

# american libraries

March/April 2024

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

**PLUS:** Hanif  
Abdurraqib,  
Swordcraft  
Programs,  
Cannabis  
Entrepreneurs

## The World of AI

Librarians  
reflect on  
uses, ethics,  
and implications

p. 20



# national poetry month

april 2024, marking the  
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#NationalPoetryMonth*

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## We, Robot?



Sanhita SinhaRoy

**D**ear library humans” is how I expected a chatbot to begin when I asked it to write my editorial this issue. (Alarming, my guess wasn’t far off.) Which leads us to this issue’s cover story (“Reading Between the Bots,” p. 20) on the topic of artificial intelligence (AI).

Our team takes a close look at the role AI is playing in the information landscape—delving into issues of privacy, bias, disinformation, and copyright. Thankfully, the news is not all ominous. In “The World of AI” (p. 22), Emily Udell talks with five technology experts, educators, and librarians who are pioneering the use of generative AI at their institutions. We also offer a primer on common forms of AI (p. 28). And then *American Libraries* staffers profile a few academic, public, and school libraries using the technology in innovative ways (“Realizing Potential,” p. 30). For a bit of fun, illustrator Drew Bardana added some common AI art fails to the cover. See how many you can spot.

From transformative technology, we take a leap back in time to the real-life era of sword fighting. In “Talking Points” (p. 14), Rosie Newmark explores the rise of swordcraft programming and the ways some libraries are using growing interest in this sport as a tool to engage young people in literacy and education.

This time of year is special for another sport—college basketball. We pay homage to the madness of March with a conversation between *Booklist* adult books editor Donna Seaman (herself a big hoops fan) and author Hanif Abdurraqib. His new book, *There’s Always This Year: On Basketball and Ascension*, weaves together his love of the sport with reflections on life (Newmaker, p. 18).

And finally, dear library humans, we end with robots—namely with the robotics archive at Carnegie Mellon University Libraries in Pittsburgh. *American Libraries* talks to Kathleen Donahoe, robot archive processing archivist, about the university’s Robotics Project, which launched in 2019 (“Completing the Circuit,” p. 40). It’s a glimpse at how some library workers are embracing the future.

Or so AI tells me.

Sanhita

Our team takes a close look at the role AI is playing in the information landscape—delving into issues of privacy, bias, disinformation, and copyright.

# american libraries

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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# Food for Thought

A robust Association requires a healthy course of democracy



Emily Drabinski

Democracy means cultivating institutions that enable all of us to have the capacity and opportunity to shape our collective future well beyond the ballot.

As I move into the final quarter of my term as president of the American Library Association, I'm taking stock of what I've learned.

At an academic library conference in Edison, New Jersey, I discovered that a Taylor ham and a pork roll are somehow both the same and different. In Morgantown, West Virginia, I learned that a pepperoni roll is indeed a delicacy, and I was grateful to be stuffed full of them at an event. And at the Sharjah International Book Fair in the United Arab Emirates, I learned at the hotel buffet that I should always get the lime pickle at breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Along the way I've also learned more about the profession. School libraries are sanctuaries for our most vulnerable students. Rural public libraries are singularly nimble American institutions. Special collections librarians collect, preserve, and make accessible materials of enduring historical value, creating conditions for deep and diverse approaches to research. That's just the start of a very long list.

And I've learned a whole lot more than I ever thought I'd want to know about Robert's Rules of Order. Alongside the state chapter visits, agenda setting, and strategic thinking that make up this gig, the primary responsibility of ALA president is to serve as the presiding officer of the Executive Board. Our formal charge is to "act for Council in the administration of established policies and programs" and to make "recommendations with respect to policy and operation." In practice, that means we make a lot of decisions. Robert's Rules are one of the tools we use to do that. As presiding officer, it's my job to facilitate that process.

When I'm teaching a classroom of students about something that may seem boring, I always try to lead with the *why*. My APA vs. MLA spiel on citation styles always includes a meditation

on time in the humanities. I'll admit that Robert's Rules initially seem completely dull—they were the one thing I dreaded about this position.

At my first training session with ALA Parliamentarian Adrian Stratton, I learned why we use these sometimes-arcane rules at meetings of the Executive Board and Council: They're one way to get everyone's best ideas in front of us so we can make the best possible decision. They ensure that our agendas reflect what's most urgent, that we use our time to talk to one another, and that everyone gets an opportunity to speak. As presiding officer, facilitating our collective decision making is my most important job.

I am proud to lead a democratic organization, one where many diverse voices can take the mike and the gavel. As this issue hits the presses, members will be asked to cast votes for our next set of ALA leaders—not just the consequential position of president but also a wide array of other offices, including representatives to Council, the governing body of the Association, and leadership positions across the divisions and round tables that give ALA its rich texture.

Of course, voting is only one expression of democracy. Democracy also means cultivating institutions that enable all of us to have the capacity and opportunity to shape our collective future well beyond the ballot. Voting to determine whether it's Taylor ham or pork roll (it's pork roll) doesn't matter much if we don't also have the rest of what we need for breakfast. As president, it's also my job to ensure that our organizational infrastructure is healthy and that we have sufficient resources to meet our mission.

Figuring out how to manifest that mission in the here and now? That's the work of all of us. **AL**

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**EMILY DRABINSKI** is associate professor at Queens (N.Y.) College Graduate School of Library and Information Studies.

✕ Spirit-free social spaces are increasingly rare yet increasingly needed. Whether folks are sober, sober-curious, or simply do not thrive in bar/club spaces, people want more options when it comes to places for social contact, learning, and community.

@FORKEDPGH, in response to “Spirit-Free Spaces” (Jan./Feb., p. 14)

f That’s amazing!

AMY JO DILLARD, in response to “A New Start” (Nov./Dec., p. 14)

## Expanding Prison Access

I was delighted to see that the cover story of the November/December issue of *American Libraries* was on library services for people who are incarcerated (“Lighting the Way,” p. 18).

Reading the sidebar about the revisions to ALA’s *Library Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions*, I noticed a lack of information about resources for people who are incarcerated and have different access needs.

In one of the article’s quotes, reform advocate Randall Horton says he hopes the new *Standards* can help people rethink the meaning of accessibility, and he calls the revised standards “a great steppingstone to get up to speed to what’s going on in today’s society.” Yet there is no mention of providing ease of access to persons with disabilities.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 guarantees people—including those who are incarcerated—the right of access to programs and services that receive federal funding, such as public libraries.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that as of December 31, 2022, the country’s prison population was over 1.2 million. According to data from the Health Policy Institute at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., it is estimated that 8% of the US population experiences impaired vision, including blindness. This suggests that



nearly 100,000 individuals in prison may need assistance accessing the right materials.

The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) has been a vital service for many American residents, providing materials electronically and through the mail at no charge. Over the years, NLS’s scope of service has expanded, encompassing Americans of all ages with disabilities such as blindness, low vision, dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, some forms of autism, and temporary or permanent physical differences preventing the use of print materials. Regional libraries in every state serve patrons everywhere—even in prison.

Speaking as a librarian and director of South Carolina Talking Book Services, a regional network library, we stand ready to serve; our challenge is getting the word out. It would have been nice to see at least a sidebar about access to services

for people with different abilities. Even better, let’s make sure that access for incarcerated, disabled Americans is not a sidebar or an afterthought but is woven into the warp and weft of our country’s free access to information.

Jennifer Falvey  
Columbia, South Carolina

## Self-Care Suggestions

Bobbi L. Newman’s column (“Care and Consideration,” Sept./Oct. 2023, p. 41) is an excellent example of what actual good self-care looks like in a work environment. Based on her book *Fostering Wellness in the Workplace: A Handbook for Libraries*, Newman’s column draws out how library administrators need to be more aware of library employee wellness and that wellness isn’t just about taking bubble baths and doing yoga. She homes in on the big issues for library employee wellness with her discussion of salary, vacation and sick time,

**WRITE US:** The editors welcome comments about recent content, online stories, and matters of professional interest. Submissions should be limited to 300 words and are subject to editing for clarity, style, and length. Send to [americanlibraries@ala.org](mailto:americanlibraries@ala.org) or *American Libraries*, From Our Readers, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601.

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schedules, emotional and invisible labor, and physical space.

As the column is, by necessity, limited in length, Newman does not have the space to discuss the barriers to the issues that she brings up. That would be an excellent follow-up. Likewise, while the column focuses on what library administrations should do to improve library worker wellness, additional columns that explain how staffers can advocate for themselves—as well as what they can do on their own to improve their workplace wellness—would be most welcome.

In short, “Care and Consideration” is an excellent starting point to think about how we can shift our culture of overwork and (far too often) toxic leadership, take better care of ourselves, and actually get back to enjoying the work that we do without tangoing constantly between being overwhelmed and burned out.

JJ Pionke  
Ames, Iowa

## We Can't Be Everything

A recent tweet from a parent imploring her city to add indoor playgrounds to public libraries so that her child has a place to burn off excess energy in the winter has been making its way across library social media. Naturally, library employees everywhere, including myself, explained to this person why this was an impractical and misguided idea (lack of space, lack of staff and staff time, safety issues, etc.), but the response boiled down to her seeing her request as a community need and libraries being positioned to fill that need.

This conversation is a near-perfect encapsulation of what our society has demanded of libraries—that libraries are here to fill every communal need, even if those needs could be better addressed by another social service with better funding. We provide in-house social workers, free meals to families in need, classes on everything from conversational English to résumé writing to Photoshop, creative spaces for people to make physical and digital art, and staff training to administer Narcan in life-threatening situations. Now we're supposed to add playground monitoring to the mix as well?

Libraries can't be everything to everybody, no matter how hard we try. As @ohjuliatweets, another user on X, formerly known as Twitter, said, “Everything public and free is not the library's job.” Say it louder for the people in back! And maybe as a society, we should start pushing for better funding of our local parks and recreation departments.

Katie Horner  
Lake Bluff, Illinois

## CORRECTIONS

In our Update section (Jan./Feb., p. 8), we misidentified one of Ray Pun's college degrees. Pun holds an EdD, not a PhD, from California State University, Fresno.

In “Spirit-Free Spaces” (Jan./Feb., p. 14), we erroneously referred to Sewickley Public Library as Sewickley Library.

In “Referenda Roundup” (Jan./Feb., p. 28), we misspelled the name of Neighbors United for Progress Chair Elise Severe.

## What You're Reading

1

### 2024 Youth Media Award Winners

Newbery and Caldecott medal winners, and other top books, video, and audiobooks for children and young adults. [bit.ly/AL-YMA24](https://bit.ly/AL-YMA24)

2

### Spirit-Free Spaces

Libraries shake things up with mocktail programs.

[bit.ly/AL-mocktails](https://bit.ly/AL-mocktails)

3

### 2023 Year in Review

The most important news that affected libraries and library workers. [bit.ly/AL-23YIR](https://bit.ly/AL-23YIR)

## In Case You Missed It



**LibLearnX Recap** Nearly 30 posts covering educational sessions, author talks, events, and ALA business. [bit.ly/AL-LibLearnX24](https://bit.ly/AL-LibLearnX24)

**Author Interviews** Read *AL* interviews with journalist Antonia Hylton, comedian Jesús Trejo, and two-time Newbery Medal winner Kate DiCamillo. [bit.ly/AL-Newsmakers](https://bit.ly/AL-Newsmakers)

**Hot Topic** Libraries lend environmentally friendly induction cooktops to patrons. [bit.ly/AL-Induction](https://bit.ly/AL-Induction)

**Field Guides** Our new online column, in partnership with the Public Policy and Advocacy Office. The first installment covers the policy implications of artificial intelligence. [bit.ly/AL-FieldGuides](https://bit.ly/AL-FieldGuides)

## Coming Soon

The return of **April Foolswatch**, *American Libraries'* review of April Fools' Day pranks at libraries.

Go green! The March episode of **Call Number with American Libraries** explores sustainability.

AMERICANLIBRARIES.ORG



## New ALA Report on Complex Digital Lending Landscape

On December 6, the American Library Association (ALA) released a report that defines concepts related to digital lending and licensing in libraries and explains how circulation of digital materials works. The aim of the free resource is to demystify the complexities of the digital lending ecosystem.

The report, *Digital Public Library Ecosystem 2023*, addresses the role of publishers in setting licensing terms for public libraries, the impact that current digital licensing terms have on authors, and how Amazon's dominance in the audiobooks market influences library access. It also builds on ALA's November 2023 report, *Gen Z and Millennials: How They Use Public Libraries and Identify through Media Use*, which notes

that younger generations borrow extensively from digital collections but are less aware that digital lending apps, like Libby and Kanopy, are available through their local libraries.

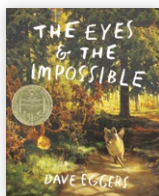
"It will take the entire digital public library ecosystem—libraries, publishers, and consumers alike—to solve the challenges and complexities we're facing," said ALA President Emily Drabinski in a December 6 statement. "This report is an important, solution-oriented step toward bringing together all stakeholders with a shared understanding of the current digital content landscape, its limitations, and its boundless opportunities."

For more information, and to read the full report, visit [bit.ly/DigitalPL-Report](https://bit.ly/DigitalPL-Report). ●

### 2024 Youth Media Award Winners Announced

On January 22, ALA announced the top books, digital media, video, and audiobooks for children and young adults—including the Caldecott, Coretta Scott King, Newbery, and Printz awards—during the Youth Media Awards ceremony at the 2024 LibLearnX conference in Baltimore.

*The Eyes and the Impossible*, written by Dave Eggers and illustrated by Shawn Harris, is this year's John Newbery Medal winner for the most outstanding contribution to children's literature. It is published simultaneously by Knopf Books for Young Readers and McSweeney's. *Big*, illustrated and written by Vashti Harrison, is the Randolph Caldecott Medal winner for the most distinguished American picture book for children. It is



published by Little, Brown and Company, a division of Hachette Book Group.

For more information, including a list of other award winners, visit [bit.ly/ALA-YMAs24](https://bit.ly/ALA-YMAs24).

### Buolamwini to Open 2024 PLA Conference

Author Joy Buolamwini will be the opening speaker at the Public Library Association (PLA) 2024 Conference, to be held April 3–5 in Columbus, Ohio.

Buolamwini is founder of the advocacy nonprofit Algorithmic Justice League, a researcher at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, a model, and an artist. She is author of *Unmasking AI: My Mission to Protect What Is Human in a World of Machines*, published in October 2023, and advises world leaders on artificial intelligence (AI).

PLA 2024 will feature author and publisher events, networking opportunities, career services, an exhibit hall, and more



Joy Buolamwini

than 100 education sessions. For more information, visit [bit.ly/PLA-JB24](https://bit.ly/PLA-JB24).

### Conference Stipend Available from SustainRT

Applications for the Sustainability Round Table's (SustainRT) New Voices in Sustainability Conference Stipend are now open. The stipend covers registration fees and provides \$250 to attend ALA's 2024 Annual Conference and Exhibition, to be held June 27–July 2 in San Diego.

To be eligible, applicants must be members of SustainRT. New and diverse voices in library sustainability and first-time conference attendees are encouraged to apply.

The deadline to submit the application is March 1. For more information, including eligibility requirements, visit [bit.ly/SusRTStipend-24](https://bit.ly/SusRTStipend-24).

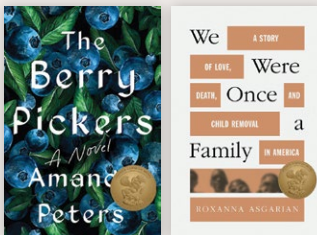
### Register for the RUSA Virtual Forum

Registration is now open for the Reference and User Services

# 2024 Carnegie Medal Winners Announced

On January 20, ALA announced that it had selected *The Berry Pickers* by Amanda Peters (Catapult) as the winner of the 2024 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction and *We Were Once a Family: A Story of Love, Death, and Child Removal in America* by Roxanna Asgarian (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux) as the winner of the 2024 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction. The winners were revealed during ALA's 2024 LibLearnX conference in Baltimore at the Reference and User Services Association's (RUSA) Book and Media Awards event.

Carnegie Medal winners will receive \$5,000 each and be presented their medals at a celebration at San Diego Public Library during ALA's Annual Conference, to be held June 27–July 2. The medals are cosponsored by RUSA, *Booklist*, and *NoveList*. For more information, visit [bit.ly/ALA-Carn0124](https://bit.ly/ALA-Carn0124). ●



Association (RUSA) Virtual Forum, to be held March 5 and March 7.

This year's forum theme is "Reference Revolution: AI + More." Programming will cover how library workers can use AI when tackling reference questions and teaching patrons how to find reliable information. This annual forum is geared for all types of library workers in reference, user services, adult readers' advisory, and collection development.

The forum is open to all, and RUSA members will receive a discount on registration. For more information, visit [bit.ly/RUSAVF-24](https://bit.ly/RUSAVF-24).

## Medina Named Honorary Chair of National Library Week

Award-winning author and 2023–2024 National Ambassador for Young People's Literature Meg Medina has been selected as the honorary chair of this year's National Library Week (NLW). The celebration will take place April 7–13.

NLW promotes the indispensable role of libraries and library workers in schools and communities with a series of observances. The theme for the 66th annual NLW is "Ready, Set, Library!"

Medina is a Cuban American author who received the Newbery Medal in 2019 for her middle-grade novel *Merci Suárez Changes Gears*. Medina also received a Pura Belpré Author Honor for her 2015 picture book, *Mango, Abuela, and Me*, and a Pura Belpré Author Award and Cybils Award for her 2013 young adult novel, *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*.

For more information, visit [bit.ly/ALA-MMNLW24](https://bit.ly/ALA-MMNLW24).



Meg Medina

## New Digital Inclusion Working Group for Library Workers

On December 15, ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office (PPAO) and the National

## CALENDAR

MAR. 16

**Freedom of Information Day**  
[bit.ly/FOI-Day](https://bit.ly/FOI-Day)

APR.

**School Library Month**  
[ala.org/aasl/advocacy/slm](https://ala.org/aasl/advocacy/slm)

APR. 3–5

**PLA 2024 Conference**  
Columbus, Ohio  
[placonference.org](https://placonference.org)

APR. 7–13

**National Library Week**  
[bit.ly/ALA-NLW](https://bit.ly/ALA-NLW)

APR. 9

**National Library Workers Day**  
[ala-apa.org/nlwd](https://ala-apa.org/nlwd)

APR. 10

**National Library Outreach Day**  
[bit.ly/ALA-NLOD](https://bit.ly/ALA-NLOD)

APR. 28–MAY 4

**Preservation Week**  
[preservationweek.org](https://preservationweek.org)

APR. 30

**Día: Children's Day/Book Day**  
[dia.ala.org](https://dia.ala.org)

JUNE

**Rainbow Book Month**  
[bit.ly/RBMonth](https://bit.ly/RBMonth)

JUNE 25–28

**Rare Books and Manuscripts Section 2024 Conference**  
Costa Mesa, California  
[bit.ly/RBMS2024](https://bit.ly/RBMS2024)

JUNE 27–JULY 2

**2024 Annual Conference**  
San Diego  
[alaannual.org](https://alaannual.org)

SEPT.

**Library Card Sign-Up Month**  
[bit.ly/LibCardSU](https://bit.ly/LibCardSU)

SEPT. 22–28

**Banned Books Week**  
[bannedbooksweek.org](https://bannedbooksweek.org)

OCT.

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

OCT. 20–26

**National Friends of Libraries Week**  
[bit.ly/ALA-NFLW](https://bit.ly/ALA-NFLW)

Digital Inclusion Alliance announced the launch of a new Digital Inclusion Working Group for library workers. The group plans to discuss digital equity work occurring in all library communities. Its first meeting was held in January.

PPAO will facilitate the working group meetings, lead discussions, and cover regular digital equity and inclusion policy updates. Library workers are not required to be ALA members to participate but

must create an account on ALA Connect.

For more information, including how to join the group, visit [bit.ly/ALA-DIWG24](https://bit.ly/ALA-DIWG24).

## Choice's 2023 Outstanding Academic Titles Announced

On December 1, *Choice*, a publication of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), released its list of Outstanding Academic Titles (OAT) for 2023. The list reflects the best scholarly

titles reviewed by *Choice* during the previous calendar year, as chosen by the editors. The 2023 installment features 499 books from 109 publishers.

*Choice* will present a weekly series of sneak peeks into the 2023 OAT list, providing an overview of the year's best academic nonfiction. The full OAT list is available exclusively to *Choice* magazine and *Choice Reviews* subscribers, but sneak peeks will be available to non-subscribers via email newsletter and at [choice360.org](https://choice360.org).

For more information, visit [bit.ly/Choice-OAT24](https://bit.ly/Choice-OAT24).

## Last Chance for 2024 Library Design Showcase Submissions

**A**merican Libraries is now accepting submissions for the 2024 Library Design Showcase, our annual feature celebrating new and newly renovated libraries of all types. The showcase will appear in the September/October 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 design with sustainability, accessibility, and smaller budgets 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 April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024.

To have your library considered, send a completed submission form ([bit.ly/DesignShowcaseForm24](https://bit.ly/DesignShowcaseForm24)) and at least five high-resolution digital images with photographer credits to [americanlibraries@ala.org](mailto:americanlibraries@ala.org) via Dropbox or another file-sharing service. **The submission deadline is May 1, 2024.** Unfortunately, not all submissions can be featured.

View last year's showcase at [bit.ly/Design-Showcase-23](https://bit.ly/Design-Showcase-23). For more information, email [americanlibraries@ala.org](mailto:americanlibraries@ala.org). ●



Middle Country Public Library in Centereach, New York

## Williams-Garcia Chosen as 2024 Children's Literature Lecturer

On January 4, the Association for Library Service to Children announced that the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh will host the 2024 Children's Literature Lecture, this year featuring author Rita Williams-Garcia. The lecture will be held on April 17.



Rita Williams-Garcia

Garcia is a *New York Times*–bestselling author of books for young adults and middle-grade readers. She has won two Coretta Scott King Book Awards, for *Gone Crazy in Alabama* in 2016 and *One Crazy Summer* in 2011. Her 2009 novel, *Jumped*, was a finalist for the National Book Award for Young People's Literature.

For more information, visit [bit.ly/ALSC-CLec24](https://bit.ly/ALSC-CLec24).

## New ALA Standards for Accreditation Released

On December 1, ALA's Committee on Accreditation announced that ALA Council had approved its 2023 Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies.

The committee had been revising the 2015 standards for three years, seeking feedback from stakeholders including library workers, educators, students,



and the public through surveys, presentations, and individual responses. The revised standards seek to eliminate redundancies, improve clarity, and embed concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

For more information, visit [bit.ly/COAStandards23](https://bit.ly/COAStandards23).

## 2024 Class of Emerging Leaders Announced

ALA announced on November 27 the names of the 50 library workers selected for the 2024 class of Emerging Leaders. The program's goal is to help library and information workers participate in project planning work groups, network with peers, learn ALA's structure, and serve the profession in leadership roles early in their careers.

The program kicked off at the 2024 LibLearnX conference in Baltimore. It will culminate at ALA's Annual

Conference in San Diego, where Emerging Leaders will highlight the results of their work in a poster session.

This year, 68% of participants received sponsorships from ALA divisions, round tables, state chapters, and other ALA affiliates. Each sponsor supports an Emerging Leader by covering some of the costs of attending LibLearnX and Annual.

For more information, visit [bit.ly/ALA-EmLe24](https://bit.ly/ALA-EmLe24).

## RUSA Seeking Article Submissions for *RUSQ*

RUSA's peer-reviewed journal, now titled *RUSQ: A Journal of Reference and User Experience*, is accepting article submissions.

The journal publishes articles of interest to librarians in areas including, but not limited to, general and subject-specific reference, user experience, readers' advisory, and reference technology.

For more information, including submission guidelines, visit [bit.ly/RUSQSubm24](https://bit.ly/RUSQSubm24).

## Donate to 2025 ACRL Conference Scholarship Fund

ACRL is now accepting donations to its Conference Scholarship Fund. The fund helps cover registration fees and travel stipends for librarians, library workers, and library school students and recent graduates from historically underrepresented or marginalized groups to attend the ACRL Conference, which will be held April 2–5, 2025, in Minneapolis. You do not have to be an ALA or ACRL member to receive funding.

ACRL Conference offers a variety of professional development events, from multiday programs to bite-sized online learning opportunities.

For more information, visit [bit.ly/ACRL-25Fund](https://bit.ly/ACRL-25Fund). 

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Janelle Van Hook,  
'20 MLIS



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this together.  
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# Sam Helmick

Community and access services coordinator at  
Iowa City Public Library | [samforlibraries.com](https://samforlibraries.com)



CANDIDATE FOR ALA PRESIDENT

What an honor it is to address the membership of the oldest, largest, and most influential library association in the world. It is more humbling still to serve in community with you as an ALA member leader and to have the privilege of seeking your support in shaping a future where every voice is heard, every story is celebrated, and every library is a beacon of enlightenment.

Together we will write the next chapter of ALA's legacy. With tremendous passion for the work and impact of libraries, I stand for election as ALA president and seek to leverage this great opportunity to promote, uplift, encourage, and endorse you, your steady efforts, and the values we represent as a profession.

As an ALA Executive Board member, ALA chapter councilor, Iowa Library Association past president, and former chair of the Iowa Governor's Commission of Libraries, I recognize that leadership—much like librarianship—is about listening, learning, and linking people with opportunities.

Through inclusion, equity, diversity, and resolve, we must continue to navigate historic transitions as an Association. It is my hope to provide my leadership abilities, which insert

joyful offense to library-adverse legislation; effective advocacy toward sustaining and resourcing libraries at federal, state, and local levels; and an all-consuming need to share our transformative stories.

I am fully committed to our professional values and to ALA's mission to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession "in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all." I believe my campaign values complement the good work we are called to do:

**Free for all, all the time.** Libraries function as economic, educational, and political cornerstones of society, making them essential to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We must

advocate for robust resourcing to ensure libraries continue to support our communities and help them thrive. The attempted privatization of access and opportunity must be countered by our profession and its stakeholders.

**We do this good work together.** Our diverse perspectives and talents shape the impact of library services. The work of the Association is often complex, even messy. However, through policies, procedures, and processes, all are welcome to conduct the meaningful—and difficult—work of libraries. Identifying shared values and the impact of free people reading freely are viable bridges of partnership.

**Our stories are worth sharing.** The joy, impact, connection, and development made possible by libraries should not be lost amid historic social, political, and economic strife. We must emphatically share good library news.

Serving ALA with you has already been the honor of a lifetime. Your stories of community building, reflective progress, and compassionate, mindful service inspire my own.

I respectfully seek your vote and partnership, and I thank you for your consideration. Our stories are worth sharing, and together we will write the next chapter of the American Library Association's legacy. **AL**

We must shape  
a future where  
every voice is  
heard, every story  
is celebrated,  
and every library  
is a beacon.

**ALA ELECTION:** March 11–April 3. More information at [bit.ly/ALA-election24](https://bit.ly/ALA-election24)

# Raymond Pun

Academic and research librarian at Alder Graduate School of Education in Redwood City, California | [raypun.info](http://raypun.info)



CANDIDATE FOR ALA PRESIDENT

For almost 150 years, ALA has been recognized as the world's first and largest library association. However, ALA has not been without its flaws, including its history of excluding underrepresented groups. The Association now reckons with its past to build a better future.

Today, libraries and library workers are enduring simultaneous challenges of book bans, artificial intelligence, climate crises, surveillance, digital content price gouging, job burnout, and workplace safety. ALA must realign itself and its core values to empower our work and better support our communities during these turbulent times.

As a first-generation college graduate and an emergent bilingual child of immigrant parents, I've navigated complex spaces and established spaces for others. My inclusive leadership centers on compassion and collaboration. Guided by the Universal Design for Learning framework, I always seek to reduce barriers to learning and access.

For the past 17 years, I have worked in public and academic libraries in America and China, from serving as a student worker to a library assistant to a librarian. Currently I am proud to serve teachers, teacher educators, and graduate students. I have held leadership positions within and across

ALA, the Association of College and Research Libraries, the National Associations of Librarians of Color, and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

As president of the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association and the Chinese American Librarians Association, I forged local and global coalitions, streamlined governance processes through transparency, and increased fiscal health and membership through fundraising and engagement, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. I believe that cultivating meaningful connections among our volunteers is purposeful work. I would continue to bring this intentionality to ALA, collaborating with members and partners to calibrate and communicate its impact, values, and growth areas.

ALA must realign  
itself to empower  
our work and  
better support  
our communities  
during these  
turbulent times.

As ALA president, my priorities would focus on:

- supporting and showcasing library workers as they confront unprecedented challenges and conditions
- building stronger relationships between ALA and its chapters and affiliates
- expanding ALA's engagement in the international library community

We need to highlight the invisible labor that library workers are doing. We can collect and share our communities' stories about how our advocacy work supports workforce development, technology and equitable access, accessibility, literacy, civics, and more.

We must also build stronger connections among ALA, organizational and individual members, state and regional chapters, and affiliates, leading up to the Association's 150th anniversary.

Finally, strengthening ALA's role in bridging global networks is critical. More than 350 languages are spoken in the US, and there are opportunities to collaborate with libraries and library workers supporting immigrants, migrants, refugees, international students, and multilingual speakers.

We can accomplish a lot together. Library work is community-driven and relationship-building work. I encourage you to join me in these efforts! **AL**



\_\_\_\_\_



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“Libraries work when they reflect what’s going on in the community, so of course we started getting people coming to us with information needs about cannabis.”

**JAY LYMAN**, head of Seattle Public Library’s Library to Business program

contacts they may need to run a successful business.

Those support industries are where Kyrié Kirkland sees the most opportunity.

Kirkland is founder and CEO of Nuvé, a Chicago-based educational technology company that works with several sectors, including the cannabis industry. She presented a program on starting a cannabis business at Aurora (Ill.) Public Library in May 2023 attended by roughly 25 entrepreneurs.

While dispensaries or growing operations may be the first things that come to mind when thinking about the cannabis industry, Kirkland observes that those are not the only industry needs. “If an entrepreneur wants to provide a support service like accounting, training, legal, things of that nature, they have a lot more opportunity right now than in the actual plant-touching space,” she says.

At SPL, librarians trained in business research are providing patrons with individual assistance via appointments, Lyman says. Librarians field questions covering all aspects of market research, from consumer demographics and competitors to merchandising and branding. The library also hosts free legal consults for business-related questions with volunteer attorneys.

While the consultations are not limited to the cannabis field, marijuana entrepreneurs regularly attend the sessions, as legality is particularly important and complicated for cannabis businesses to navigate. “The appointments are for learning, not legal representation, and sometimes we have to help people learn and understand that too,” Lyman says. “We make no judgment with where people are in their learning. We help people learn how to do the things they don’t know.”

### Battling bias and stigma

The fraught history of cannabis sales in the US offers some unique challenges for libraries providing services in this area.

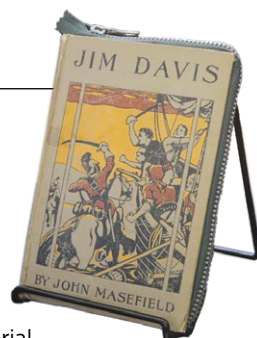
“A lot of times the people coming to us for help have criminal records because in communities of color, there are high prosecution rates,” says Byrnes, noting the significant disparity in incarceration rates for cannabis-related charges between community members who are white and those who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color. (According to marijuana advocacy organization NORML [bit.ly/NORML-arrests], Black Americans are nearly four times as likely to be arrested under

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Recycling

**75%**

Percentage of recycled material required for each item featured in Mattapoisett (Mass.) Free Public Library’s *RE-ART* show, held in September 2023. Among the pieces local artists submitted: a robe constructed with upcycled quilts and a purse made from a vintage book.



**1,000**

Number of volunteers who support the annual book sale hosted by Friends of the Metropolitan Library System in Oklahoma City. Every February, shoppers sift through hundreds of thousands of donated, used titles at the event, one of the largest library book sales in the US.

**2**

Number of New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) branches that serve as glass recycling drop-off sites. In partnership with the nonprofit arm of Glass Half Full, the city’s only glass recycling facility, NOPL’s Alvar and Algiers Regional branches accept drop-offs once a month. The glass is crushed into sand and gravel for construction, landscaping, and other applications.

**320**

Square footage of the converted shipping container that Meridian (Idaho) Library District used to create its Tiny Library. Opened in 2018 next to the town’s YMCA and an elementary school, the Tiny Library is designed to support young learners, from birth to age 5, with rotating collections and interactive programs. ●



Continued on page 15 ▶



Courtney Waters (left), youth services manager at Missouri River Regional Library in Jefferson City, Missouri, learns fencing moves from a Guild of Knightly Arts instructor.

# Talking Points

Swordcraft programming brings history, hands-on excitement to patrons

BY Rosie Newmark

When Courtney Waters saw young patrons taking an interest in fantasy and medieval history, she decided to introduce sword fighting at her library.

“I’m always looking to do programs that are a little bit off the beaten path,” says Waters, youth services manager at Missouri River Regional Library (MRRRL) in Jefferson City, Missouri.

Enter centuries-old combat and training techniques, which have seen a boom in recent years, thanks in part to the emergence of historical European martial arts (HEMA) communities, mainly in the US, Australia, and Europe.

After seeing another library host a swordcraft program, Waters came across the Guild of Knightly Arts, a local HEMA group in Jefferson City that formed in 2019. If there was enough interest for a local sword-fighting community, she figured there should be enough interest in a library program on the topic.

“Crafts are awesome, book clubs are cool, lectures are cool, but I wanted something more hands-on,” she says. “Something active and unique, something that people would not ordinarily have a chance to do on their own.”

In July 2022, 20 adults and eight teens attended the first MRRRL sword-fighting event, a Scottish broadsword class that featured a demonstration by a local expert invited by the Guild.

Other libraries have also taken note of the swordcraft trend.

Kevin Marsh, director of Copperas Cove (Tex.) Public Library (CCPL), has more than four decades of experience in multiple forms of sword fighting—an interest spurred by reading books about King Arthur and chivalry at the public library as a kid.

To incentivize youth to come to the library, Marsh skipped the pizza and snacks, opting instead for swordcraft. He created a summer reading program in 2021 called Hero Camp, designed for two

groups—ages 7–10 and 11–17—where they learned sword-fighting techniques with foam weapons, crafted armor and shields, and learned how to properly use safety gear. Participants were required to submit a waiver from a caregiver.

Marsh says that through his membership in the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), an international organization that studies and reenacts pre-Renaissance history, he was able to form a partnership with the group for CCPL’s event last May. SCA has surviving documents from the 16th century that, through translated text and drawings, list steps for fighting.

“There are a lot of people out there in the community who have knowledge of how to do these things,” he says. “You don’t have to invent it from scratch.”

At this younger level, Marsh says his aim is to teach movement and balance: “Even if they never do sword fighting again, they’re going to be able to use that throughout their life.”

## Fighting a dual duel

At Kent District Library (KDL) in Comstock Park, Michigan, Outreach and Programming Manager Hennie Vaandrager also recognized the excitement of sword fighting for some younger patrons, especially those who may not necessarily come to the library.

“We’re always trying to reach teens—but also boys because we just seem to have a harder time engaging them in some of our programming,” Vaandrager says. “This just seemed like a really great fit.”



Younger patrons did not participate in combat with swords at KDL, but they witnessed demonstrations and looked at historical artifacts, many of which were provided by the nearby Swordsmanship Museum and Academy, which partnered with the library on the program.

Many of those who attended were captivated by the history of the weapons and wanted to learn more, says Greg Lewis, KDL's program-ming specialist. To complement this learning, several branches offered reading materials related to sword-craft and European martial arts, and the library plans to host its third program this summer.

“We see it so much in movies and videogames, but you never get to do that in real life with a real sword.”

**COURTNEY WATERS**, youth services manager at Missouri River Regional Library in Jefferson City, Missouri

At MRRL, Waters says, attendees were captivated by the hands-on portions of the programs, especially having an opportunity to hold and swing a sword.

“We see it so much in movies and videogames, but you never get to do that in real life with a real sword,” she says. “And it does feel pretty cool to hold one, trying to block or strike one of the instructors.”

Waters encourages other libraries to host a similar event. Not only is the program “sneaky educational,” she says, “it’s good exercise as well.” **AL**

**ROSIE NEWMARK** studies journalism at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

◀ Continued from page 13

marijuana possession laws as white Americans.)

As a result, Byrnes notes that librarians should be aware of the potential for unconscious biases related to incarceration.

Lyman also emphasizes the importance of educating white entrepreneurs—and librarians—entering the field about historical and political context. “We go into our work with the understanding that this business that we’re helping might be going into a space where other people who did the same exact thing went to prison for it,” he says, “and that there are members of that community who still have brothers or sisters or parents who are incarcerated.”

RPL partners with organizations Women of Color in Cannabis and NYHempLab to provide access to the New York State Library of Cannabis ([roccitylibrary.org/nysloc](http://roccitylibrary.org/nysloc)). This collection of resources is designed to help entrepreneurs, particularly those who have been historically disenfranchised and may not have access to institutional support, by offering expert information on every aspect of cannabis, from growing to the supply chain to business development.

Such programs are crucial for entrepreneurs because, as Kirkland explains, many people who joined the cannabis industry early on “aren’t reaching back to keep in communication with people who are still trying to destigmatize, who are still trying to understand what this means for their community.” As such, she says, “libraries have been the most accessible places for finding people and community.”

As legal recreational cannabis becomes more common across the country, SPL's Lyman says librarians in states where marijuana is legal



Promotional flier for a 2023 program at the Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County in New York on the health and wellness impacts of cannabis

should share information with those in states where the legalization process is still in progress.

Being aware of history and the law is particularly important, he says, so that when those questions come up, librarians are prepared to help people find an authoritative source to answer their questions.

“With any topic, libraries sharing our experiences helps each other be stronger. That happens internally within one system and then across systems too,” Lyman says. With a complex topic like cannabis, the best way that librarians can serve their patrons is to make themselves aware of the topics that are important to cannabis entrepreneurs and be prepared to help them find the best sources of information. “Even if we can’t answer a question, we should be able to send them to the right person. Libraries sharing, that’s what makes us strong.” **AL**

**LEIGH KUNKEL** is a Chicago-based writer who has been published in *Oprah Daily*, *The New York Times*, *Travel + Leisure*, and more.



Participants at LifeWorks, a residential community for neurodiverse young adults, hold bags from Warren County (Ky.) Public Library (WCPL). WCPL recently opened a satellite branch at LifeWorks.

# Meeting Neurodiverse Needs

Library opens satellite location at residence for adults with autism

To fill in service gaps exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Warren County (Ky.) Public Library (WCPL) opened four satellite libraries. These one-room, full-service satellites, housed by community partners, are meant to support populations that would otherwise struggle to visit a full-size branch because of socioeconomic, transportation, or other barriers.

Last year, WCPL debuted a satellite inside LifeWorks, a local residential community for young adults with autism who are striving toward independence and employment. The location, the state's first public library specifically serving this population, has offered participants new insight into what the library can offer them, opportunities to socialize, and, for some, inspiration for a future career path—all in a less intimidating setting.

BY Ashley Cosby Fowlkes

In February 2023, Warren County (Ky.) Public Library (WCPL) began working with LifeWorks at Western Kentucky University (WKU) in Bowling Green. LifeWorks is a 28-unit residential community that offers two-year stays for neurodiverse young adults and focuses on independent living and job readiness.

By May, WCPL opened a satellite location at LifeWorks—making it the state's first public library branch dedicated to serving neurodiverse patrons. Earl Willis, WCPL's special populations liaison, has been at the helm.

Early results of the satellite have been encouraging, with Willis hosting several programs every

week. The satellite is designed to be a sensory-sensitive environment, enabling individuals with autism, ADHD, or other learning differences—who can become overstimulated in crowded public areas—to concentrate on their studies, read a book, or browse digital library resources. With natural light from two large windows and carpet to reduce noise, the space is conducive for learning. What's more, its location away from living spaces and LifeWorks' main activity area provides a calm place for participants to spend time without distractions.

Having a staff member like Willis involved has been beneficial. Because of his decades of library experience, he is incredibly familiar with the neurodiverse population and can build strong bonds with LifeWorks participants by being there daily. He provides detailed training sessions on how to access and utilize the library's services, like Hoopla and Libby, which are enhanced even further by the enrichment activities and social groups he's created. There are book, poetry, and music clubs where participants can share and learn from others.

Willis notes that he has already seen a change in the way participants view the library, primarily because the satellite is less intimidating than a typical library branch. "It's a more personal experience," he says. "While the public library may not have been a familiar environment before, they now know about the many resources available to them."

Library classes and workshops are offered at a variety of times to accommodate LifeWorks participants' unique schedules. Additionally, those interested in careers in library services can shadow Willis to learn what it might take for them to also become professional librarians. Several have expressed interest in library work after volunteering with him.

The satellite is designed to be a sensory-sensitive environment, enabling individuals with autism, ADHD, or other learning differences to concentrate.

Housing a satellite library has helped advance LifeWorks' mission and demonstrated the power of community partnership to bring resources where they're most accessible to those in need. WCPL is excited about what the future holds for the branch. We hope to further develop our relationship with WKU, including the school's Kelly Autism Program, which offers educational and social programs to students from kindergarten through college. We want to eventually make the LifeWorks satellite library available to these students and offer them monthly programming. Furthermore, we hope the partnership between WCPL and LifeWorks serves as a model for other communities to think creatively about ways to engage with the neurodiverse population and meet them where they are. <sup>AL</sup>

**ASHLEY COSBY FOWLKES** is digital content manager at Warren County (Ky.) Public Library.

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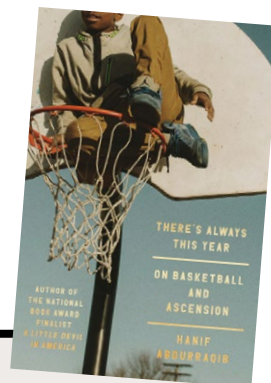


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# Hanif Abdurraqib

Award-winning author pays homage to hometown in new book



a beautiful way. The library played a mighty role, not just from an emotional standpoint as a pilgrimage to this place where I became a reader, but in a very practical, material sense, because it gave me access to years of local newspapers.

When poet and writer Hanif Abdurraqib received a 2021 MacArthur Fellowship, the foundation observed that he “is forging a new form of cultural criticism, one that is informed by lived experience and offers incisive social and artistic critiques.” This aptly describes *A Little Devil in America: Notes in Praise of Black Performance* (2021), winner of the 2022 Carnegie Medal, and Abdurraqib’s new book, *There’s Always This Year: On Basketball and Ascension* (Random House, March), which is, in part, a paean to his hometown of Columbus, Ohio. Abdurraqib spoke with *American Libraries* about his forthcoming work, the experience of finding a personal history in the library, and how basketball reflects larger issues in the world.

BY Donna Seaman

**You explore the resonance of basketball from many perspectives throughout your new book. Can you sum up the essence of the game’s meaning to you?**

Growing up, we had a basketball hoop on our garage, and people I loved, thought about, and cared for would gather around. As a kid, obviously, I was not thinking about basketball as a fully encapsulating world to perhaps use as a vessel to discuss

what it is to love a city, and then be let down by that city. I joked early on that I used the shape of the book to trick people into thinking they’re

reading about basketball, when they were really reading about all these other things. But I think I did that to trick myself into thinking I was writing about basketball. It was a lot harder for me to come to the reality that I was confronting a lot of larger, personal things.

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

I went back to the library that I grew up in to do a lot of the research for this book. Columbus (Ohio) Metropolitan Library is not where I learned to read, but it’s where I learned to be a reader. I grew up in a house where my parents really valued reading, but we didn’t have a lot of money, and my parents worked a lot. I could just spend all day at the library during the summer and winter and spring breaks, and no one would kick me out. I wanted to return to this place where I was my most focused self, when I was young and eager and curious.

There was something different about research this time around, because I wasn’t researching a past during which I wasn’t alive. I was looking at newspapers and seeing the faces of old high school teammates, which was jarring in

**We’re in a time of increasing book challenges, especially targeting books by BIPOC and LGBTQ writers. What are your thoughts about book bans?**

I was always in the library. Librarians would clock what I was reading, and then I’d come in the next day, and they’d say, “I think you’d like this.” A librarian saw that I was reading Toni Morrison, and so they put Gloria Naylor in my hands.

To not only crack down on books but to put a sense of fear or guilt into someone—a teacher or an elder or a librarian—who is simply

being intuitive and thoughtful in seeing what young people are reading and

## MORE ONLINE

For the extended interview, visit [bit.ly/AL-Abdurraqib](https://bit.ly/AL-Abdurraqib) after March 1.

saying, “I’ve got something else for you,” is to create an anxiety around the exchange of information. And that anxiety is going to create a real gap in empathy and education, in language and care.

I’m confident in young people and I’m confident that folks will find ways to continue to have a relationship to text, but that kind of anxiety and fear is really alarming and upsetting to me, in part because I was a kid who grew up with very little resources. I would hate to see that not afforded to a young person now who might otherwise be written off. Having books and people who love books in young people’s lives is vital. To have that taken away has grave consequences. **AL**



Photo: Kendra Bryant



“If a drag queen wants to read you a story at a library, listen to her, because knowledge is power, and if someone tries to restrict your access to power, they are trying to scare you.”

Drag queen and TV personality **RUPAUL**, in his Emmy Awards acceptance speech, January 15.



“What I’ve come to think is that every book has its just-right time, but that time is different for every reader. And it’s not finite or single, not in most cases.... Sometimes the only time it’s fun to read a book is when everyone else is reading it, when the vibes are jubilant and communal, when you’re part of something bigger. Sometimes there are books you read once, at a precise moment, and can never read again—the associated feelings are too big, too heavy, too messy, too much to revisit on a casual reread.”

Writer **MOLLY TEMPLETON**, “Every Book in the Right Time,” *Tor.com*, January 18.

“I HAD BEEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST MANY TIMES. NOW I HAD TO BE THE ONE WHO CENSORS THINGS? AND DESTROYS BOOKS? NO, THAT’S FASCISM.”

Librarian **VLADIMIR KOSAREVSKY**, in “‘No, That’s Fascism’: The Librarian Who Defied Russia’s Purge of LGBTQ+ Books,” *The Guardian (UK)*, December 24.

“Sure, I go to the library for books. But also sometimes I go just to exist in a space that’s welcoming, organized, comfortable, judgement-free, and run by knowledgeable, helpful, passionate people, because that energy is straight up medicinal.”

Writer **JONATHAN EDWARD DURHAM**, @thisoneOverhere on X, formerly known as Twitter, January 3.

**“The significance of keeping *Flamer* [by Mike Curato] in the teen section cannot be overstated. It’s a lifeline for those struggling with their identities. It offers guidance, assurance, and the knowledge that they are not alone.”**

High school student **SOPHIA PILGRIM**, in “Ketchikan Library Advisory Board Votes Down Book Challenges,” *KRBD-FM (Ketchikan, Alaska)*, January 19.



Illustration of a happy librarian in a bustling public library

GENERATE





Illustration: Drew Bardana

»» **W**hat is artificial intelligence (AI)? What do library workers think of it? How are they using it? And what ethical concerns or issues of privacy have developed as AI becomes increasingly commonplace?

According to a May 2023 survey of academic librarians by Leo S. Lo, professor and dean of the College of University Libraries and Learning Sciences at University of New Mexico in Albuquerque,

# Reading Between the Bots

Where librarianship is headed in the age of AI

about 45% of respondents said they have a moderate understanding of AI concepts and principles ([bit.ly/UNM-AI24](https://bit.ly/UNM-AI24)). Seventy-four percent underscored the urgent need to address potential ethical and privacy issues related to this emerging technology.

Nearly a year since that survey, some librarians report experimenting with AI in their libraries. Others are proceeding with caution. *American Libraries* explores how

the current AI boom has so far made an impact on different aspects of the profession.

These stories include:

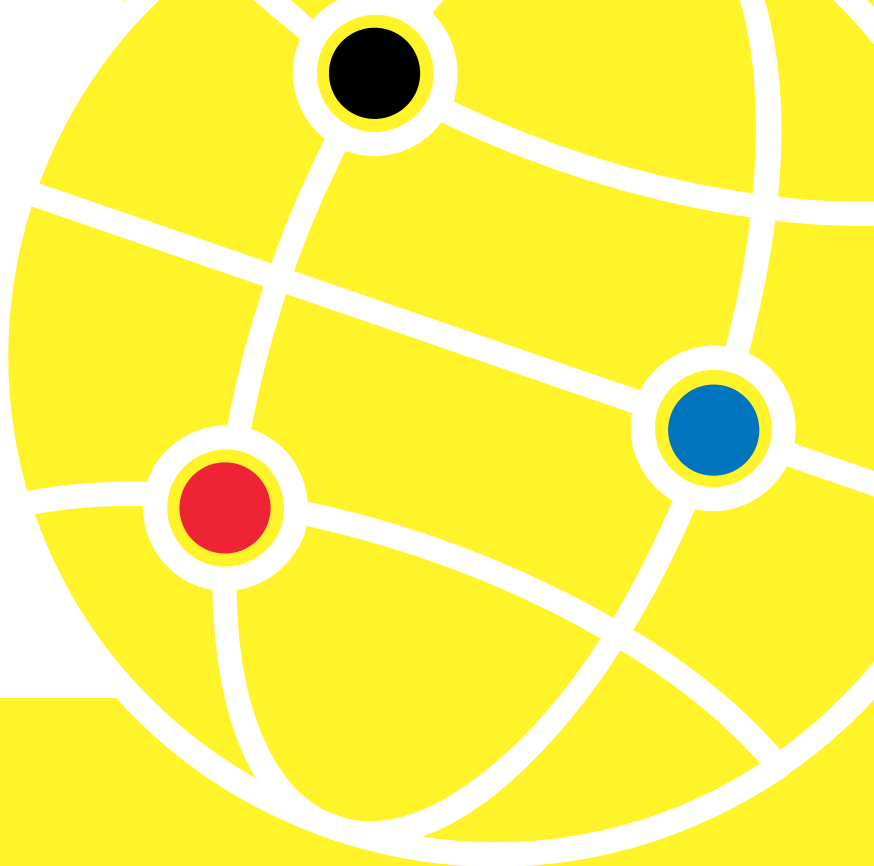
- »» Conversations with library workers about using generative AI
- »» Projects, special programs, and other examples of how AI is being implemented in library work
- »» Statistics mapping out common forms of generative AI and their current footprint

This report also offers a peek into what's to come for librarianship, as AI technologies advance and attitudes evolve. For more on AI, read our ongoing coverage at: [bit.ly/AL-AIstories](https://bit.ly/AL-AIstories). **AL**



Spot anything amiss in the artwork for this package? We asked illustrator Drew Bardana to implement some common AI art fails.

# The World of AI



## How libraries are integrating and navigating this powerful technology

by Emily Udell

**L**ast October, President Joe Biden released an executive order ([bit.ly/Biden-AIExO](https://bit.ly/Biden-AIExO)) detailing guidelines for various aspects of artificial intelligence (AI), with the aim of driving inquiry, regulations, and policy around current and emerging tools.

A hot topic in many industries, *generative artificial intelligence* (generative AI) has increasingly occupied our cultural consciousness since the large language model ChatGPT debuted for public use in November 2022. Some libraries are playing a unique role in charting a path through this new technological territory as the boundaries of AI's uses and impacts continue to shift.

"Librarians are asking if AI will render us obsolete—it won't," says Nick Tanzi, library technology consultant,

author, and assistant director of South Huntington Public Library in Huntington Station, New York. "We are information professionals, and our information landscape has just grown in complexity."

AI's critics have sounded the alarm about the models' tendency to reinforce and amplify any biases found in the data they are trained on. Others have raised concerns about false information and privacy, as well as plagiarism and copyright, issues of particular concern to academic and school libraries. How can users be sure the output generated by AI tools is legal, ethical, and accurate?

"There's an old saying: 'Garbage in, garbage out,'" says Elissa Malespina, teacher-librarian at Union (N.J.) High School, who writes the *AI School Librarians Newsletter* ([bit.ly/AISL-News](https://bit.ly/AISL-News)). "In the world of AI, it's a matter of 'data in, data out.' Make sure you've got a clear sense of not just how AI operates but also where it's drawing its knowledge from. It's all about being an informed user."

*American Libraries* spoke with five technology experts, educators, and librarians who are pioneering the use of generative AI at their institutions. They discuss how it's being used in libraries, what ethical concerns have emerged, and how librarians can educate their communities on navigating these powerful technologies.





**Karim Boughida**  
Dean at Stony Brook  
(N.Y.) University  
Libraries



**Nicole Hennig**  
E-learning developer at  
University of Arizona  
Libraries in Tucson



**Elissa Malespina**  
Teacher-librarian  
at Union (N.J.)  
High School



**Nick Tanzi**  
Assistant director at South  
Huntington Public Library in  
Huntington Station, New York



**Trevor Watkins**  
Teaching and outreach  
librarian at George Mason  
University in Fairfax, Virginia

## What top questions have librarians and educators raised about AI?

**TANZI:** Perhaps it's because I started working in public libraries in the 1990s, but I see many of the same questions and concerns that emerged with the rise of the internet. Librarians are approaching AI with a high degree of skepticism, which is good and necessary. They want to know how we can trust the quality of the information, since AI systems can *hallucinate*. We often don't know the source of the information AI systems are providing us with, and they can make up fake sources that come with fake citations.

**MALESPINA:** Every time new technology rolls out, I believe there are two kinds of educators. Some are like kids in a candy store, eager to bring it into the classroom. Others are more hesitant, thinking, "Maybe this is not for me." I've seen both types right in my school. There are those who are using it in really creative ways, and then some who'd rather keep generative AI at arm's length. There's also this sizable group in the middle, kind of on the fence. They think the tech is cool but are scratching their heads on how to integrate it. At the same time, they are leery about some of the negatives associated with AI.

## How are you or how is your institution or community already engaging with generative AI?

**WATKINS:** We created an AI Salon Series at George Mason University (GMU) to discuss AI and the use of AI tools in research and the classroom led by our computing librarian, Heidi Blackburn. We have also created an AI Community of Practice and an AI Task Force. The salon series provides a platform that helps bring together librarians and staff at GMU libraries with varied AI experiences and facilitates discussions.

In our AI Community of Practice, we provide a space for discussions and time to use generative AI tools like ChatGPT and Bard for professional and research purposes. It gives staff the chance to acquire hands-on experience with those tools they may use in the classroom or in

**88.2% »** Likelihood that the Bible's Book of Genesis was generated by AI, according to the AI writing detector ZeroGPT.

their jobs. We opened the AI Salon Series and AI Community of Practice sessions to the wider GMU community. I also recently used ChatGPT and Bard in the classroom for the first time with one of our English professors I work with each semester. While students liked using those tools, they preferred the traditional research practices I taught. I am working on an article that details that project.

**MALESPINA:** I'm a big fan of generative AI, and I lean on it quite often. I had it help me edit the answers to these questions. I also love using it when crafting social media posts for the library. I shoot over a basic idea, and AI generates the content. It's also helpful when I want to tweak the tone or style of something I've written. Thinking of titles for my presentations or drafting conference proposals is something I hate to do, and AI does it for me.

**Have you received any pushback about the use of AI in the library? What has been your response?**

**HENNIG:** When University of Arizona Libraries (UAL) published our Student Guide to ChatGPT last summer ([bit.ly/UAz-SGAD](https://bit.ly/UAz-SGAD)), one writing instructor got in touch with us. His main concern was that one of the items in our list was to use ChatGPT to

come up with topic ideas for a research paper. He felt strongly that should only be done with the student's own mind. He didn't mind the use of ChatGPT to narrow a topic, but he wanted students to start with their own ideas.

**60% »** Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds who said they preferred interacting with chatbots to humans about products.

After I learned more about his teaching, I volunteered to remove that bullet point since I didn't want to make life more difficult for instructors. However, when I showed him the sample assignment UAL staff came up with about generating topics for your research paper with ChatGPT ([bit.ly/UAz-ChatGPTSample](https://bit.ly/UAz-ChatGPTSample)), he decided what we described was acceptable, since it was mostly about narrowing down a topic and coming up with keywords for searching in library databases.

**WATKINS:** What I like more than anything about working for GMU is there is a culture of innovation, where trying new things is encouraged. However, there is a big difference between encouraging innovation and providing the support needed to bring life to that innovation. It involves buy-in from

*"There are those who are using it in really creative ways, and then some who'd rather keep generative AI at arm's length."*

**ELISSA MALESPINA**, teacher-librarian at Union (N.J.) High School

the top down, and if you don't have that initial buy-in, you will need a strong advocate and the intestinal fortitude to ascertain those resources on your own. I am currently working on a conversational agent—I hate the term chatbot. That project has expanded into an interactive 3D tour of GMU's Fenwick, Mason Square, and Mercer libraries with the conversational agent embedded as a tour guide, using both virtual reality and *augmented reality* technology. As in most academic and public libraries around the country, budget cuts affect what can and can't be done.

**What ethical questions has generative AI posed at your institution? Should libraries be establishing policy guidelines for use?**

**TANZI:** I, along with some colleagues I've spoken with, have ethical concerns about how these training models are being built. Generative AI is often trained on various artists' copyrighted works. Some text-to-image generators can easily imitate styles of a living artist. We have concerns about algorithmic bias, where one group of users is privileged over another. For example, AI detection tools will consistently flag a book report written by nonnative English speakers as AI-generated. Limited-memory AI systems use human and environmental data to sometimes improve the quality of their training model, but this can come at the expense of user privacy.

**BOUGHIDA:** Internally, we at Stony Brook University Libraries (SBUL) are actively deliberating establishing a university-wide AI governance framework in which SBUL assumes a central role. Leveraging the high trust traditionally placed in libraries by campus stakeholders, we aim to act as mediators, contributing to the collaborative development of policies through a shared governance approach.

# glossary

**Karim, as former dean of libraries at University of Rhode Island (URI), you helped establish the first-ever multidisciplinary AI lab at an academic library in 2018. What prompted its development, and what AI functions were the focus?**

**BOUGHIDA:** The lab served a dual purpose. It provided tutorials and workshops for students at various skill levels, covering topics such as robotics, *natural language processing*, and machine learning. Simultaneously, it functioned as a hub for faculty, students, and the community to examine AI's social, ethical, economic, and artistic implications with an underlying emphasis on preparing students for the workforce of the future. This strategic move emphasized responsible and ethical AI integration and commitment to a balanced approach. URI Libraries has a traditional ethos of caring about diversity, ethics, privacy, fair use, and so on. We aimed to position ourselves as a pivotal intermediary stakeholder. We didn't use ethics and privacy as an excuse to avoid engaging with rapidly evolving AI. We observed that some peers resort to the ethics framework to justify inaction.

**As more students and patrons use different types of AI in the library, what are some potential risks and benefits?**

**WATKINS:** One benefit is that we are serving as a resource to help students and patrons who may not have the technology needed at home to access these tools or someone who can demonstrate how to use them effectively. They will get that assistance in the library. For students who are going to enter the job market soon, having a working knowledge of AI in their field is crucial. One of the potential consequences could be an overreliance on the technology, specifically generative AI. Technology comes and goes, and its longevity is unfortunately predicated on the profit margins of the companies that create them.

**BOUGHIDA:** Benefits include enhanced user experiences through personalized recommendations, streamlined searches, productivity enhancement, language learning, and study assistance. We know that students integrate AI into their daily routines through widely used applications such as TikTok, Snapchat, Google Maps, and others. Potential consequences include concerns regarding user privacy, algorithmic bias, and data security. In particular, students extensively employ AI and prefer to keep their usage undisclosed from instructors and faculty. Some students have expressed the perception that instructors lack awareness of their AI utilization,

## Artificial general intelligence »

Artificial intelligence that could accomplish or even surpass any intellectual task performed by humans or animals; contrasted with artificial narrow intelligence, which focuses on a specific type of task.

## Artificial hallucination, or hallucination »

Inaccurate or misleading information that an AI platform presents as fact.

**Augmented reality »** An interactive experience in which a real-world environment is enhanced with computer-generated elements.

**Bard »** A free generative AI chatbot that draws from internet resources, similar to ChatGPT, that was released in spring 2023 by Google. (See p. 28.)

**ChatGPT »** A free generative AI large language model-based platform created by OpenAI that was released to the public in fall 2022. (See p. 28.)

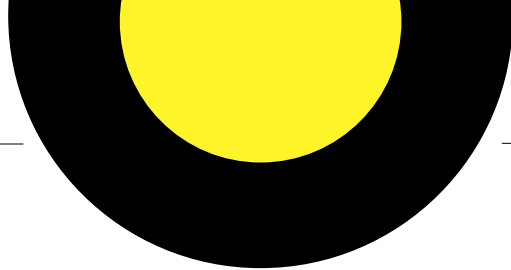
**Deepfake »** Imagery, video, or audio, now often AI-generated, that convincingly represents a person's likeness. It can be used to spread malicious or false information.

**Generative AI »** AI technology that can create text, images, and other types of content based on a pool of data.

**Multimodal AI »** AI that can simultaneously understand and generate various forms of data input, including text, images, and sound.

## Natural language processing »

A subtype of AI technology that gives computers the ability to understand, analyze, and manipulate language much as humans can.



highlighting a distinct digital divide in this context. We need AI literacy for all.

**There have been concerns about copyright infringement and plagiarism with language learning models. How do you advise faculty, students, and researchers on those issues?**

**HENNIG:** When it comes to plagiarism issues, we refer students to their instructors. Each faculty member will have different attitudes and policies about the use of generative AI. In our Student Guide to ChatGPT ([bit.ly/UAz-ChatGPTInt](https://bit.ly/UAz-ChatGPTInt)), we discuss academic integrity, giving credit, and what to do if you are falsely accused of cheating with generative AI, because sadly, that happens. Tools advertised as being able to detect AI writing have been found to be very unreliable, especially if your first language isn't English. For instructors, we recommend thinking about ChatGPT as a pedagogy problem, rather than a plagiarism problem.

As for copyright, we discuss those issues in our LibGuide for instructors, AI Literacy in the Age of ChatGPT ([bit.ly/UAz-AILitInstructors](https://bit.ly/UAz-AILitInstructors)). Since the question of copyright is not settled yet, it's difficult to create specific policies. But we can point people to this information and have discussions with students about it. Some lawyers say that it may take years for this to be determined in the courts.

**WATKINS:** This goes back to AI literacy. As library professionals, we must create learning objects that focus on critical thinking, especially when analyzing any AI-generated content. We also must reinforce what plagiarism and copyright are and the consequences of violating them. Plagiarism and copyright are viewed differently globally, so we should take that into consideration when we consult with faculty, students, and researchers who may come to the institution with a different perspective than what is taught in America. When I work with faculty, students, or researchers interested in using ChatGPT, I point to the bottom of the interface and remind them that according to OpenAI, "ChatGPT can make mistakes. Consider

*"This is the next chapter of information literacy. AI represents both an enormous challenge and opportunity for libraries."*

**NICK TANZI**, assistant director of South Huntington Public Library in Huntington Station, New York

checking important information." So, I encourage everyone to use it ethically.

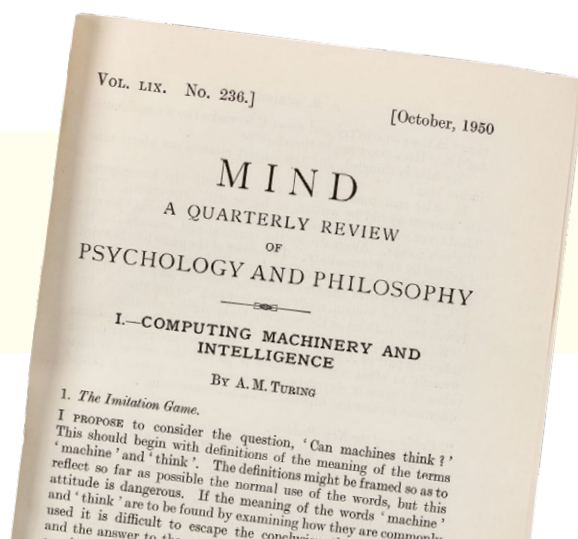
**Nicole, you have drafted resources to help librarians navigate AI, including a checklist for evaluating generative AI for purchase. What prompted its creation?**

**HENNIG:** I recently met online with a group of faculty librarians at another academic library to lead a discussion about generative AI. I learned that they had been approached by a vendor of an AI tool to consider purchasing it. So that got me thinking: "How will we, as library professionals, have enough knowledge of generative AI technologies to effectively evaluate these tools?" That led me to think about how useful it would be to have a list of questions to ask when purchasing a tool based on generative AI models. So I created one ([bit.ly/AIToolEval](https://bit.ly/AIToolEval)). It's an early draft at this point and open for comments.

**What is your response to President Biden's recent executive order regarding AI?**

**WATKINS:** Prior to President Biden's AI executive order, California Gov. Gavin Newsom was followed by Pennsylvania

**1950 »** Year Alan Turing published "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," the paper in which he proposed the *imitation game*—now known as the Turing test—as a way to evaluate whether a machine's behavior successfully replicates a human's.





Gov. Josh Shapiro and Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin in issuing executive orders for their respective states. What I find troubling in all these executive orders are potential loopholes that could be exploited by corporations because of the ambiguity of the language in each executive order. Corporations have armies of lawyers that could easily pick these apart, which throws enforcement of any of these orders out the window. I do not understand why libraries are not more involved.

**TANZI:** In part, the executive order is a plan to develop a plan. It directs a number of federal agencies to develop standards and best practices involving artificial intelligence, as a way to minimize its harms and maximize its benefits. Some of the more consequential actions from the government will likely take place in the coming months, as the aforementioned federal agencies weigh in. For example, we should all keep an eye on the US Department of Education, as it will need to produce a toolkit on the safe, nondiscriminatory use of AI in the classroom within the year. Those types of actions will prove highly impactful and can build some guardrails as the regulatory environment takes shape.

As is the nature of executive orders, it is no replacement for legislation; it can be undone by a current or future president at the stroke of a pen. Overall, I think it's a positive development, in that it concerns itself with things that we should be concerned about: privacy, algorithmic bias, job market disruption, disinformation, and safety.

#### What do you think is most exciting about generative AI technology? Most concerning?

**MALESPINA:** I'm thrilled about the timesaving perks of AI and its potential to level the playing field for everyone. However, my excitement is tempered with a bit of caution. I worry about students becoming too dependent on it, which could lead to them not grasping material as deeply as they should. From an educational perspective, AI throws open the doors to reimagine how we evaluate students. The old standbys, like five-paragraph essays, won't cut it anymore. We'll need to shift our focus from the end product to the journey. In other words, assessing the student's process and approach. This change could pave the way for more inventive and varied methods for students to demonstrate their understanding. Frankly, it's a transformation I believe is overdue, and I'm eager to see where it takes us.

**BOUGHIDA:** Being the foremost generative AI application, ChatGPT has fundamentally altered how AI is perceived and utilized. It demonstrates AI's ability to generate content tradition-

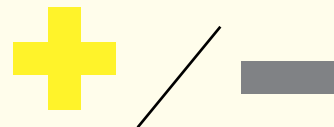
ally associated with human capabilities. The recent advancements in *multimodal AI* capabilities and the emergence of more tailored applications are particularly noteworthy. The accelerated turnaround time for generating software code content is also a significant advantage. I remain unconcerned about *artificial general intelligence*, viewing it as a fabricated concept designed to generate hype around the sale of AI products. On the other hand, I am vigilant about potential issues such as hallucinations, misinformation and disinformation, potential harm to marginalized populations, and the rise of *deepfakes*.

**TANZI:** AI and its contextual awareness capabilities can be used to perform diversity audits on library collections but can also be used as a tool of exclusion—particularly concerning in a time of book bans and library collections composed of licensed (rather than owned) digital media. We have seen examples of ebook publishers modifying content after it was sold. AI could conceivably be used to conduct particularly insidious forms of censorship by modifying, rather than removing, a title. The tone or theme of a book could be altered after purchase. A character could be erased. AI represents an extraordinarily impactful and disruptive technology that will transform our information landscape.

Librarianship, with its commitment to privacy and providing accurate, unbiased information, will prove essential. This is the next chapter of information literacy. AI represents both an enormous challenge and opportunity for libraries, and I am confident we will rise to the occasion. **AL**



**EMILY UDELL** is a freelance writer based in Indianapolis.



**85 million »**

Estimated number of jobs worldwide that will be replaced by AI by 2025.

**97 million »**

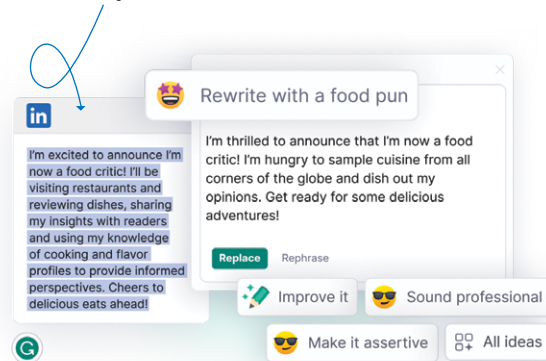
Estimated number of jobs worldwide that will be created due to AI by 2025.

# Common Forms of AI

## Text generators

Tools that generate text based on user prompts.

**EXAMPLES** copy.ai, Anyword, Peppertype, Grammarly



**USES** Automate drafting of routine documents like overdue notices or new cardholder welcome messages, draft marketing copy or web page text

### CONTROVERSIES

- » *Sports Illustrated* was recently criticized for publishing AI-generated product reviews on its website, which it blamed on a company it licensed content from.
- » AI-generated travel guides reached top spots in Amazon's search results, boosted by reviews alleged to be fake.
- » AI can *hallucinate*, or present plausible but false information as if it were true.

## Chatbots

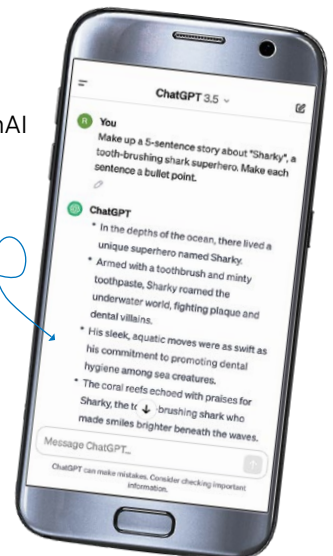
Similar to text generators, chatbots respond to user prompts, but they have a greater focus on responding in a conversational format.

**EXAMPLES** ChatGPT, Bard, HuggingChat

**USES** Respond to basic informational and reference queries, alert users to library resources, generate keywords for research, summarize works, create bibliographies and citations, recommend books

### CONTROVERSIES

- » The Authors Guild filed suit against OpenAI in September 2023, alleging that the company improperly trained ChatGPT using books by the authors it represents.
- » Similarly, comedian Sarah Silverman and authors Richard Kadrey and Christopher Golden sued Meta and OpenAI in July 2023, claiming their books were used without permission to train chatbots.



- » Many news publishers have blocked web crawlers from AI companies to prevent them from using current news stories for training.

## Image generators

Tools that create pictures in response to user prompts.

**EXAMPLES** Canva Magic Studio, Craiyon, DALL·E

**USES** Marketing, document design. Improve accessibility by ensuring adequate contrast and legible fonts and generating descriptive text or descriptive audio

### CONTROVERSIES

» An AI-generated art piece won first place at the 2022 Colorado State Fair Fine Arts Competition in the emerging artist division's digital arts/digitally manipulated photography category. Artist Jason M. Allen disclosed his use of the AI image generator Midjourney when he entered.



*Théâtre D'opéra Spatial*  
by Jason M. Allen

» A UK court ruled in December that a Getty Images lawsuit against Stability AI can proceed. Getty alleges Stability improperly used millions of Getty's images and their accompanying metadata to train image generators. Getty has filed a similar suit against Stability in the US.

» A January 2023 class-action suit against Stability AI, Midjourney, and DeviantArt alleges unlawful use of copyrighted images to train AI generators. The artists expressed concern that AI art will replace their own work.

## Video generators

Tools that can create videos from text or image prompts. Different generators require varying levels of input and offer different levels of customizability.

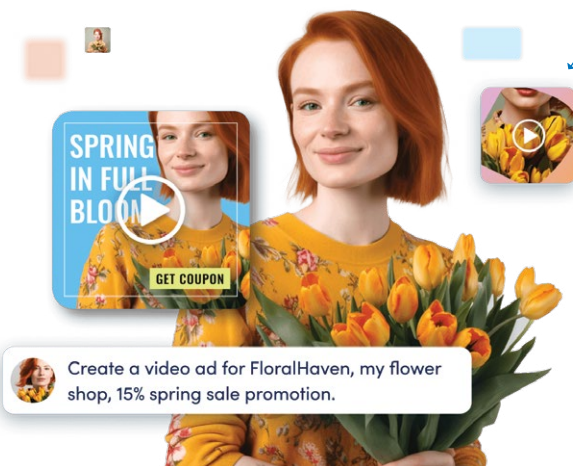
**EXAMPLES** Lucas AI Video Creator, Pictory, BHuman

**USES** Marketing videos, video guides

### CONTROVERSIES

» Google has decided not to release its video generator, Imagen, to the public over concerns it can produce content that is violent or sexually explicit, and that it can rely on stereotypes or cultural biases. Similarly, Meta is still testing its Make-A-Video service to "reduce the creation of harmful, biased, or misleading content."

» Deepfake videos that replace one person's likeness with another are easy to create and use for misinformation, harassment, or fraud.



# Realizing Potential

Libraries employ  
(and investigate)  
artificial  
intelligence

BY *American Libraries* staff

»» **A**round the world, organizations are learning how to assess the benefits and challenges of swiftly evolving artificial intelligence (AI) tools, while simultaneously learning how to safeguard against some of the concerns they present.

As many types of AI become commonplace, library workers in particular will be at the forefront of evaluating their significance in the information realm. *American Libraries* touched base with professionals at five public, school, and academic libraries who are using, and innovating with, this emerging technology.



Photo: Embodied Inc.



## Robots in Residence

### Santa Ana (Calif.) Public Library

Some libraries have artists in residence or writers in residence. At Santa Ana (Calif.) Public Library (SAPL), there are robots in residence.

Launched in February 2022 with state and American Rescue Plan Act grants, SAPL's Robots in Residence program provides young people with the opportunity to try new technology. Part of the program, known as AStounD, allows youth with autism to check out a robotic friend. The robot Moxie is designed to help kids build social-emotional skills, something that can be challenging for those on the autism spectrum or for kids who may struggle with socializing. Embodied Inc., the company that created Moxie, describes it as "the world's first AI robot for kids."

SAPL Principal Librarian Cheryl Eberly came up with the idea for the Robots in Residence program as a way to offer cutting-edge technology that can be financially inaccessible for many local youth. According to a 2023 report from Orange County's Social Services Agency, 17.9% of children in Santa Ana live in poverty, compared with 10.8% county-wide. "When there's a digital divide, in Santa Ana, it's even deeper," Eberly says.



Santa Ana (Calif.) Public Library's AStounD program, part of its Robots in Residence initiative, provides youth with autism access to robots Moxie (left) and Milo (above), among others.

Moxie has an expressive face and arms, and a motion-responsive camera. It can talk and respond to users independently and interpret their emotions using AI. SAPL has 15 Moxies, which began circulating in November 2022 to K–12 students for three months at a time.

In addition to Moxie, the AStounD program offers noncirculating robots with conversational and other kinds of lessons: QT, Kebbi, and NAO from MOVIA Robotics and Milo from RoboKind. These models require someone, like a guardian or a library worker, to help operate the robot.

Since the program began, Eberly says parents have reported marked improvements in their children, particularly in socializing, connection, and calmness. One parent has also been using Moxie to teach their child English, with positive results, Eberly says.

"Think of a flower bud, and then the flower bud getting closer to the robot and just opening up," says Larry Singer, SAPL library associate and lead for AStounD. "It's amazing, the transformation."

## AI High

### Gwinnett County (Ga.) Public Schools

In Georgia, Gwinnett County Public Schools has been a trailblazer for youth AI education since 2019, when it set out

to establish a cluster of public schools that teach an AI-oriented curriculum.

In August 2022, the district opened Seckinger High School (SKG) in Buford, Georgia, the first college preparatory institution of its kind in the nation where students use AI and have an optional pathway of AI-specific classes including Foundations of AI and Applications of AI.

Joni Gilman, SKG media specialist, says students at the school use several AI tools. ChatGPT helps them with preliminary research for essays or projects, and Gamma, an application that generates custom slideshows and documents, helps them create presentations so they can focus more on gathering data.

"We want our students to understand what AI is [and] see how it impacts the world," Gilman says. "A lot of them are thinking about their careers—especially our upperclassmen—and how AI will affect them."

Staff members, she adds, have also used AI for their own professional development. Tools such as TeachFX offer teachers feedback on their performance during instruction.

"It showed me at least one blind spot that I was able to focus on for the next lesson," says Samantha Bart-Addison, AI teacher leader at SKG. "It is a great way to have your lesson observed without feeling judged."

Teachers frame generative AI as a collaborative tool or partner rather than a shortcut, Gilman says, to discourage the overuse of AI in student work. SKG does not have an official way to measure overuse yet, but its teacher leaders and AI Council are discussing the need for it.

"I know we have students who are using [AI] to cheat," Gilman says. So for guidance, she asks students to

The AI Studio in Sunderland Foundation Innovation Lab at Kansas State University in Manhattan provides technologies and programming to students, faculty, and community members.

think about what they would ask their teacher for help with. “You wouldn’t ask the teacher to write your paper,” she says, “but you might ask her for help with some keywords for this research assignment.”

Gilman continues, “It’s most definitely an ongoing conversation, as each time we use [AI], it’s in a different form or for a new purpose. We’re all in this together as a team and learning through it as teachers and students.”

## Studio Sessions

### Hale Library, Kansas State University in Manhattan

In 2021, the Sunderland Foundation Innovation Lab (SFIL) at Kansas State University in Manhattan opened its AI Studio. The studio, located inside Hale Library—the main library on campus—provides access to technologies and programming to students and faculty across disciplines and members of the public. “People are very interested in what AI is doing for them,” says Jeff Sheldon, SFIL’s associate director. “With that comes exploration of things like ethics and how to apply [them].”

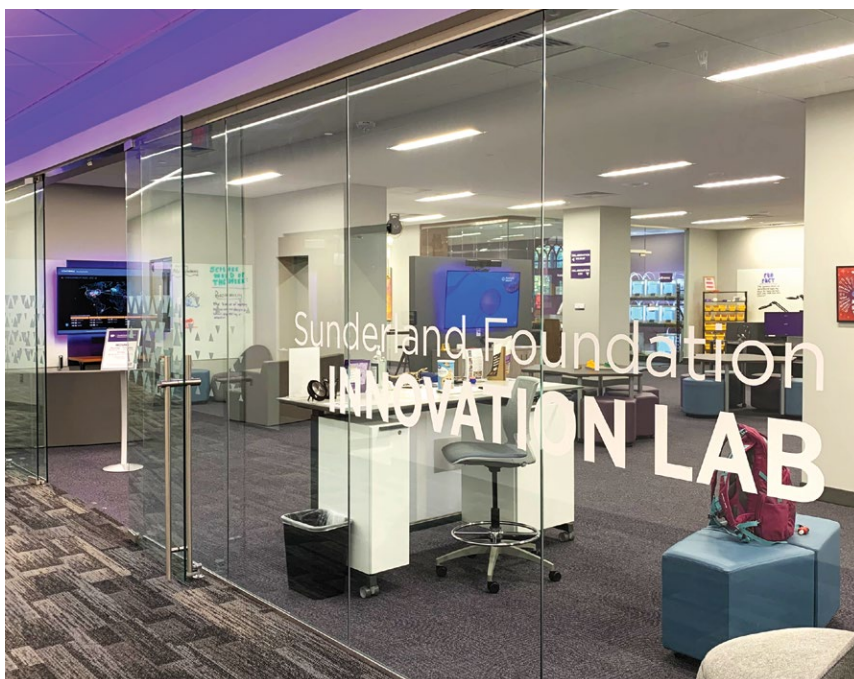
Anyone can use the studio to access common web-based generative AI platforms like ChatGPT and DALL·E. For those digging deeper, there are powerful computers onsite that can run open source generative models, which can be programmed for specific projects. To help allay some privacy concerns, users don’t have to register for an account or send information across the internet. The lab hosts an instance of Stable Diffusion, an image-generation model, and

Alpaca, a large language model created at Stanford (Calif.) University.

“A lot of people who are using generative AI are willing to just use a web browser as their portal,” says Sheldon, but many may never program something from scratch. When people are given the chance to experiment with programming generative AI tools at the studio, he says, “they go wild.”

The studio also aims to introduce users to AI-enabled electronics using the TinyML (tiny machine learning) philosophy. These projects use basic sensors and less-powerful computers like the Raspberry Pi to explore *computer vision*—a type of AI that interprets information from images. Machine learning also dovetails with maker tools available at SFIL, Sheldon says. For instance, AI is being used for error detection in laser cutting and 3D printing, and to generate art for both.

“Technology is moving faster than we thought,” Sheldon says. “So what we’re hoping to do is just have a centrally located, open-access space where people can experiment, learn, and ask questions.”



## Aligning AI with Library Values

### Montana State University Library in Bozeman

Many anxieties about AI stem from the unknowns about how it will work with—or upend—established values.

“[Librarians] have clear guidelines for how libraries can be a social good and certain protections that we provide to our users,” says Sara Mannheimer, data librarian at Montana State University (MSU) in Bozeman. “AI can provide efficiency, but that can come into tension with privacy and other library values.”

Mannheimer is leading a research team of academics working to address those tensions by developing a tool to help guide librarians through ethical concerns that AI may raise. Their findings will be published this spring.

The eight-person team for the Responsible AI Project ([bit.ly/MSU-AI](https://bit.ly/MSU-AI)), an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant-funded project that runs 2022–2025, has so far conducted a review of about 90 research papers dating back to 2017 that examines ethical challenges

related to AI in libraries. The team has also solicited a series of eight case studies from practitioners of AI projects in North American libraries and archives. These case studies will be published in a spring 2024 edition of *Journal of eScience Librarianship*.

The next step, currently under way, is a series of 15–20 workshops in which library practitioners and students consider which values are relevant for the use of AI in libraries and prioritize them. The participants in each workshop are also asked to consider scenarios related to AI in reference and cataloging, and to “create the most irresponsible way of conducting the project,” Mannheimer explains. These discussions of unethical ways to use AI, she says, help to illuminate strategies for using AI in conscientious ways.

The tool that comes out of this research will specifically consider library

values like privacy, access, and intellectual freedom. They anticipate releasing a preliminary version of the tool in the fall, with a final version in 2025. While the tool is aimed at academic librarians, the team hopes it will benefit librarians of all types.

The concern for ethics reflects the project team’s optimism for AI’s potential, says Mannheimer. While the assumption is that AI can be used to improve findability in collections and provide better reference services, “we want to think about how to use it in a way that’s responsible,” she says.

## Kingbot: The AI Chatbot That Reigns

### Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library, San José (Calif.) State University

“Greetings! I’m Kingbot, your library’s after-hours chatbot.”

That’s one welcome message students receive when using the AI chatbot at San José (Calif.) State University’s (SJSU) Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library. Named after the library, the interactive chatbot uses natural language processing to answer basic circulation and introductory reference questions. That means when patrons ask new questions, Kingbot gathers and interprets this information to continuously improve its responses.

Kingbot also provides patrons with links and resources, including databases and research tutorials, says User Experience Librarian Sharesly Rodriguez, who codeveloped the technology in 2018 as an LIS intern. It was fully deployed in

fall 2020, at the start of the academic term, in response to the increased need for online reference support amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The library was closed,” she says, “so the chatbot was something to help students when they couldn’t reach us physically.”

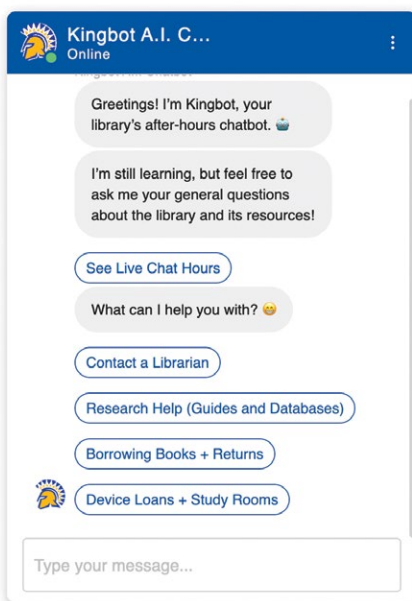
Kingbot uses Google’s Dialogflow ES, a free chatbot development software that requires minimal technical knowledge or coding skill.

Since its launch, Kingbot has seen year-over-year usage growth, Rodriguez says. And a recent post-use questionnaire showed that 88% of student respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Kingbot provided relevant information about library services—sometimes learning about those services from the chatbot itself, which has served as an entry point to the library.

“It’s not only a way to engage but also promote services,” Rodriguez says, noting that Kingbot offers a list of subject librarians and their contact information if users are not satisfied with the chatbot’s response.

At the start of this academic year, the team noticed a trend of students interacting with Kingbot beyond its intended scope, as if they were interacting with ChatGPT or other generative AI, such as requesting information about free speech around the globe or things to do on vacation. Users are also increasingly asking Kingbot for these types of recommendations.

“The expectations of users, with so many AI tools coming out, is going to be higher,” Rodriguez says. “We have to keep up to make sure it matches what students expect and that they can get the information how they expect it.” <sup>AL</sup>



# Working Hand in Hand

## How to conduct community-led planning

BY Audrey Barbakoff  
and Noah Lenstra



**AUDREY BARBAKOFF** is founder and CEO of Co/lab Capacity, a library consulting firm. She is author of *Adults Just Wanna Have Fun: Programs for Emerging Adults* (ALA Editions, 2016).



**NOAH LENSTRA** is an associate professor of library and information science at University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

When coauthor Audrey talked with librarians about community-led planning in the late 2010s, one of the most frequent comments she heard was that they just do not know how to do it. They said that if they knew the steps, they would start using community-led methods right away. But Audrey's research paints a different picture of how people ought to begin.

*Community-led planning* is a method for making decisions that puts power in the hands of the community rather than the library. They have real responsibility, authority to make decisions, and accountability for the outcomes. Librarians serve as conveners and facilitators, providing access to library resources and support. The library cannot and should not try to impose a rigid set of steps or schedule, because the community determines how the process will progress. Libraries must be flexible and grounded enough to adapt to changing circumstances, and they must be committed enough to dive in and persist despite ambiguity, all without losing sight of their true goals and principles. To accomplish this, librarians should understand the importance and purpose of community-led work.

One of the clearest models for how to conduct community-led planning in libraries comes from the Working Together Project, an initiative that created the Community-Led Libraries Toolkit ([bit.ly/ComLedLibs-TKit](http://bit.ly/ComLedLibs-TKit)). The model has five broad stages: (1) systematically build knowledge about community through community assessment; (2) identify community goals and needs; (3) plan services; (4) deliver services; and (5) evaluate results. The stages themselves are similar to traditional library-led planning, but the way each stage unfolds is very different.

A community-led perspective reshapes evaluation. Traditional library-led planning relies heavily on standard output statistics like attendance, circulation, and door count. It tends to take place at the conclusion. In a community-led model, the library works with locals to identify what success means to them and to determine how to evaluate progress toward that goal. Ideally, these evaluation conversations would happen at the beginning of a process. This is because understanding what the community truly wants is essential to achieving it. Developing a shared vision of what success looks like early on helps prevent missteps.

In traditional planning, libraries treat community assessment and identifying community priorities as a largely internal, point-in-time process. For example, a librarian might look at school district or census statistics to analyze trends or populations. Then they might solicit input through a survey. In community-led planning, understanding the community and its priorities comes from building ongoing relationships with the public,

especially minoritized communities. Librarians get involved in communities by joining organizations, contributing to local celebrations, or spending time in spaces created by the community for itself.

Another key difference appears in planning and delivery. In traditional planning, the library makes all the decisions and manages the execution. Staffers generate their own service ideas from professional and community news, by requesting specific input from their peers, or from patrons' feedback. Then they plan the programs, write the policies, set the strategic goals, and so on. In a community-led model, the

community takes the helm through coalitions or action groups. Because the people who will use the service or be impacted by the decision are the ones who plan and implement it, the result is deeply rooted in the community.

Community-led planning values the process and the relationships it builds as much as it values the product. It treats human relationships as a valid way of knowing and doing. The timeline, the communication strategies, what tasks take place, and who is responsible for them—these will all vary. What stays constant is our understanding of why we are doing this work and a commitment to contributing to a more equitable community.

*Adapted from The 12 Steps to a Community-Led Library by Audrey Barbakoff and Noah Lenstra (ALA Editions, 2023).* **AL**

Community-led  
planning values  
the process  
and the  
relationships  
it builds.



# Beyond ADA Compliance

Expanding the library's service to patrons with disabilities

BY Amy Holland



**AMY HOLLAND** is children's librarian and inclusion coordinator at Irondequoit Public Library in Rochester, New York.

**T**he Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)—while a good framework—must be bolstered by our libraries. In 2020, staff members at Irondequoit Public Library (IPL) in Rochester, New York, began rethinking our approach to accessibility and inclusion. With reduced hours and services during the COVID-19 pandemic, we had an opportunity to envision how we wanted to welcome patrons back.

ADA guidelines provide for a minimum standard of service, but we knew we could do better for the thousands of people who live with a disability in our community. According to 2022 census data, nearly 16,000 Irondequoit residents either have a disability or are over age 65. Further, a welcoming and accessible library is beneficial to everyone, as design features that improve accessibility for people with disabilities often improve usability for people without disabilities as well.

Our director secured state aid that allowed us to hire consultants, provide training, and purchase equipment. However, you don't need a big budget to commit to expanded accessibility and inclusion at your library. These steps can be scaled or modified to fit a variety of budgets and needs.

**Build a team.** We started by assembling a group of five staffers committed to accessibility and inclusion to help facilitate and advise on initiatives. Some had lived experience with disability, but our knowledge and backgrounds covered only a small portion of what disability can look like.

To ensure we considered a range of experiences, and for general support, we partnered with Rochester Accessible Adventures (RAA), a local organization that helps institutions ensure access and inclusion in all settings. RAA staff assisted us in evaluating IPL operations and developing an action plan that designated me and another colleague from the accessibility team as inclusion coordinators. We provide a point of contact for anyone, whether community member or staffer, who has questions or feedback.

**Create a culture of inclusion.** The accessibility team monitors the action plan at monthly meetings, but all staffers play a role. To initiate a culture shift, all employees took a free online training course to become Certified Inclusion Ambassadors ([bit.ly/inclusion-ambassadors](https://bit.ly/inclusion-ambassadors)). The course, now required during new hires' onboarding, teaches participants how to identify and dismantle physical and social barriers to inclusion.

We also schedule periodic staff trainings led by disability advocates. In recent months, this has included sessions on serving patrons with autism and those who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Additionally, weekly staff meetings include regular inclusion coordinator updates, providing

opportunities for discussion and problem solving.

**Gather feedback.** After we built our team and underwent training, we invited a local disability rights advocate who uses a wheelchair to tour our space and point out potential barriers. One eye-opening example was her attempt to use our fixed-height iPad catalog stands. They were too high for her to access, and we didn't have any other options for catalog use. This led us to purchase adjustable-height gooseneck iPad stands.

**Spread the word.** The accessibility page on IPL's website ([bit.ly/IPL-accessibility](https://bit.ly/IPL-accessibility)) is a one-stop shop for patrons. It's also a useful resource for staffers who receive questions about accessibility and inclusion. It describes IPL's available services and equipment, including motorized scooters, walkers, and adjustable-height desks; books in braille, large print, and

audio formats; and contact information for the inclusion coordinators, who are available to provide orientation tours and other accommodations as needed.

**Expand your public profile.** This was our final step. In 2023,

we participated in Rochester's Festival of Inclusion, an annual event highlighting organizations that support the disability community. In the future, IPL plans to host a smaller-scale version specific to our town. This event will send the signal, without hesitation, that we are committed to including everyone. **AL**

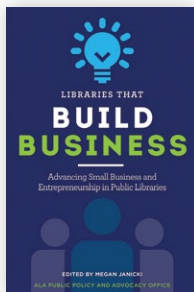
You don't need a big budget to commit to expanded accessibility and inclusion at your library.

# Getting Down to Business

How libraries can support local entrepreneurs



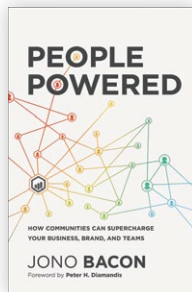
**ARACELI MÉNDEZ HINTERMEISTER** is knowledge manager at Uplift Education in Dallas.



## Libraries That Build Business: Advancing Small Business and Entrepreneurship in Public Libraries

Edited by Megan Janicki

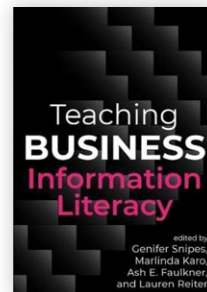
Libraries are valuable allies for local entrepreneurs, breaking down barriers to technology and information access while fostering community connections. Drawing from ALA's Libraries Build Business initiative, this book is divided into two parts. The first outlines strategies and considerations for building entrepreneurship programming and services catered to your community; the second considers examples from public libraries' business development programs, featuring case studies of their business resource centers, mentorship programs, and marketing workshops. These materials will help library staffers better identify and address challenges and opportunities in their local business community. ALA Editions, 2022. 296 p. \$64.99. PBK. 978-0-8389-3840-9.



## People Powered: How Communities Can Supercharge Your Business, Brand, and Teams

By Jono Bacon

Bacon explores how successful companies have harnessed the expertise and influence of their communities to build an enthusiastic customer base ready to elevate and support their business. By asking readers to step into the business owner's role, *People Powered* facilitates a deeper understanding of how to effectively interact with others, which can help generate ideas for marketing and even new products. Library workers will come away from this book with knowledge of how brands establish meaningful connections, hopefully leading to better patron engagement. HarperCollins Leadership, 2019. 320 p. \$22.99. PBK. 978-1-4002-1491-4. (Also available as an ebook.)

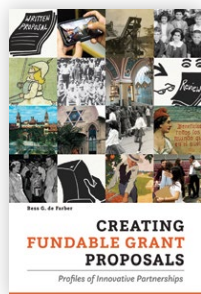


## Teaching Business Information Literacy

Edited by Genifer Snipes, Marlinda Karo, Ash E. Faulkner, and Lauren Reiter

The demand for academic libraries to support business information literacy is rising across college campuses. This book offers ways to fill those gaps, providing more than 40 classroom-proven lesson plans for librarians venturing into business research instruction and programming or looking to expand their skills. Readers will learn how to educate and empower students in various disciplines, including finance, entrepreneurship, data literacy, and technology integration. Each chapter provides background, preclass preparation, and adaptable activities, equipping library staffers with practical guidance for this evolving subject area. ACRL, 2022. 412 p. \$98. PBK. 978-0-8389-3909-3. (Also available as an ebook.)

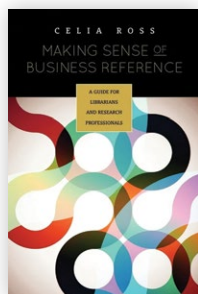
BY Araceli Méndez Hintermeister



### Creating Fundable Grant Proposals: Profiles of Innovative Partnerships

By Bess G. de Farber

De Farber, a consultant and former academic library grant manager, channels her extensive experience overseeing nearly 200 grant projects, ranging from under \$5,000 to more than \$1 million. She provides insider strategies through a detailed 10-step workflow for grant proposals and covers necessities like understanding application guidelines, finding internal and external partners, and creating budgets. Though this title is about library grants, the tools and lessons gleaned from its success stories can be applied more generally, enabling staffers to better support business and nonprofit grant seekers who come through their doors. (To read an excerpt, see *AL*, Mar./Apr. 2022, p. 42.) ALA Editions, 2021. 240 p. \$64.99. PBK. 978-0-8389-4760-9.



### Making Sense of Business Reference: A Guide for Librarians and Research Professionals, 2nd edition

By Celia Ross

This read expands on Ross's first edition, published in 2012, delivering updated insights to acquaint readers with databases for business reference, company profiles, and consumer information. Offering best practices for tackling challenging reference questions, the core chapters educate on essential industry and consumer information categories, like investment research and marketing. The book also provides tips to help readers navigate vital resources like listservs, blogs, and government resources. The advice is relevant for supporting all types of pursuits—including nonprofits and international commerce—and will help reference librarians best serve an array of business students, job seekers, investors, and entrepreneurs. ALA Editions, 2019. 176 p. \$59.99. PBK. 978-0-8389-1926-2. (Also available as an ebook.)



### The Basics of Starting a Business: Proper Planning Prevents P!ss Poor Performance

By Julian Tansley

Tansley breaks down the need-to-knows for aspiring business owners. This book covers everything from crafting a business plan and mastering branding to sourcing capital. Thanks to its accessible tone and user-friendly content, readers will gain a deeper comprehension of various types of entrepreneurship. Library workers looking to support patrons and guide programming around their journeys will benefit from this title. Journey Together Publishing, 2023. 192 p. \$9.99. PBK. 978-1-9169-8200-0. (Also available as an ebook.) [AL](#)



# PEOPLE

## Announcements

### ON THE MOVE

In August **Edgar Alvarez** joined Santa Barbara (Calif.) City College's Luria Library as resident librarian.



**Tahni Bannon** became youth services librarian at the La Jolla/Riford branch of San Diego Public Library in November.

**Kevin Bourque** started as head librarian at Newburyport (Mass.) Public Library in November.

**Patti Holt** started as operations manager for the Private Academic Library Network of Indiana in Indianapolis September 11.

**Holli Howard** became director of Columbia County (Ark.) Library System September 1.

**Kevin Merriman** started as director of global collections at the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago in January.



**Mark Procknik** started as director of Dighton (Mass.) Public Library December 18.

**Sandra Schweikert** started as Waterbury (Vt.) Public Library's youth librarian in September.

**Beth Swift** became technology librarian at Washington (Iowa) Free Public Library in October.

**Kasey Swords** started as youth services librarian at Oconee County (S.C.) Public Library in the fall.

In November **Chiara VanderBeek** became youth services librarian at Lewistown (Mont.) Public Library.

December 11 **Robert Van Rennes** joined the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago as licensing librarian.

### Kudos

September 26 **Alyssa Coleman**, digital services librarian at Luzerne County (Pa.) Community College, was named 2023 New Librarian of the Year by the Pennsylvania Library Association.

**Rachel Grover**, librarian at Rocky Run Middle School in Chantilly, Virginia, received the Virginia Association for School Librarians' 2023 School Librarian of the Year Award November 3.

In September the South Dakota Library Association awarded **Kathleen Slocum**, accessible library services manager at South Dakota State Library in Pierre, its 2023 Distinguished Service Award. ●

### PROMOTIONS

In September **Meaghan Leenaarts Beasley** was promoted to county librarian for Dare County (N.C.) Library.

**Silvia Christy** was promoted to director of Seguin (Tex.) Public Library December 11.



**Hannah Farmer** was promoted to assistant director of Seguin (Tex.) Public Library December 11.

November 17 **Joanne Kaczmarek** was promoted to university archivist and head of archival programs at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

**Elizabeth Lorang** was promoted to dean of university libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln December 1.

In April 2023 **Janet Ward**, assistant director of Limestone University Library

in Gaffney, South Carolina, was promoted to tenured professor of computer science and academic research.

### RETIREMENTS

**Nancy Campbell** retired as collections analysis librarian at Northern Kentucky University in Highland Heights in December.

**Mary Chesnut** retired as teaching and learning librarian at Northern Kentucky University in Highland Heights in December.

December 1 **Jacki Gross** retired as director of Seguin (Tex.) Public Library.

**Lois Hamill** retired as archivist at Northern Kentucky University in Highland Heights in December.

**Lois Schultz** retired as associate dean of collections at Northern Kentucky University in Highland Heights in December.

**Laura Sullivan** retired as student success librarian at Northern Kentucky University in Highland Heights in December.

**Sandra Treadway** retired as librarian of Virginia in January.

August 31 **Jonathan Wark** retired as director of East Albemarle Regional Library System in Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

### AT ALA

**Mike Larson** joined ALA as controller November 13.

November 13 **Gwendolyn "Wendy" Prellwitz** joined Conference Services in the new role of conference marketing and engagement manager.

**Holly Robison** was promoted to program officer in the Office of ALA Governance November 27. [AL](#)

## In Memory

**Ellen Altman**, 87, a retired faculty member of the library schools at University of Kentucky in Lexington, University of Toronto in Ontario, and Indiana University Bloomington, died September 14. Altman was director of the library school at University of Arizona in Tucson from 1979 to 1985. She served as feature editor of *Public Libraries* from 1993 to 1999 and coauthored eight books, including *Assessing Service Quality*, which won the Highsmith Library Literature Award in 1999. She also served as ALA councilor from 1980 to 1984, and held numerous ALA committee assignments.

**Ronald Blazek**, 87, professor emeritus at Florida State University School of Information in Tallahassee, died December 8. Blazek wrote dozens of articles and reviews, and authored or coauthored 10 books, including widely used textbooks on the humanities and US history. Blazek received the 1986 Justin Winsor Library History Essay Award, and several of his books appeared on *Choice* Outstanding Academic Titles lists.

**Adonna “Donna” Fleming**, retired GIS map science librarian and head of the math and geology libraries at University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL), died November 25. Prior to joining UNL, she had been a librarian at Washington State University in Pullman and University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. She researched and published extensively in the geology and library science fields, receiving the Best Paper Award from the Geoscience Information Society in 2013.

**Beatrice Johnson**, 96, the first Black librarian in the School District of Philadelphia, died August 21. She began as a teacher at Martha Washington Elementary School and later earned an MLS from Drexel University in Philadelphia in 1972. She served as librarian until her retirement in 1993.



**James Kyed**, 86, retired librarian at Harvard University Library in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and head of the Environmental Protection Agency’s Superfund Records Center for the New England region, died November 30. Kyed had previously worked at the engineering libraries at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge for

20 years—including 13 years as head librarian—and Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. In retirement, he was a trustee for Truro Public Library in North Truro, Massachusetts, and chair of its endowment fund.

**Carole J. McCollough**, 86, retired associate professor and dean of the library and information science program at Wayne State University in Detroit, died December 1. With the Children’s Defense Fund, McCollough conducted workshops for college interns training to run summer literacy (Freedom School) programs. She was chair of the Coretta Scott King Book Awards Task Force from 2000 to 2004, chaired the Coretta Scott King Book Award jury six times, and coedited two editions of *The Coretta Scott King Awards*, including the 50th anniversary edition published in 2019. McCollough also served on the boards of Southfield (Mich.) Public Library and Langston Hughes Library in Clinton, Tennessee.



**George Needham**, 68, retired director of Delaware County (Ohio) District Library, died November 28. Needham also served as state librarian of Michigan, executive director of ALA’s Public Library Association, vice president of OCLC, and director of Fairfield County (Ohio) District Library. He received the Ohio Library Council’s Hall of Fame Librarian award in 2022.

**Betty-Carol Sellen**, 89, who held positions at the City University of New York (CUNY) Brooklyn College Library from 1964 until her retirement in 1990, died November 26. She had previously served at Brooklyn Public Library from 1959 to 1960 and University of Washington Law Library in Seattle from 1960 to 1963. She was a founder of ALA’s Social Responsibilities Round Table and its Feminist Task Force, chaired the Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship, and helped organize an ALA preconference on the Status of Women in Librarianship in 1974. In 1990, Sellen received the ALA Equality Award. Her numerous publications included *The Librarian’s Cookbook* and *What Else You Can Do with a Library Degree*.

**Michael D. Toman**, 73, adult services librarian at South Pasadena (Calif.) Public Library from 1995 until his 2015 retirement, died September 2. ●



# Completing the Circuit

How do you archive a robot?

This is the question that Kathleen Donahoe, robot archive processing archivist at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) Libraries in Pittsburgh, and a team of archivists, roboticists, and preservation experts seek to answer through the Robotics Project, which launched in 2019.

“There are just so many layers to how a robotics project comes about, and each has its challenges,” says Donahoe. CMU’s archive is not just robots. It also contains digital copies of the code they run on, records of research and development processes, photos, videos, and correspondence between collaborators.

Organizing these items can be tricky, Donahoe says. Caustic material needs to be protected in older engines and motors. Not all labs have the same workflow, meaning data can be spread across third-party platforms like Slack or GitHub. And in such a fast-paced field, she notes, preservation isn’t always a top priority, as robots may be disassembled and remixed into new projects. “[People in the lab are] not necessarily thinking, ‘We should keep this robot for 40 years,’” Donahoe says. “They’re thinking, ‘I need that arm.’”

CMU’s collection is available through its Digital Robotics Archive, and almost all items are available to view in person and open to the public. Preserving this history doesn’t benefit only researchers; the archive attracts fine arts students and even character artists for Disney. A favorite item of patrons is the inflatable robotic arm that helped inspire the design of the *Big Hero 6* character Baymax. “When [students] come in and see it during open houses, their eyes light up and they get really excited,” Donahoe says. “It’s a very CMU thing, to have that crossover between the humanities and sciences.” **AL**

**THE BOOKEND** showcases librarians, their work, and their workspaces. For consideration, email [americanlibraries@ala.org](mailto:americanlibraries@ala.org).

Photo: Heather Mull





## **PLA 2024 Conference** VIRTUAL



### **Can't make it to Columbus? We've got you covered!**

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## **Online Kids' Yoga & Mindfulness Training: Affordable, Engaging, & FUN!**

The Public Library Association has teamed up with Bari Koral + Yogapalooza to offer a top-rated way for children's librarians to learn how to seamlessly integrate engaging kids' yoga and mindfulness content into their programming. Yogapalooza activities are enjoyed daily by thousands of children, teachers, librarians, and parents. Children "sleep" like a pony in the barn, learn yoga with a dancing bear, go on a dragon hunt, practice with unicorns, and much more. Visit [tinyurl.com/yogapaloozamindfulness](https://tinyurl.com/yogapaloozamindfulness) to learn more and to start the self-guided certification course (only \$299!).

Bari Koral is a popular children's recording artist and a globally recognized kids' yoga educator. She has helped tens of thousands of educators calm their classroom (and their lives).

[tinyurl.com/yogapaloozamindfulness](https://tinyurl.com/yogapaloozamindfulness)

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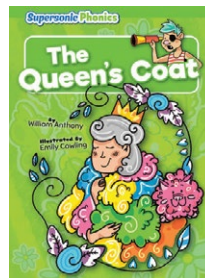
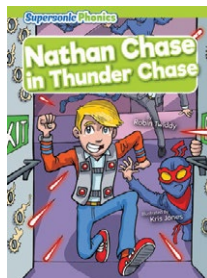
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