Blackfeet Community College in Browning, Montana. “There’s a lot of communal distrust of institutions, and culturally they grew up in a time when they would be in trouble if they

Clockwise from top: Aaron LaFromboise, director of library services at Blackfeet Community College in Browning, Montana; Katie Strand, first-year experience librarian at Utah State University in Logan; Robbie Barber, teacher-librarian at Tucker (Ga.) High School

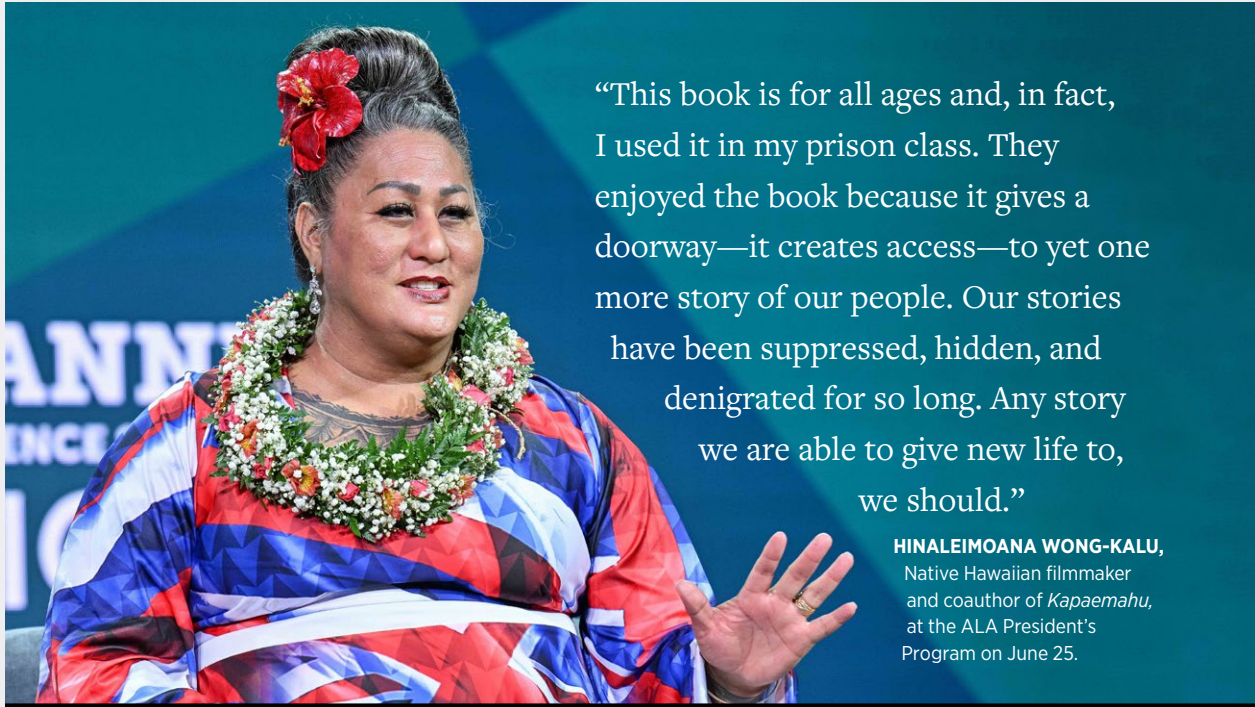
came into a library and they just were themselves.”

### Learning to discern

Natural language processing tool ChatGPT was the primary focus of Core’s Top Technology Trends panel, which explored the opportunities and limitations of generative artificial intelligence in libraries. Jonathan McMichael, undergraduate success librarian at Arizona State University in Tempe, emphasized that students are already using these tools and encountering thorny questions of individual incentive and the common good: “Libraries are a really good place to be talking about this stuff because we’ve been thinking







“This book is for all ages and, in fact, I used it in my prison class. They enjoyed the book because it gives a doorway—it creates access—to yet one more story of our people. Our stories have been suppressed, hidden, and denigrated for so long. Any story we are able to give new life to, we should.”

**HINALEIMOANA WONG-KALU**, Native Hawaiian filmmaker and coauthor of *Kapaemahu*, at the ALA President’s Program on June 25.

“LIKE MANY OF YOU, I MADE PERCY JACKSON MY PERSONALITY FOR A SOLID TWO TO THREE MONTHS.”

**MARK OSHIRO**, at their Main Stage Speaker session with *The Sun and the Star* coauthor Rick Riordan, on June 25.

“I kind of feel like I’m doing something right if I’m pissing people off with my stories in some way. I also really try to focus on the fact that the feedback I’m getting from young people is always the opposite of what gatekeepers and adults are saying about what young people can handle or what they have going on in their lives. We do a real disservice when we underestimate and overlook what young people are holding today.”

**MARIAMA J. LOCKINGTON**, author of *Forever Is Now*, at “Beyond the Middle School Rainbow: Intersectionality in LGBTQIA+ Middle-Grade Books” on June 25.

**“When I was in middle school, the school library was my sanctuary. I had some mean girl problems. The library isn’t just books; it’s that space where kids come because maybe their home life isn’t as safe as they want it to be, [or] it’s the only space where they can catch a breath. In all the rhetoric about book bans, remember the spaces.”**

**ELLEN OH**, CEO of We Need Diverse Books, at “Leading with Your Hands and Your Heart: A Conversation about Leading from Wherever You Are” on June 26.

“A workplace doesn’t have to be *bad* to be unionized. You can have a perfectly great workplace that is going to unionize for all the right reasons.”

**ALICE TIPPIT**, developer and systems coordinator at Northwestern University Libraries in Evanston, Illinois, at “An Introduction to Organizing and Collective Bargaining in Libraries” on June 24.

about collective action for information for a long time.”

At “Connecting Library Experiences: Collaboration across Library Types to Better Support Our Patrons,” presenters addressed how libraries can work together to assist students throughout their educational journeys. For example, librarians at Utah State University (USU) in Logan hosted a half-day conference last summer with local high school librarians and teachers to explore partnership possibilities. “Our main goal was to begin a dialogue about USU resources and to learn how to better support incoming high school students,” said USU First-Year Experience Librarian Katie Strand.

The session “Picture This! The Literacy of Digital Images” spoke to the power of manipulated photos and offered strategies for identifying them. “The more you start thinking about this, the more it becomes second nature,” said Robbie Barber, teacher-librarian at Tucker (Ga.) High School. “You start to go, ‘Wait a minute, that light looks weird.’”

### Reimagining the library

Even in their traditional roles as purveyors of books and champions of literacy and learning, libraries are finding new ways to support and engage patrons and meet their needs and interests.

“Near-Peer Leadership at the Library: Teens Inspiring Kids through Tutoring, Storytelling, and Readers’ Advisory” introduced the Teen Reading Ambassadors program at New York Public Library (NYPL), which pairs younger children with teen mentors. “Teens are immediately motivated by being placed in a position as a role model,” said Rachel Roseberry, NYPL’s associate director of young adult programs and services. “They often are being treated like kids themselves in other contexts.”

At “Fostering Economic Opportunity and Advancement with Innovative



Programming,” Andrea Levandowski, consultant for small business development and technology at New Jersey State Library in Trenton, talked about library services for entrepreneurs and small businesses. “Business owners are members of the community,” Levandowski said. “They are running businesses out of their homes, people trying side hustles in their spare time, doing passion projects or creative pursuits. The library is a perfect home for those people.”

Similarly, the session “Creating Opportunities to Shop Small: Two

Clockwise from top: Rachel Roseberry, associate director of young adult programs and services at New York Public Library; Danielle Costello, science librarian at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge; Jessica Taylor, atmospheric scientist at NASA’s Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia

Approaches for Public Libraries” focused on supporting local entrepreneurs through programming and investment. For example, Spokane County (Wash.) Library District has hosted annual scavenger hunts designed to drive patrons to brick-and-mortar stores since 2016.



## COUNCIL MATTERS

Resolutions passed to no longer require preregistration for members to vote in person at hybrid membership meetings (CD#10.2); to reaffirm the freedom to read (CD#55); to condemn discrimination against library workers and support the LGBTQIA+ community (CD#58); to investigate the possibility of changing dates for future Annual Conferences, noting LGBTQIA+ members regularly have to miss their local Pride events to attend (CD#59); and to call on the Policy Manual Revision Working Group to review the process for vacancy appointments to the ALA Executive Board and the Bylaws Committee and develop recommendations regarding a process in which Executive Board actions “may be reviewed, amended, or overturned by Council or Membership” (CD#60).

A resolution that ALA Bylaws Article VII, Section 2 be amended by striking “may be held virtually” and inserting “shall be held virtually” was referred to the Bylaws Committee.

Julius C. Jefferson Jr., chair of the International Relations Committee (IRC), presented a resolution asserting ALA’s objection to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) choosing Dubai, United Arab Emirates, as the location for IFLA’s 2024 World Library and Information Congress because of the country’s criminalization of homosexuality. Proposed amendments clarified ALA’s disapproval of the location unless IFLA can ensure the protection of LGBTQIA+ participants and the unfettered inclusion of related programming, or otherwise find a new location in the region. The motion passed as amended.

Committees shared the following updates and action items:

Brian Schottlaender, chair of the Bylaws Committee, presented an action item to amend Article VIII, Section 1(A) of the ALA Bylaws, removing the listing of each current standing committee (CD#25.1). The motion passed.

Carla Davis-Castro, chair of the Committee on Diversity, presented an action item to review and approve the 2023 edition of the ALA Standards for Library Services for the Incarcerated or Detained (CD#14.1), which passed nearly unanimously.

Andrew Pace, chair of the Committee on Organization, provided an update on the committee (CD#27.1) and introduced action items to modify the charge of the ALA Conference Committee and modify the name, charge, and composition of the ALA Council Orientation Committee. Both motions carried.

Toni Negro, chair of the Policy Monitoring Committee, proposed two amendments to the ALA Policy Manual (CD#17.1), which were approved by Council.

Erin Berman and Sara Dallas, cochairs of the Core Values Task Force (CD#34), shared an update on the work of the task force and requested an extension until 2024 to complete their work, which passed.

Council heard reports from Committee on Legislation Chair Ed Garcia (CD#20.1), Intellectual Freedom Committee Chair Lesliediana Jones (CD#19.1), and Freedom to Read Foundation President Peter Coyl (CD#22.1).

Tribute resolutions were read honoring: Josephine Maria (Riss) Fang (M-#8); David Goodman (M-#9); David “Chris” Cottrill (M-#10); Jen Angel (M-#11); Bill Ott (M-#12); Kristen A. Cooper (M-#13); Esperanza Bravo de Varona (M-#14); Helene Lafrance (M-#15); James Henry Jacobs Jr. (M-#16); Paul Cappuzzello (M-#17); Patricia A. Wand (M-#18); David S. Baugh (M-#19); Rebecca Taylor Bingham (M-#20); Terrilyn Chun (M-#21); Eleanor M. McKnight (M-#22); Joyce Meskis (M-#23); Tracey J. Hunter Hayes (M-#24); Daniel Ellsberg (M-#25); Aletta Seales (M-#26); Charles L. Blockson (M-#27); and Susana Hinojosa (M-#28).

Then-ALA President Lessa Kanani’opua Pelayo-Lozada read a tribute resolution honoring the 50th anniversary of the Intellectual Freedom Round Table (T-#2). ●

Other libraries are fashioning themselves as STEM hubs. “Cloud Watching for NASA” addressed citizen science projects including NASA’s GLOBE Observer app, which allows anyone to contribute observations about clouds, mosquito habitats, land cover, and trees. “NASA has a responsibility for collecting data

about our environment,” and libraries can be partners in that, said Jessica Taylor, atmospheric scientist at NASA’s Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia.

Many libraries initially underestimated demand for glasses, programming, and other services related to the

2017 total solar eclipse. In “A Procrastinator’s Guide to the 2023/2024 Solar Eclipses,” members of the Space Science Institute’s National Center for Interactive Learning (NCIL) STAR Library Network shared advice for libraries anticipating these astronomical events. NCIL is distributing 5 million eclipse glasses to

libraries nationwide. “Don’t worry—we still have glasses left for you,” promised Anne Holland, NCIL senior education associate.

Tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs) have become more popular in recent years. The Games and Gaming Round Table president’s program, “Creating Role-Playing Games in the Library,” focused on the potential of game jams, free or cheap events where students and patrons of all ages create their own TTRPGs. Danielle Costello, science librarian at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, points out that this type of collaborative storytelling gives players a sense of agency and control, “which is something a lot of our patrons really need right now.”



### Books behind bars

At Annual, ALA Council approved the first update to the Association’s Standards for Library Services for the Incarcerated or Detained since 1992. These services were the focus of “Expanding Information Access for People Who Are Incarcerated: Service Standards and Mapping,” where librarians discussed ongoing projects to expand individuals’ freedom to read.

“This goes beyond library services,” said Bee Okelo, administrative and GIS analyst at San Francisco Public Library, which is mapping library services in correctional facilities as part of its Jail and Reentry Services program. “This connects to bigger conversations like abolition and, just generally, how do you run a society? How do we care about people? Especially people who are at the



‘bottom,’ that we’re typically told aren’t humans in the same way we are?”

At “Nurturing Writers Workshops in Prison,” presenters shared a curriculum developed by PEN America for writing workshops held in prison libraries or led by librarians. David Fleenor, who participates in one of these workshops, called in from a correctional facility to describe his experience. “The clarity that I gain from writing, and that other people do also, is often the only way we can see a future where we can make a meaningful contribution to the outcome of our lives,” he said.



Clockwise from top: Sterling Cunio, a board member of Oregonians United to End Slavery, holds a phone through which incarcerated individual David Fleenor speaks; Bee Okelo, administrative and GIS analyst at San Francisco Public Library; audiobook producer Taryn Ocko Beato

### Audio adds to accessibility

A panel of authors, producers, and judges discussed the qualities of a good audiobook, the process of creating and editing one, and how the medium benefits young readers, at “Listen to Win: Hearing from Audiobook Winners and the Judges Who Select Them.” Producer Taryn Ocko Beato sees an audiobook adaptation of a graphic novel





From left: Ling Hwey Jeng, professor and director of the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman's University in Denton, and Association for Library Service to Children President Amy Koester; Melanie Huggins, executive director of Richland Library in Columbia, South Carolina

as a companion rather than a separate work. "There are a lot of things that can happen in production, in the narration, that you could make special, and give listeners something just as good as the book itself," she said.

Audiobooks on CD are a particularly valuable tool for readers with visual impairments, but CD technology is rapidly falling by the wayside in favor of Bluetooth and streaming apps like Hoopla and Libby. Iowa City Public Library (ICPL) workers shared what they've learned about providing app-based audiobook service at "Accessible Digital Libraries: Navigating Audiobook Apps with Low-Vision Patrons." As audio shifts away from CDs, "librarians need to improve their technical literacy to be able to serve patrons in the future," said Melody Dworak, librarian at ICPL.

## Leading libraries into the future

As communities confront complex challenges, from providing teen mental health services to assisting families facing eviction to seeking more resources for the unhoused, leadership remains a perennial theme at ALA conferences.

"I believe libraries are at an inflection point right now," said Melanie Huggins, executive director of Richland Library in Columbia, South Carolina, at "Leadership by Design: A Human-Centered Approach for Library Leaders." She pointed out that the pandemic has allowed for "a grand opportunity to rethink the way we do everything." For Huggins and her team, that involved developing a framework for user-centered library design to support people, technology, spaces, partnerships, materials, and services.

The Association for Library Service to Children president's program, "Leading with Your Hands and Your Heart: A Conversation about Leading from Wherever You Are," was a meditation on what makes a leader. Ling Hwey Jeng,



professor and director of the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman's University in Denton, described leadership as more of a competency than a role. "[A leader is] someone who can exercise positive influence over others," she said. "You don't have to be visible."

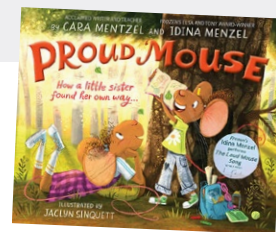
Library leaders are also stewards of their collections, a role that can include navigating the tension between open educational resources—which can help counter high textbook prices—and traditionally published materials. At "It's Not Either/Or: How to Include Open Access Materials to Transform Curriculum and Collections," Stephanie Robertson, assistant professor and outreach librarian at Brigham Young University–Hawaii in Laie, shared her perspective: "To have a collection that is high-quality and has the layers of complexity you would expect from a collection, you need both."

Worker well-being played into the discussion at "An Introduction to Organizing and Collective Bargaining in Libraries," a panel comprising

# Idina Menzel and Cara Mentzel

Authors and sisters discuss collaborating on children’s books, impact of libraries

BY Megan Bennett



When Idina Menzel was contemplating writing a children’s book, her first thought was to join forces with her younger sister.

“I wouldn’t have done it any other way,”

Menzel—a world-renowned singer and performer best known for her stage and screen roles in *Frozen*, *Rent*, and *Wicked*—said about working with her sister Cara Mentzel, an author and former elementary school teacher. “I knew that she would bring it to life and guide me in my storytelling.”

The duo debuted with the book *Loud Mouse* (Disney-Hyperion, 2022). Its sequel, *Proud Mouse*, comes out this September. Both follow a pair of mouse sisters, Dee and Cara Lee, who support each other in their journeys of being their most authentic selves.

The sisters spoke with *American Libraries* about their series, what they hope young readers take away from it, and their own memories of libraries.

**These books are based on your own personalities and experiences. *Proud Mouse* is from Cara’s perspective and *Loud Mouse* is from Idina’s. What messages do you think young readers will take away from this series?**

**Idina Menzel:** I think they’ll love the story of sisters, which is a theme in my life and my career. I love how we complement one another. *Loud Mouse* explores a young person’s complicated nature of embracing who they are, being seen and heard. While that might be scary—taking risks is scary, being vulnerable is scary—it’s the thing that connects you to, in my case, your audience, or readers, or your friends and family. It’s a form of expression.

**Cara Mentzel:** So much of what’s modeled in the books is “sister and ally.” Whether it’s your sister or just a friend, it’s about learning how to be an ally and support people being their biggest, best selves.

In *Proud Mouse*, the takeaway is also just [to] be yourself, because who else would you be? But you don’t have to decide who you are. It’s so much about just being curious, being open to all these things, and being in love with the world. Cara Lee has a journal in that story, and she just wants to document everything. That’s what we wanted kids to take away: You don’t need to know what you’re going to be when you grow up. You don’t need to know your major in college.

Chicago-area library workers who organized for unionization at their institutions. For Cate Levinson, youth services librarian at Niles (Ill.)–Maine District Library, organizing was a response to a board election that gave austerity candidates a 4–3 majority and threatened the library’s operations and core values. “Forming a union was the only way to save our jobs,” she said. “We jumped into action, and I think that was a testament to how strong the organization was.”

Rebecca Hass, programming and outreach manager at Anne Arundel County (Md.) Public Library, reflected on how leaders set the tone at “Building Joy-Centric Libraries.” Acknowledging that librarians and their patrons experienced tough times during the



Rebecca Hass, programming and outreach manager at Anne Arundel County (Md.) Public Library

pandemic, Hass suggested practical ways for librarians to insert positive psychology and self-care in the workplace. “You and your team and your customers and our communities, we all deserve joy of every flavor, color, religion,” Hass said. “Well-being is in the definition of joy, and you are worth it.” **AL**

**SALLYANN PRICE** is a writer and editor in Seattle. Megan Bennett, Judy Czarnik, Terra Dankowski, Greg Landgraf, Diana Panuncial, Sanhita SinhaRoy, Carrie Smith, and Sally Stieglitz contributed reporting for this story.



What you need to do is to be open to all these things.

### How is it collaborating with a sister on a creative project?

**Mentzel:** It's the best. It's a personal and professional relationship. All I knew I wanted to be when I grew up was to be a mom, and then the idea to be a teacher and a writer, both came from my sister. She was the one whose idea it was for me to write a memoir [*Voice Lessons: A Sister's Story*] in 2017, and then she's the one who brought me on board to write *Loud Mouse*. To see the person that you have on a pedestal, that you love so much, say, "I see you, I see you doing it well, and I want to see you do it," is really special.

### Cara, you spent a decade as an elementary school teacher and studied children's literacy as part of your master's degree. How do those experiences help you write for a children's audience and reach young people?

**Mentzel:** It's so much about loving children and thinking about what will speak to them the most. Like Dee in *Loud Mouse* growing into this big mouse because she's so full of life, so happy to be singing, and to be recognized for that. Kids sometimes just absorb the metaphor. They don't necessarily say, "Oh, that's a metaphor," but they experience it.

**Mentzel:** I think she challenges children with words.

**Mentzel:** Kids are pretty sophisticated. I know when you work with kids, you should be explicit and keep things kind of simple. But I also think you should embed a lot of layers, because they will rise to the occasion. And over repeated readings, they will get different things out of a text.

**Mentzel:** The books that we love so much are the books that evolve with us, that



Idina Menzel (left) and Cara Mentzel

you can return to at different ages and discover new things.

### Idina, as you've been promoting these books, do children recognize your voice as Elsa's from *Frozen*? What's been their response?

**Mentzel:** It depends on age. It could be rather traumatic for a child to love Elsa, and see Elsa, and then meet me and be told I'm Elsa. So sometimes I have them close their eyes and then I say something to them from the movie. And then they get it.

### What do you make of this wave of book bans and challenges currently sweeping the country?

**Mentzel:** It's really sad and frustrating, especially because I feel like librarians are on the front lines. That's a really bizarre juxtaposition—they're just people who want to provide trusted sources of information, and texts, and the love of reading to people.

**Mentzel:** A lot of our kids are feeling alone and unseen. It's so important for us to have representation in media, but also our books, so they can see themselves

and we can educate the people around them. That's very disconcerting for me.

**Mentzel:** So much of our sense of community comes from these protagonists that we fall in love with, that we see ourselves in.

### What role have libraries played in your life?

**Mentzel:** Libraries were the beginning of my love of books. I just remember walking into libraries and having all these options, seeing the spines of all the books and knowing I had so many to choose from.

I remember my first chapter book was right off the shelf of the Syosset (N.Y.) Public Library. It was *B Is for Betsy* [by Carolyn Haywood]. I remember just feeling so grown up that I was checking a book out of the library. I used to pretend I was a librarian at my desk at home. I pretended that I was doing the checkout with my dolls and books.

**Mentzel:** The same thing, the exhilaration of walking into the school library. My first book wasn't this, but I remember looking at all the Judy Blume books and being so excited to choose one. ●

# Trending Upward

Library Marketplace sees an attendance boost, mainstay products, and growing interest in AI

by Marshall Breeding

**W**ith 15,851 total registrants and nearly 600 vendors represented, the American Library Association's (ALA) 2023 Annual Conference and Exhibition (June 22–27) in Chicago continued to make progress toward prepandemic attendance numbers. The Library Marketplace, which remains the world's largest assemblage of products and services for libraries of all types, provides a unique venue for attendees to connect with company representatives.





From energetic demos and mascots to giveaways and games, vendors continue to invest in their exhibit hall spaces for the opportunity to interact with current and potential customers. Additionally, many businesses act as sponsors, contributing to the overall success of Annual Conference and the Association.

While this wasn't a year for breaking news in the library technology industry—as mergers and acquisitions seem to be in a lull—vendors demonstrated the developments and incremental progress they have made on fresh and flagship products.

## Managing books and physical materials

The aisles dedicated to publishers bustled with foot traffic, as conference-goers lined up for author autographs and copies of the latest titles. Booths ranged from major global conglomerates to small and independent imprints. Their popularity underscored that print books continue to reign supreme in libraries.

A few aisles away, vendors of technologies and products that help libraries manage books and physical materials displayed their offerings. **Bibliotheca** provides a wide variety of automated material handling (AMH) equipment, including self-service kiosks and returns, smart lockers, and other solutions to optimize operations. The company's products integrate with its cloudLibrary digital lending service.

**Lyngsoe Systems** likewise offers an array of AMH solutions, including large-scale, centralized sorting systems. The company's Intelligent Material Management System is interoperable with many integrated library system (ILS) products, enabling an efficient model of floating collections.

Other vendors demonstrating inventory management solutions included



Joseph Coelho (left), United Kingdom's Waterstones Children's Laureate for 2022–2024, signs a copy of his forthcoming picture book, *One Little Word*.

**Arcus**, a cloud-based RFID solution from Australian company Adilam Technologies; **FE Technologies**, which featured its smart locker system; **mk Solutions**, maker of self-service products LibDispenser, LibLocker, and Open Library; and **D-Tech**, with its broad menu of AMH products, including smart lockers.

**Meescan** showed off its cloud-based self-checkout systems. **EnvisionWare** demonstrated its products, including self-service kiosks, computer and room reservation systems, payment processing solutions, and other tools to support operations. **Farber Specialty Vehicles** was on hand to talk to library personnel about bookmobile configurations.

Print collections need specialized infrastructure. **LBS** (Library Bureau Steel) displayed its library shelving, end panels, and related products. **Iron Mountain** and **Clancy Relocation and Logistics** promoted their services to help libraries with offsite storage. **Ziffit**

(part of The World of Books Group) and **Better World Books** (owned by the Internet Archive) showed library workers how they can give new life to print materials as they cycle out of collections, through resale and donation.

## Solutions for digital content and services

While physical books remain a mainstay, interest in ebooks and other digital content continues to grow. **OverDrive** leads among public libraries, delivering ebooks to patrons from several publishers through its Libby and Sora apps. Competitors **Bibliotheca** (which makes cloudLibrary) and **Baker & Taylor** (which makes Axis 360) complement OverDrive's offerings in this space.

**Hoopla**, a streaming platform from Midwest Tape, demonstrated its collection of audiobooks, movies, and music. Visitors to the **Library Ideas** booth learned about the company's content

services, including Freegal (for music), iVox (for immersive storybooks), and Freading (for ebook lending).

The major providers and distributors of scholarly content—of critical interest to academic and research libraries—were well represented on the exhibit hall floor. Publishers with a prominent presence included **Elsevier, Oxford University Press, Sage, Springer Nature, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley.**

In addition to primary source collections, **Gale** demonstrated its literature and business databases, ebook collections, and learning solutions. **Coherent Digital** highlighted its major collections (including Africa Commons, History Commons, and Policy Commons), along with its recently acquired Accessible Archives. **Ooble**, an app developed by Knowledge Unlatched, helps institutions manage their open access resources. **ITHAKA**, parent company of digital journal platform JSTOR, Portico digital preservation service, and the Ithaka S+R consulting and research arm, has integrated JSTOR with its Artstor platform for images and other media.

In recent years, libraries have boosted efforts to improve access to digital

**With mergers and acquisitions in a lull, vendors demonstrated the developments and incremental progress they have made on fresh and flagship products.**



OverDrive account manager Kevin Coon talks about ebook access model OverDrive Max.

content, driving increased interest in advanced digitizing equipment. At its booth, **DLSG** (Digital Library Systems Group) featured a large display of historical documents preserved through library digitization programs. The company's BSCAN scanners facilitate efficient interlibrary loan and document delivery. DLSG's parent company, **Image Access**, manufactures the popular Book-eye and Click series of book scanners, WideTEK large-format digitization equipment, and workflow tools for quick digitization of materials.

**Indus International** promoted its page-turning robotic scanner that facilitates the rapid digitization of books with minimal operator intervention. **AM** (part of Sage and previously known as Adam Matthew Digital) offers AM Quartex as a comprehensive solution for creating, managing, and enabling access to digital collections. The company also licenses access to its own set of primary source resources.

## Going beyond the LSP and ILS

On the library systems front, an interesting mix of options were represented, including longstanding proprietary products, services and support for open source solutions, and add-ons that enhance existing platforms.

**Clarivate** presented several products from its acquired businesses: **Ex Libris** demonstrated its flagship Alma and Primo library services platforms (LSPs) as well as Rapido, its resource sharing application, and Leganto, a resource list management system. **Innovative** featured new Vega products for discovery and customer engagement that integrate with its Polaris and Sierra ILSes. **ProQuest** promoted a broad array of databases and primary source collections, along with its ebook platform.

**EBSCO Information Services** highlighted services for the open source FOLIO LSP and components that make EBSCO FOLIO a comprehensive choice



for academic libraries. EBSCO also demonstrated its EBSCO Discovery Service, EBSCOhost databases, and journal subscription services.

**SirsiDynix** showcased its Cloud-Source OA—a discovery solution that optimizes open access content and open educational resources—in addition to its Symphony ILS and BLUEcloud application suite.

**The Library Corporation** (TLC) offers the Library-Solution and CARL-X ILS products. TLC exhibited in tandem with its Tech Logic subsidiary, which specializes in AMH equipment, self-service solutions, and other RFID-based technologies.

In the open source arena, **ByWater Solutions** shared its rapidly growing list of library clients that subscribe to support services for Aspen Discovery and Koha. The nonprofit **Equinox Open Library Initiative** promoted its services for Aspen Discovery, Koha, VuFind, and the

Evergreen ILS for consortia. Visitors to the **Index Data** booth learned more about the company's development and support services for FOLIO, Project ReShare, and other open source initiatives.

Other ILS vendors in the exhibit hall included **LibLime**, demonstrating its Biblioovation ILS; **Auto-Graphics**, showing off its VERSO ILS and SHAREit resource sharing platform; and **Millonex**, displaying its Simplicity ILS geared to public libraries.


**Lyrasis** is a nonprofit organization that supports open source software and community-driven initiatives. This includes the Palace Project, an open source ebook platform and marketplace for licensing titles. Lyrasis also supports longstanding open source projects ArchivesSpace, BiblioLabs, DSpace, Fedora, and Vivo.

Visitors to the **OCLC** booth learned about the many products and services

provided by the nonprofit on behalf of the broader library community. In addition to WorldCat, the world's largest library catalog, OCLC offers WorldShare Management Services and OCLC Wise to help libraries manage their local collections. The organization also featured its research and reports that support the mission of libraries.

Many vendors demonstrated products that integrate with or enhance library management systems. **Shoutbomb** offers a text messaging service interoperable with any ILS product as well as its Text4Literacy service, which enables libraries and schools to send reminders to families for reading and other literacy activities. **StackMap** promoted tools for mapping indoor spaces and creating wayfinding aids to better help patrons find materials.

**Atlas Systems** featured products supporting libraries and archives, including



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Aeon (for managing special collections requests), Ares (for course reserves), and ILLiad (for interlibrary loan). The company also offers support services for ArchivesSpace.

**Springshare** promoted its LibGuides CMS for managing library websites, in addition to its core LibGuides topic curation product. The company offers several other applications through its cloud platform, including tools for event management, chat-based reference, managing staff schedules, and analytics.

### Services for print and digital collections

Another category of vendors focuses on providing services that support cataloging and other library operations.

In addition to its online marketplace for library materials and Axis 360 digital lending service, **Baker & Taylor** has launched, and recently enhanced, its BTCat cataloging service.

**MARCIVE** and **Backstage Library Works** each offer a wide-ranging set of services for cataloging, authorities processing, and database cleanup projects. **Midwest Library Service** provides collection development, acquisitions, and cataloging services. **WT Cox Information Services** demonstrated its subscription services for electronic and print serials.

**Recollect**, a New Zealand-based company exhibiting for the first time at Annual, offers a digital collection management system with a strong bent toward community engagement.

### A focus on library patrons

Technologies designed to enhance the library user experience are in high demand. **BiblioCommons** showed off its latest versions of BiblioCore (a discovery interface), BiblioWeb (an environment for deploying websites), BiblioEvents (for managing and promoting library programs), and BiblioApps (for creating mobile library apps).

**Library Market** demonstrated its LibraryWebsite product, which provides



Communico employees demonstrate products in the company's Tiny Library trailer.

customers with a modern and intuitive website template that can be easily updated and maintained. The company also offers LibraryCalendar for managing events and scheduling rooms.

**Communico** once again brought its Tiny Library trailer, a walkthrough enclosure that displayed the company's integrated suite of cloud-based applications for patron-facing services. **SOLUS** showed off the latest versions of its mobile apps and discovery interfaces.

Vendors also focused on products that invite patrons to physically engage with the library. The **Short Édition** booth featured the company's Short Story Dispenser, a standalone kiosk that prints fiction, nonfiction, and poems and is intended to be installed in public spaces. **International Library Services** displayed its AutoLend kiosks, which can be placed at locations outside of a library's

building and enable patrons to browse, hold, borrow, and return materials.

### A growing interest in AI

Interest in artificial intelligence (AI) has skyrocketed over the last year, sparked by ChatGPT and other generative AI services. This technology is rapidly making its way into the library sphere.

Just prior to the conference, **Clarivate** announced a major partnership with **AI21 Labs**, a company that specializes in natural language processing. Clarivate plans to train AI21's components on its vast content assets to power new services across its product lines.

**LibraryThing** invited booth visitors to try Talpa Search, an AI-based library catalog with a conversational interface that aims to identify items not easily found via traditional keyword-based interfaces. This experimental catalog is



not yet offered as a product but demonstrates AI's potential to transform library searches.

**OCLC** showed a beta version of an AI-generated book recommendation feature in WorldCat. The feature uses **Third Iron's** LibKey Discovery service to connect users to scholarly articles. Third Iron also provides BrowZine, a user-friendly interface for browsing and reading e-journals and magazines.

**LaptopsAnytime**, a company that offers laptop checkout kiosks in many different configurations, demonstrated its computer kiosk BRAINY. This AI-themed prototype allowed conference-goers to enter their own ChatGPT and DALL·E 2 prompts.

## Teaching and learning opportunities

Yet another set of vendors highlighted services for learning and continuing education that libraries can offer to patrons and staffers.

**Brainfuse** presented a wide selection of online tutoring and homework help options designed for libraries, schools,

and higher education institutions. Likewise, **Mango** was on hand to demonstrate its language-learning platform. Libraries and educational organizations can license Mango's more than 70 language courses for their patrons and students.

**Library Juice Academy's** online courses provide professional development for all types of library workers. Visitors to the **Girls Who Code** booth learned about the organization's mission to help close the gender gap in the tech industry and how libraries can partner with them to establish clubs in their communities.

## Making metrics count

In this age of data-driven decision making, products that enable libraries to measure and analyze performance are of keen interest.

**LibraryIQ** has developed a platform that collects data and provides reports and visualizations across a wide range of library operations metrics. Similarly, **Counting Opinions** specializes in helping libraries collect and analyze operational

# Interest in artificial intelligence (AI) has skyrocketed over the last year, sparked by ChatGPT and other generative AI services.

statistics through its LibPAS and LibStat portals. **SimplyAnalytics** demonstrated its web-based platform for data visualization, mapping, and analytics that is used by libraries, educational institutions, and businesses.

**SenSource** has developed specialized sensor technology that counts people in buildings, transmits this data to relevant systems, and creates visualizations of crowd activity. The product has been applied in many industries beyond libraries. **TRAF-SYS** highlighted its people-counting sensor service and SafeEntry occupant monitoring software. Both companies rely on overhead sensors rather than video monitoring, which avoids possible privacy concerns.

This year's exhibit hall was busy and productive, with abundant opportunities to interact with the vendor community. The scale of the exhibition precludes mentioning every company and product—perhaps a good sign for Annual's comeback. While managing physical materials and digital content remains front and center for libraries, interest in open source, patron-facing, and AI products is on the rise. **AL**



John Himes (center), director of sales at EnvisionWare, shows off the company's self-service kiosks.



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

2023

# INTERNATIONAL INNOVATORS

ALA  
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projects

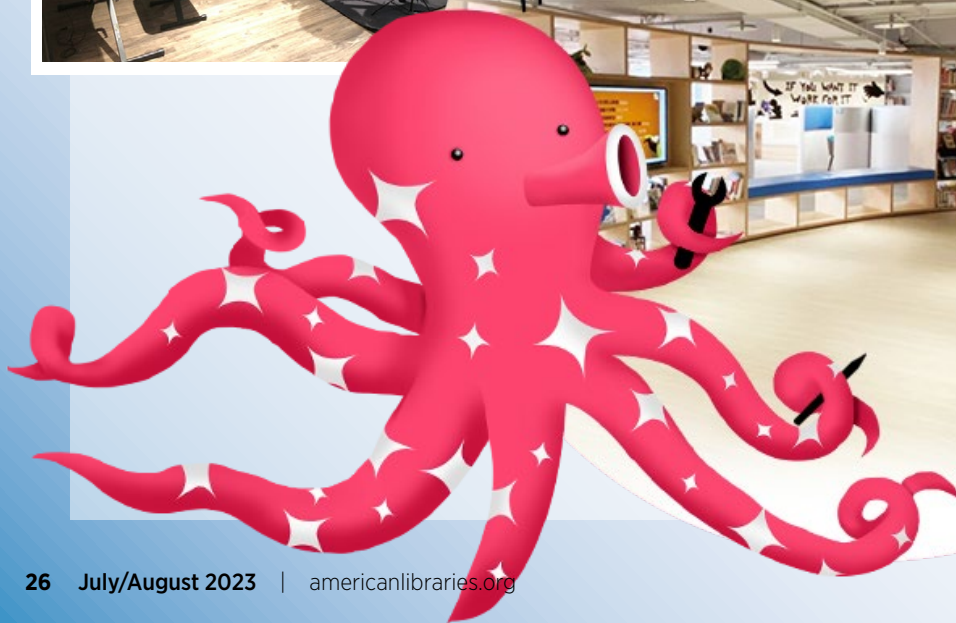
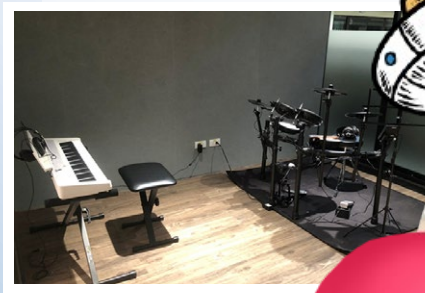
EDITED BY  
Megan Bennett

**T**wo libraries earned this year's American Library Association (ALA) Presidential Citation for Innovative International Library Projects. The winning entries are the National Central Library (NCL) in Taipei City, Taiwan, and Seoul National University Library (SNUL) in South Korea.

The citations, chosen by the International Relations Round Table (IRRT), were the creation of 2007–2008 ALA President Loriene Roy. The awards recognize exemplary services and projects that draw attention to libraries that are creating positive change, demonstrating sustainability, and providing a model for others.

The winners were honored this year during IRRT's International Librarians Reception at ALA's Annual Conference and Exhibition on June 26.

The deadline for submitting a project for the 2024 Presidential Citations is January 31, 2024. Those interested can visit [bit.ly/IntlAwards](https://bit.ly/IntlAwards). **AL**





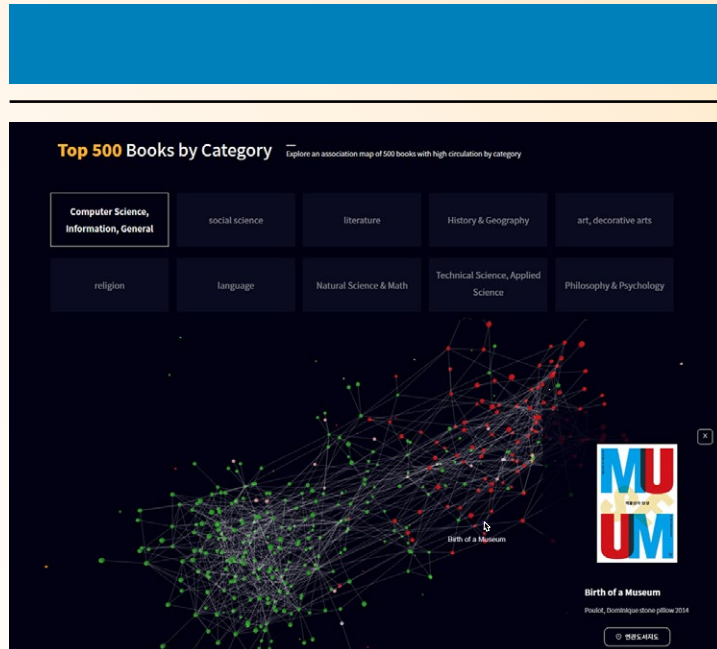
# OPEN LAB MULTIMEDIA CENTER

National Central Library  
Taipei City, Taiwan

In November 2022, NCL debuted its Open Lab Multimedia Center, transforming an old office into an interactive makerspace designed to foster exploration, learning, creation, and communication. Open Lab provides not only books but also emerging technologies and space for creative pursuits. This includes rooms to practice and compose music (an electric piano and drum set are available onsite), film and broadcast studios, and services for hands-on activities like sewing, printmaking, and carpentry.

Open Lab has expanded hours and serves younger patrons compared with NCL's other facilities. Children ages 6 and older can use Open Lab without an adult, whereas patrons must be 16 years old to use other NCL spaces unsupervised. The site also offers workshops and courses for those looking to hone their skills. Recent classes have covered subjects including 3D printing and leather engraving. ●

National Central Library's Open Lab Multimedia Center includes a DIY studio, for activities like sewing, and music rooms.



A Knowledge Map of popular books in Seoul National University Library's collection, created by the LikeSNU information services platform.

## LIKESNU

Seoul National University Library  
South Korea

An ongoing project since 2022, the LikeSNU information services platform developed by SNUL uses big data analysis to create optimized functions for individuals and fields of study across the university. LikeSNU collects and connects university data—such as the 2.5 million library checkouts from 60,000 people over the past decade, bibliographic information of SNUL's collections, and university-produced materials like dissertations, course enrollment histories, and syllabi—to examine and determine meaningful correlations. The goal is to create better learning and research opportunities for professors, students, scholars, and locals who use the library.

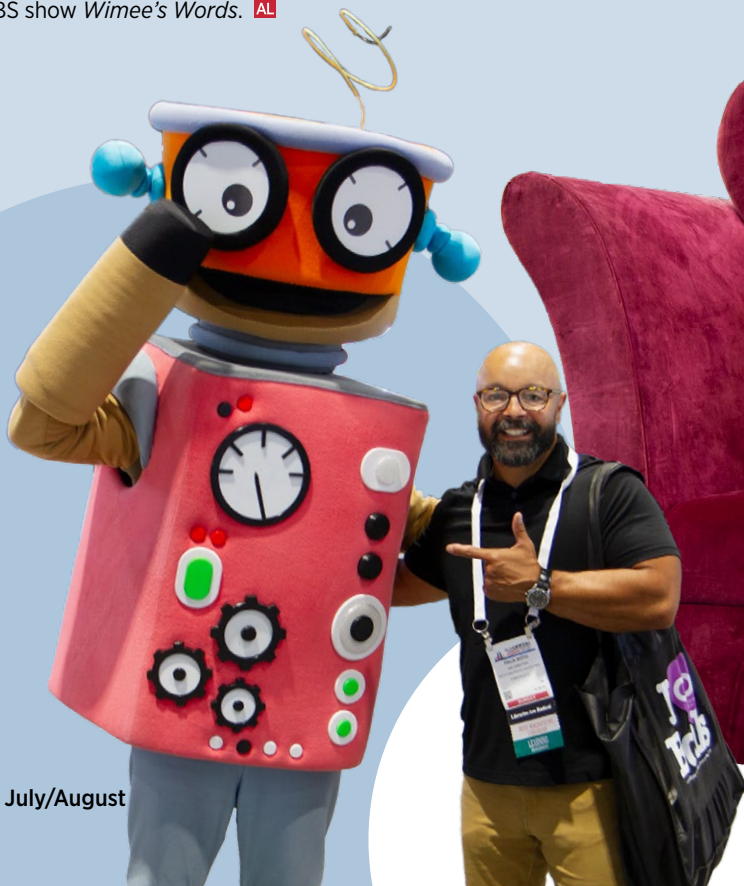
LikeSNU's main service features include a Knowledge Map, which allows members to see trends related to library usage within their academic disciplines; a Knowledge Telescope, which generates personalized book recommendations using algorithms; and a Knowledge Compass, which provides a personalized dashboard of members' own library usage statistics to help them plan future research. Since launching the project, SNUL has reported a significant increase in books borrowed and book borrowers. ●



## Electric Exhibits

The atmosphere was charged at the American Library Association's (ALA) 2023 Annual Conference and Exhibition in Chicago. At the center of it all, as usual, was its popular Library Marketplace. Thousands of attendees marveled at the rows of vendor booths that hosted signings and mascot meet-and-greets, promoted new book releases, and demonstrated innovative library products. At the specialty stages, library workers gathered for author and illustrator talks, presentations, and enlightening panel discussions. Here are some high-voltage moments from the exhibition floor.

Clockwise from top: **Nikole Brown**, assistant manager of reference at St. Louis (Mo.) County Library, with Chicago-based drag performer **Ginger Forest**, who did a "Read the Rainbow" storytime at the Lyrasis booth; **Desiree Thomas**, collection development librarian at South Carolina State Library in Columbia, with The Pigeon from Mo Willems's book series, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary; **Ayn Reyes Frazee**, teacher-librarian at Portland (Ore.) Public Schools, reading *Bridge to Terabithia* at the Banned Books Read-Out sponsored by ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom and Unite Against Book Bans campaign; and **Felix Soto**, library media center director at John R. Tibbott Elementary School in Bolingbrook, Illinois, with Wimee the Robot from the PBS show *Wimee's Words*. **AL**







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