

# american libraries

November/December 2024

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION



## Stolen Pages

**NEWSMAKER:**

**Vashti Harrison**

p. 16

**Political Scientist  
in Residence**

p. 14

**PLUS:** Accessibility Grants,  
Intergenerational Book  
Clubs, Campaign Buttons

Looking back on a  
rare-book robbery

p. 18

# Unlock the Power of Puzzling at Your Library!

Sponsored by Ravensburger

Your library has always been a hub for learning, creativity, and community. Now, it's time to add some excitement and fun with Speed Puzzling, brought to you by Ravensburger!



## What is Speed Puzzling?

Speed Puzzling is an exciting, fast-paced challenge where teams, pairs, or individuals race to complete a jigsaw puzzle in the shortest time possible. It's a dynamic and engaging activity that strengthens community spirit while promoting focus, patience and teamwork. With large-scale events like the USA Jigsaw Nationals and the World Jigsaw Puzzle Championship, Speed Puzzling is becoming a worldwide phenomenon—and it's perfect for libraries looking to offer something new and fun!

## How Ravensburger Can Sponsor Your Library

As a world leader in puzzles and games, Ravensburger is excited to partner with libraries across the country to promote the joy of puzzling! Here's how we can support your library:

- **Event Sponsorship:** Let us sponsor your speed puzzling events! We are happy to announce we can provide a limited amount of free competition puzzles each year.
- **Free Products for Your Catalog:** We can send a small collection of puzzles for various ages to add to your collection for patrons to check out.

## Join the Puzzle Movement

Ravensburger is dedicated to creating opportunities for learning and fun within your library. Together, let's turn puzzling into a beloved community tradition!



### Ready to Get Started?

Contact us today to learn how Ravensburger can sponsor your library and bring the excitement of speed puzzling to your patrons!

### Sponsorship Intake form:

<http://rav.wiki/PuzzleEventSponsorshipRequest>

Ravensburger - Inspiring Minds, One Puzzle at a Time

**Ravensburger**

# CONTENTS

November/December 2024

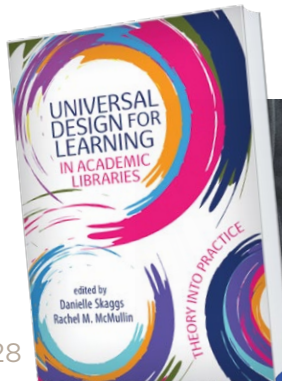
American Libraries | Volume 55 #11/12 | ISSN 0002-9769

## COVER STORY

### 18 **Stolen Pages**

On the 20th anniversary of a confounding crime

BY Anne Ford



28



22

## FEATURES

### 22 **Libraries Transforming Communities, One Year Later**

A look into ALA's largest-ever grant program, funding accessibility initiatives at rural and small libraries

BY Alison Marcotte

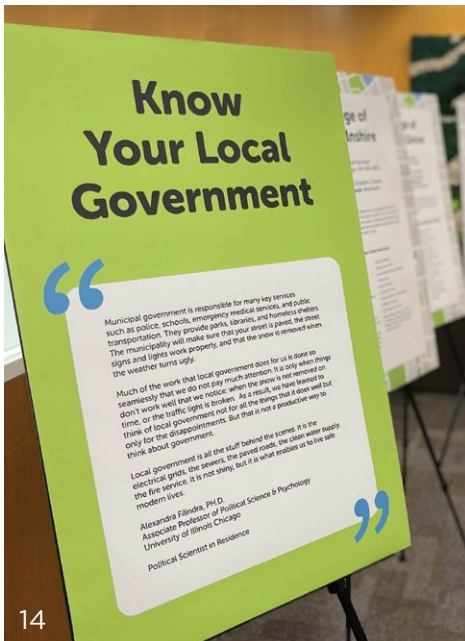
### 28 **10 Tips toward Accessibility**

An overview of guidelines that can optimize library instruction

BY Elisabeth B. White

**ON THE COVER:** Illustration by Shane Tolentino

# CONTENTS



14



16



10

## UP FRONT

3 **From the Editor**  
Getting through Together  
by Sanhita SinhaRoy

5 **From Our Readers**

## ALA

4 **From the President**  
Calling All Nations  
by Cindy Hohl

6 **Update**  
What's happening at ALA

## TRENDS

10 **For the Ages**  
Intergenerational book clubs foster friendships  
by Rosie Newmark

12 **The Bottom Line**  
Libraries distribute diapers to families in need  
by Cass Balzer

## SPOTLIGHT

14 **The Political Scientist Is In**  
Helping library patrons navigate the election year  
by Ashley Johnson, Roz Topolski, and Catherine Savage

## NEWSMAKER

16 **Vashti Harrison**  
On elevating—and celebrating—untold stories  
by Alison Marcotte

## PLUS

11 By the Numbers  
17 Noted & Quoted

## PERSPECTIVES

### ACADEMIC INSIGHTS

32 **Small Victories**  
by Lorin M. Flores

### DISPATCHES

33 **Redefining Resilience**  
by Emily Weak

### YOUTH MATTERS

34 **The Upside to Asides**  
by Tess Prendergast

### ON MY MIND

35 **Serving New Neighbors**  
by Ana Ndumu

### LIBRARIAN'S LIBRARY

36 **Improving Inclusivity**  
by Rachel Rosenberg

## PEOPLE

38 **Announcements**

## THE BOOKEND

40 **Put a Pin in It**



40

## ADVERTISER INDEX

Kanopy Cover 4 | Ravensburger Cover 2 | San José State University 15 | American Library Association Continuing Education Cover 3 | Editions 27 | JobLIST 9

Address: 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300  
Chicago, IL 60601  
Website: americanlibraries.org  
Email: americanlibraries@ala.org  
Phone: 800-545-2433 plus extension  
Career Ads: JobLIST.ala.org

Favorite political movie?

**EDITOR AND PUBLISHER**  
**Sanhita SinhaRoy** → *Fail Safe*  
ssinharoy@ala.org | x4219

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
**Terra Dankowski** → *RoboCop*  
tdankowski@ala.org | x5282

**SENIOR EDITOR**  
**Paula Mauro** ← *Election*  
pmauro@ala.org | x5105

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR** → *Legally Blonde 2: Red, White, and Blonde*  
**Megan Bennett** →  
mbennett@ala.org | x4213

**EDITOR-AT-LARGE**  
**Anne Ford**  
anne.ford@ala.org

**EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING ASSOCIATE**  
**Carrie Smith** → *In the Loop*  
casmith@ala.org | x4216

*Citizen Ruth* ← **ART DIRECTOR**  
**Rebecca Lomax**  
rlomax@ala.org | x4217  
*The Act of Killing* ← **CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**  
Lucas McGranahan, Joanne Trestrail → *Wag the Dog*

*The Contender* ← **ADVERTISING**  
**Melissa Carr** melcarr@ala.org | 704-491-7789  
**Ryan King** rking@rkmediaadv.com | 773-414-9292  
Acceptance of advertising does not constitute endorsement.  
ALA reserves the right to refuse advertising.

*Thirteen Days* ← **PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT**  
**George Kendall** → *Dr. Strangelove*  
Senior Director, Publishing and Media  
**Mary Jo Bolduc** → *A Few Good Men*  
President Rights, Permissions, Reprints | x5416

**MEMBERSHIP**  
**Melissa Kay Walling**, Associate Executive Director,  
ALA Offices and Member Relations

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
Bradley J. Kuykendall (chair), Eileen K. Bosch,  
Pat Hawthorne, Elizabeth Nelson, Matthew N. Noe,  
Lisa Anne Romano, Katie Rothley  
Committee associates: Lisa Bintrim, Sarah Maximiek  
Editorial policy: ALA Policy Manual, section A.8.2

**INDEXED**  
Available full text from ProQuest, EBSCO Publishing, H. W. Wilson,  
LexisNexis, Information Access, JSTOR.

**SUBSCRIBE**  
Libraries and other institutions: \$75/year, 6 issues, US, Canada,  
and Mexico; international: \$85. Subscription price for individuals  
included in ALA membership dues. Email membership@ala.org, call  
800-545-2433, or visit ala.org. Claim missing issues: ALA Member  
Relations and Services. Allow six weeks. Single issues: \$12.50, with  
a 30% discount for five or more copies. (Discount applies only to  
multiple copies of the same issue.) Contact Carrie Smith, 800-545-  
2433 x4216 or casmith@ala.org.

**PUBLISHED**  
*American Libraries* (ISSN 0002-9769) is published 6 times yearly.  
Printed in USA. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, Illinois, and  
additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Personal members: Send  
address changes to American Libraries, c/o Membership Records,  
American Library Association, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300,  
Chicago, IL 60601. ©2024 American Library Association. All rights  
reserved. No portion of this magazine may be reproduced or  
published without written permission from the publisher.

## Getting through Together



Sanhita SinhaRoy

Like many people, I enjoy curling up with a good heist story on a chilly evening. But what Anne Ford reports in our cover story (“Stolen Pages,” p. 18) is no light caper. In fact, it’s a harrowing look 20 years later at the infamous Transylvania University rare-book robbery, which resulted in the theft of \$725,000 worth of books and manuscripts from the library’s special collections, including a first edition of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*. Ford’s article is a gripping story of betrayal, trauma, and lessons learned.

Many of you will receive this issue shortly before Election Day. For the occasion, our team brings several articles on that theme. In “The Political Scientist Is In” (Spotlight, p. 14), staff members at Vernon Area Public Library District in Lincolnshire, Illinois, discuss their political scientist residency, an initiative to educate and inform voters throughout this election cycle. The effort is boosting civic engagement and restoring faith in the integrity of the election process.

In “Put a Pin in It” (Bookend, p. 40), we talk with Corinne Wolfson, digital collections librarian at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. The school’s Library and Research Services is home to more than 4,800 buttons, pins, and stickers, many displaying campaign messages. As she notes, some of these items still speak to current issues.

For those in the library field, those issues certainly include censorship and book banning. In her column (“Calling All Nations,” p. 4), ALA President Cindy Hohl writes about the fight against challenge attempts and how we must all “rise in solidarity through acts of respect and kindness.”

Author and illustrator Vashti Harrison (Newsmaker, p. 16), the first Black woman to win the Caldecott Medal in its 86-year history, for her book *Big*, talks about sharing real stories to help us all feel “a little less alone in those really tough, sad moments.”

There’s nothing like a high-stakes election for producing tough moments of all kinds, and nothing like good books and good friends to help us get through them.

Sanhita

There’s nothing like a high-stakes election for producing tough moments of all kinds, and nothing like good books and good friends to help us get through them.

# Calling All Nations

Embracing humanity through shared values and a celebration of differences



Cindy Hohl

Stories are powerful, and to see yourself reflected in the pages of a book is to receive validation and inspire understanding of shared life experiences.

**R**ecognizing all of humanity in libraries requires a thoughtful approach and a humble spirit. I believe that we, as information professionals, have been called to this work because of our shared values.

Every day, library workers provide a vital public function. We are entrusted to serve our communities, and we know that the best way to serve the public good is to welcome everyone into libraries to access accurate information. To answer the call to join public service is to step into the rank of noble professionals who pledge to serve everyone in the best way possible, and that is through equality of access and equitable service.

When libraries elevate every voice, they help people live their best lives together, and that is a society we should all aspire to support. When readers learn about new worlds and characters through books, they embrace humanity in their hands.

With a recent decrease in book censorship attempts, now is the time to be heartened that our efforts to inform the public and dissuade the spread of misinformation are encouraging positive support of our libraries. We must also continue to stand united so that everyone feels they are represented and a part of our communities. Stories are powerful, and to see yourself reflected in the pages of a book is to receive validation and inspire understanding of shared life experiences.

We must uphold solidarity with authors and members of our BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities, supporting everyone during attempts to dehumanize people and erase the fact that there are many ways of living. Actively working toward inclusion ensures that no one is left behind and that our communities are all the better for it.

We all have opinions on literary merit, and we don't all have to agree on the takeaways

of a story, but we can embrace differences to learn and grow together. These discussions will strengthen the fabric of society. To that end, we encourage everyone to join our Unite Against Book Bans campaign ([uniteagainstbookbans.org](http://uniteagainstbookbans.org)).

As we advocate for no more silenced voices in America, we need to preserve the lessons learned from these times so that we can work toward a resolution for future generations and prepare for the next wave of hostility displayed through material challenges and other attempted acts of censorship.

To embrace humanity is to call all nations to rise in solidarity through acts of respect and kindness, and I believe that librarianship is the ambassador to all fields of enlightenment because of these shared values.

For example, there was a time in this country when it was illegal for Indigenous peoples to speak, read, write, or sing in their native languages. November is National Native American Heritage Month, and I hope to see many displays and programs recognizing the rich cultures of the original inhabitants whose descendants are still here.

December 10 is also Human Rights Day, as declared by the UN General Assembly in 1948. For almost eight decades, this celebration has encouraged people across the globe to recognize the inherent dignity of humanity, and this act of recognition helps us achieve inclusion.

Thank you, library workers, for your service to the field. We are truly grateful for your efforts to promote sustainable service for all. Wopida Tanka! (*Many thanks!*) **AL**

---

**CINDY HOHL** is Dakota of the Santee Sioux Nation and works in Missouri on the ancestral homelands of the Kaw/Kansa, Kickapoo, Očeti Šakówin, Osage, Otoe-Missouria, Shawnee, and Wyandot.

## Unique and Refreshing

The Downtown Reno Library of Washoe County (Nev.) Library System is the neatest one in the *American Libraries* Library Design Showcase issue (“Lushness in the Library,” Sept./Oct., p. 48). Most of the other ones, and most others I have seen featured in the past, look so cold and corporate, making them appear intimidating. I simply don’t see “library” when I look at them, which is a shame because I’m sure they cost quite a penny to build. It may be due to my area’s libraries being smaller and cozier, often Carnegies or other old buildings with additions and some touch-ups. To see a fun addition such as the Downtown Reno Library is truly refreshing. I hope other libraries with unique characteristics, especially smaller ones with not as much money, feel more confident in showing themselves off, because I want to go to this library so badly now.

**Charessa Sistek**  
Okawville, Illinois

## Providing Printouts

I am a little frustrated about the lack of a print program option at ALA’s Annual Conference and Exhibition. I can understand the reasoning behind a greener, paperless option, but not everyone has a smartphone and data plan or is willing to load an app on their device. There is an internet café, but this year it



Toronto Public Library’s York branch

consisted of three terminals and a printer that printed two sheets every two to three minutes and was only available for limited hours. I spent most of my conference trying to figure out what to attend rather than actually attending anything.

I also like the print program for later reference. A permanent copy of programs and panels may prove relevant long after the conference is over and a digital copy is no longer accessible. It is also very useful to have a paper map of the various event locations. Trying to look at a map on a small phone screen is an exercise in frustration.

It would be very helpful to have an opt-in or purchase option for those who need or desire it. The cost to attend Annual keeps going up, and

yet the value does not seem to be keeping pace. The past two I have attended, where there was no print program, I have left feeling more frustrated than inspired, spent less time connecting with people, and felt my presence and contributions were not desired if I don’t have the money or ability to be electronically connected. For the first time in 16 years, I am questioning whether it is even worth being a member of ALA.

**Cheryl Aine Morrison**  
Bothell, Washington

## CORRECTION

In “2024 Library Design Showcase” (Sept./Oct., p. 18), an image of Toronto Public Library’s (TPL) Albert Campbell branch was incorrectly used to represent TPL’s York branch.

**f** Outstanding coverage of an outstanding library! Congratulations to all of you at Brown County (Wis.) Library for what you are accomplishing for our community!

**BRIDGET KRAGE-O’CONNOR**, in response to “2024 Library Design Showcase” (Sept./Oct., p. 18)

**f** Love her. She is nice and bright and humble.

**LISA DAVIS-GODLEY**, in response to our coverage of veteran TV news anchor Connie Chung’s appearance at ALA’s 2024 Annual Conference and Exhibition

**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.

## FOLLOW US:

**x** @amlibraries  
**f** [facebook.com/amlibraries](https://facebook.com/amlibraries)

### ALA Reports Slowdown in Book Challenges

During this year's Banned Books Week (September 22–28), the American Library Association (ALA) released preliminary data documenting attempts to censor books and materials in public, school, and academic libraries through the first eight months of 2024.

ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) tracked 414 attempts to censor library materials and services between January 1 and August 31, with 1,128 unique titles challenged. In the same reporting period last year, ALA tracked 695 attempts with 1,915 unique titles challenged. Though the number of reported challenges declined in 2024, ALA notes that the number of documented attempts to censor books continues to exceed numbers prior to 2020, and instances of *soft censorship*—where books are purchased but placed in restricted areas, not used in library displays, or are otherwise kept off-limits or hidden—prevail.

"As these preliminary numbers show, we must continue to stand up for libraries and challenge censorship wherever it occurs," said ALA President Cindy Hohl in a September 23 statement. "We urge everyone to join librarians in defending the freedom to read. We know people don't like being told what they are allowed to read, and we've seen communities come together to fight back and protect their libraries and schools from the censors."

OIF compiles data on book challenges from reports by library workers and news stories published in the US. Because many challenges are not reported to ALA or covered by media, the data represents only a snapshot of censorship attempts.

The theme for this year's Banned Books Week was "Freed Between the Lines." A day of action, Let Freedom Read Day, was held September 28 and focused on voting. For more information, visit [bit.ly/OIF-data-24](https://bit.ly/OIF-data-24). ●

#### Revised Dates for 2025 Annual Conference

On August 22, ALA announced a change in dates for its 2025 Annual Conference and Exhibition in Philadelphia. Originally scheduled for June 26–July 1, 2025, the event will now take place June 26–30, with closing programs occurring on Monday.

ALA Conference Services notes that the decision to revise conference dates follows a review aimed at accommodating the schedules of attendees, addressing logistical concerns, and ensuring a more engaging and accessible experience for all. To sign up for updates for the 2025 Annual Conference, visit [alaannual.org](https://alaannual.org).

#### \$3.5 Million in Grants for Small and Rural Libraries

ALA is accepting applications for the third round of funding of its Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC): Accessible Small and Rural Communities

grant program. During this round, an estimated \$3.5 million in grants will be distributed to small and rural libraries to improve the accessibility of facilities, services, and programs to better serve people with disabilities.

Library workers may apply for LTC grants through December 11. Up to 300 libraries will be awarded grants of \$10,000 and \$20,000 to support costs related to a community engagement project, as well as receive virtual trainings, online resources, and technical and project support from ALA's Public Programs Office throughout the grant term. Each selected library will conduct input-gathering sessions to ensure their work aligns with local disability community needs and will be required to facilitate a conversation with the primary audience they are hoping to reach.

A total 465 libraries representing 46 US states and the Northern Mariana Islands have so far received funding through this initiative. To be eligible, a

library must be located at least five miles from an urbanized area and in a place with a population of 25,000 people or fewer. Previous awardees are eligible to apply, but priority will be given to applicants not previously awarded. For more information, including grant guidelines and successful application examples from earlier rounds, visit [ala.org/LTCaccess](https://ala.org/LTCaccess). (See p. 22 for a look at how libraries are using their LTC grants.)

#### Applications Open for Carnegie-Whitney Grant

The ALA Publishing Committee is seeking applications for its Carnegie-Whitney Grant. The grant provides up to \$5,000 for the preparation of print or electronic reading lists, indexes, or other guides that promote reading or the use of library resources at any type of library.

Previously awarded projects include a resource guide about disabilities, disability theory, and assistive technologies; a bibliography for LGBTQ+ teens;



# ALA Hosts Intellectual Freedom Summit in D.C.

For the third time in its nearly 150-year history, ALA convened an Intellectual Freedom Summit to bring together national organizations, publishers, educational institutions, foundations, authors, and other champions in supporting the freedom to read. The event, held September 17 at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., aimed to forge strong partnerships and shape strategy to fight ongoing censorship challenges.

“As we gathered at the world’s largest library, we identified strategies to respond to the withdrawal and censorship of information,” said ALA President Hohl in a September 18 statement. “We are joining forces to lift ourselves and ultimately our country above the fray of polarization and politicization of access to information.”

ALA last hosted an Intellectual Freedom Summit in 1953, where the Freedom to Read Statement, a seminal document responding to the censorship pressures of the McCarthy era, was produced. That statement, approved by the American Book Publishers Council, remains a foundational text for the protection of intellectual freedom.

This year’s summit built on that legacy, inviting a coalition of diverse voices to collaborate on a new playbook to address censorship challenges. For coverage of the event, visit [bit.ly/AL-IFsummit](https://bit.ly/AL-IFsummit). For more information on the summit, visit [freepopleareadfreely.org](https://freepopleareadfreely.org). ●

an annotated list of graphic novels that discuss mental health; and a collection of resources aimed at web accessibility for libraries.

Applications are due November 1. Recipients will be notified by February 2025. For more information, visit [bit.ly/CW-grants](https://bit.ly/CW-grants).

## ALA Accredits First LIS Program outside North America

For the first time, ALA’s Committee on Accreditation has granted accreditation to a library school program outside North America. On July 29, ALA announced that the master’s in library and information studies program at University College London received initial accreditation in June 2024. University College London’s program is already

accredited by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, the library professional body in the UK.

“We recognize the importance of working with the global library community, and this is a significant step as we build opportunities for people joining our profession,” said ALA President Hohl in a statement.

ALA’s accreditation will apply to all students who have graduated from the master’s program since July 2022. The next comprehensive review visit is scheduled for spring 2031. For more information, visit [bit.ly/COA-UCL](https://bit.ly/COA-UCL).

## 2024 Spectrum Scholars Announced

On August 1, ALA’s Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services

## CALENDAR

NOV.

**International Games Month**

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

NOV. 14–16

**Core Forum** | Minneapolis

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

JAN. 24–27, 2025

**LibLearnX 2025** | Phoenix

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

APR. 2025

**School Library Month**

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

APR. 2–5, 2025

**Association of College and**

**Research Libraries 2025**

**Conference** | Minneapolis

[bit.ly/ACRL2025Con](https://bit.ly/ACRL2025Con)

APR. 6–12, 2025

**National Library Week**

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

APR. 8, 2025

**National Library Workers Day**

[ala-apa.org/nlwd](https://ala-apa.org/nlwd)

APR. 9, 2025

**National Library Outreach Day**

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

(ODLOS) announced it had awarded scholarships to 70 students pursuing graduate degrees in library and information studies as part of its 2024 Spectrum Scholarship Program.

The Spectrum program aims to increase diversity in the profession by providing scholarships to students who are American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern/North African, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Recipients are selected based on their leadership potential and commitment to building community and promoting social justice in the LIS profession.

Since 1997, ALA has awarded more than 1,600 Spectrum Scholarships. In this most recent cycle, the program

# ALA, Partners Awarded IMLS Grant to Support Literacy

On September 19, ALA announced that it and its partners in the Adult Literacy and Learning Impact Network (ALL IN) had received a National Leadership Grants for Libraries Award of more than \$400,000 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The grant will support adult and family literacy by funding the design and creation of 500 literacy centers at libraries across the US.

“Libraries are culturally and strategically positioned to close the literacy gap in this country,” said Kevin Strowder, director of ODLOS, in a statement. “The innovative collective we’ve established through ALL IN and key library systems, with essential support from IMLS, prepares us to enhance the blueprint for addressing the multiple literacy crises in our communities.”

According to the US Department of Education, an estimated 54% of adults lack proficiency in foundational

literacy, including reading, numeracy, and digital skills. Literacy is directly connected to better health outcomes, reductions in recidivism, and better language and learning outcomes.

Through this new initiative, ALA and its ALL IN partners will codesign a set of resources and training materials alongside personnel at Charleston County (S.C.) Public Library, Chicago Public Library, and Delaware Libraries, intended to help library professionals support literacy-building in their communities. ALL IN members partnering with ALA include the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, National Center for Families Learning, ProLiteracy, and World Education.

The resources developed over the course of this two-year project will be available to libraries nationwide. For more information, visit [bit.ly/ALA-ALLIN](http://bit.ly/ALA-ALLIN). ●

## Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

In compliance with the United States Postal Service requirements, the following statement is published as it was submitted to the postmaster on PS Form 3526.	Extent and nature of circulation	Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months	No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date
<b>Publication title</b> <i>American Libraries</i>	<b>Total number of copies (net press run)</b>	43,241	44,583
<b>Publication number</b> 0002-9769	<b>Paid circulation</b>		
<b>Filing date</b> September 23, 2024	Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions	40,813	41,268
<b>Issue frequency</b> 6 issues annually	Mailed in-county paid subscriptions	0	0
<b>Mailing address</b> 225 N. Michigan Ave. Suite 1300 Chicago, IL 60601	Paid distribution outside the mails	1,370	1,406
<b>Editor/Publisher</b> Sanhita SinhaRoy	Paid distribution by other classes of mail through the USPS	0	0
<b>Managing Editor</b> Terra Dankowski	<b>Total paid distribution</b>	42,183	42,674
<b>Owner</b> American Library Association	<b>Free or nominal rate distribution</b>		
	Outside-county copies	0	0
	In-county copies	0	0
	Copies mailed at other classes through the USPS	61	71
	Distribution outside the mail	894	1,415
	<b>Total free or nominal rate distribution</b>	955	1,486
	<b>Total distribution</b>	45,993	46,057
	<b>Copies not distributed</b>	784	493
	<b>Total</b>	46,777	46,550
	<b>Percent paid</b>	97.6%	95.81%
	<b>Electronic copy circulation</b>		
	Paid electronic copies	0	0
	Total paid print copies	42,183	44,129
	Total print distribution	45,993	46,057
	Percent paid	97.6%	95.81%

received four times as many applications as there were available scholarships. To learn more about the Spectrum Scholarship Program, visit [ala.org/spectrum](http://ala.org/spectrum). For a list of this year’s scholars, visit [bit.ly/ALASpectrum24](http://bit.ly/ALASpectrum24).

### ALA Presents during UN General Assembly

On September 21, experts and leaders representing government, academic, public, and school libraries in New York City presented the Association’s first in-person event to coincide with a session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. The event, titled “Libraries Powering the UN Global Digital Compact,” was presented by ALA’s UN Sustainable Development Goals Subcommittee, part of the International Relations Committee, at New York Public Library’s Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library.

The program discussed an inclusive global framework for overcoming digital, data, and innovation divides, as well as the opportunity libraries have to lead with this framework in

their local communities. Presenters included Loida Garcia-Febo (2018–2019 ALA president), Brandy McNeil (president-elect of the Public Library Association), and Shauntee Burns-Simpson (former president of the Black Caucus of ALA). For more information, visit [bit.ly/ALA-UN-event](https://bit.ly/ALA-UN-event).

### Applications Open for Jason Reynolds Travel Grant

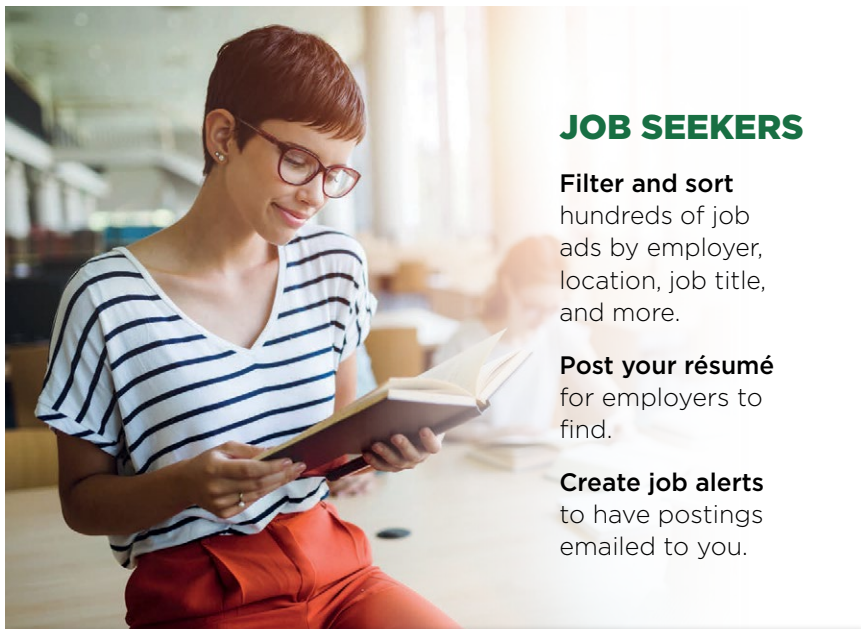
ALA is accepting applications for its 2025 Jason Reynolds/Simon & Schuster Travel Grant. The grant will cover expenses for five Black/African American librarians to attend the 2025 Annual Conference in Philadelphia. Applicants must work in youth or teen services in a public library or as a librarian or media specialist in a school library.

Grant recipients will receive up to \$3,000 (and no less than \$1,500) for travel, housing, registration, and a ticket to the Coretta Scott King Book Awards Breakfast, where recipients will be acknowledged. Applications are due December 1. Winners will be announced in February 2025. For more information and to apply, visit [bit.ly/JR-SS-grant25](https://bit.ly/JR-SS-grant25).

### New Research Addresses Librarian Roles amid COVID-19

On September 20, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) announced new research published in its peer-reviewed online journal *School Library Research* that examines the shifting responsibilities and duties of school librarians within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The Evolving Roles of School Librarians during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Phenomenological Study” by Kay Elizabeth Wright, Olga Koz, and Julie Moore uses interview-based methodology to explore how the duties of school librarians grew, changed, or became strained amid a virtual learning environment. The free article is available at [ala.org/aasl/slr](https://ala.org/aasl/slr). [AL](#)



## JOB SEEKERS

**Filter and sort** hundreds of job ads by employer, location, job title, and more.

**Post your résumé** for employers to find.

**Create job alerts** to have postings emailed to you.

# ALA JobLIST

Your source for jobs in Library and Information Science and Technology.

[joblist.ala.org](https://joblist.ala.org)

## EMPLOYERS

**Strengthen your candidate pool.** ALA reaches the engaged professionals and students you want to hire.

**Simplify recruitment** with flat-rate pricing, ad options to maximize visibility, and powerful employer branding features.



ALA JobLIST is a service of the American Library Association and Association of College & Research Libraries.

# TRENDS



Members of Totoket Valley Elementary School's (TVES) intergenerational book club, comprising 4th-graders from TVES and residents from North Branford Senior Center in Northford, Connecticut, complete an activity based on the book *Mr. Ferris and His Wheel* in 2023.

In intergenerational book clubs, members of different ages come together to discuss literature. Libraries often host them in partnership with local senior organizations, offering young people and older adults the chance to socialize, build connections, share stories, and find out what they have in common.

"We had some seniors involved who did not have children or grandchildren and were just so grateful to be part of the program," Seiden says of TVES's club, which began in 2019. "On the other side, we had kids that didn't have that generation in their lives, so it was just very sweet and tender."

## For the Ages

Intergenerational book clubs foster friendships

BY Rosie Newmark

On a Wednesday in February 2023, anyone stopping by the North Branford Senior Center in Northford, Connecticut, might have expected to hear big-band music or golden oldies, not Disney songs. But that was before the 4th-graders got there. "There's so much that we share / That it's time we're aware / It's a small world after all," several older adults sang along with students, who were visiting from nearby Totoket Valley Elementary School (TVES) as part of an intergenerational book club. The song was part of the club's discussion of the picture book *Mr. Ferris and His Wheel* by Kathryn Gibbs Davis, which is

set during the 1893 world's fair in Chicago.

"There [are] moments where suddenly, the years melt away, and the 4th-graders and the seniors are responding in similar ways to the story," says Carrie Seiden, former teacher-librarian and gifted education specialist at TVES.

For example, during their reading of *Mr. Ferris and His Wheel*, some participants disclosed small details—like that they loved Ferris wheels or found them scary—while one older adult talked about actually attending a world's fair. Her story got the kids hooked. "She just made it really real," Seiden says.

### Not your typical classroom

At Montgomery County (Md.) Public Libraries' Little Falls branch in Bethesda, the intergenerational book club between local middle schoolers and retired adult volunteers from the Jewish Council for the Aging, which began in the spring of 2020, is held virtually. It started as an attempt to create more virtual programming in the height of the pandemic but has remained an offering due to its popularity. It is run by Judy Ehrenstein, head of children's services, and Shawna Leonard, teen librarian, both from the Little Falls branch.

Recently, the club read *Attack of the Black Rectangles*, a middle grade novel about censorship by

“There [are] moments where suddenly, the years melt away, and the 4th-graders and the seniors are responding in similar ways to the story.”

**CARRIE SEIDEN**, former teacher-librarian and gifted education specialist at Totoket Valley Elementary School in Northford, Connecticut

A. S. King. Leonard says that while she thought students would be more focused on the importance of learning about censored content, they ultimately focused more on why the characters in the book chose to censor in the first place.

Students are encouraged to stray from the typical book report format, Ehrenstein notes. The club’s aim is to help students develop their public speaking skills outside the classroom. “We’re trying to give them the freedom to say, ‘I just don’t think that these were good choices made in this book’ and ‘I don’t understand,’” she says. “I don’t think you ever get to say that when you’re in school.”

Some seniors and students were hesitant to speak up at the beginning of TVES’s club, Seiden says, because they were afraid to read aloud or say the wrong thing. Soon, they learned to laugh at their mistakes; learn from one another; and to take turns teaching,

speaking, and listening. “The seniors get to see how intelligent and thoughtful 4th-graders are, just how wise they are in their own way,” Seiden adds.

### Finding common ground

Arlington (Mass.) High School (AHS) has hosted its Intergen Book Club in conjunction with its town’s Council on Aging each year since 2005. Students can submit the hours they participated in the book club for their community service requirement. Participants help choose what they read and have read titles across many genres, including frequently banned books like *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky, *Maus* by Art Spiegelman, and *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas.

“Since banned and challenged books have been so much in the news in recent years, our members have certainly been interested in understanding that,” says Stacy Kitsis, AHS library teacher and book club co-organizer.

Marci Shapiro-Ide, a social worker from the Council on Aging who co-runs the club with Kitsis, says that over time, American society has gone away from living in multigenerational households. Reading *Maus*, in particular, was eye-opening for students: They learned that some of the senior members had parents or other relatives who were Holocaust survivors.

“There are a lot of kids who don’t have exposure to people of different generations,” adds Shapiro-Ide. “These interactions help boost kids’ empathy.” One student went on to write

Continued on page 13 ▶

## BY THE NUMBERS

# Small Business

## 50%

Approximate percentage of libraries in the US that provide free services to entrepreneurs seeking to start or expand their businesses, according to the American Library Association’s *Libraries Build Business Playbook* ([bit.ly/AL-LBBP](https://bit.ly/AL-LBBP)).

## 5.5 million

The record-breaking number of new businesses started in 2023, according to the US Census Bureau.

## 4

Number of commercial kitchens at Mid-Continent Public Library’s Culinary Center in Kansas City, Missouri. These kitchens, available to rent for start-up food businesses, offer a six-burner range top, conventional and convection ovens, mixers, a steam kettle, and both dry and cold storage.



## \$13,000

Amount that St. Louis County (Mo.) Public Library estimates small businesses can save annually by using its databases and resources. Its Small Business Center offers subscriptions to LinkedIn Learning, the Gale Business: Entrepreneurship database, and a directory of foundations offering grant opportunities.

## 8

Number of street vendors who served as paid consultants for Los Angeles Public Library’s Sea un Vendedor Ambulante Exitoso/Successful Street Vending program.

The program includes a self-paced curriculum that can be accessed via smartphone in Spanish and English. Check out *Call Number* podcast’s May 2023 episode to learn more. ●





St. Louis (Mo.) County Library, in partnership with the St. Louis Area Diaper Bank, distributes diapers at its six library locations.

# The Bottom Line

## Libraries distribute diapers to families in need

BY Cass Balzer

**W**hat would you do to keep your child clean, dry, and healthy? Skip meals? Miss bill payments? Take on an extra job?

For nearly half of US families with young children, the answer is: all of the above and more.

A National Diaper Bank Network study found that in 2023, an unprecedented 47% of families with young children nationwide struggled to afford diapers—a drastic increase from 2010, when 33% of families reported diaper need.

In response, libraries have stepped up to distribute these critical supplies. Though they can be challenging to fund and

coordinate, these programs are immensely popular and—for many communities—vital.

### Meeting a growing need

In 2020, as COVID-19 raged, the Western Pennsylvania Diaper Bank in Pittsburgh needed an outdoor area in which to safely distribute supplies to families. “They asked if they could set up in our parking lot,” says Mandy Luchs, director of Sewickley Township Public Library (STPL) in Herminie, Pennsylvania. Soon after, she explains, “we decided we wanted to have a more formal relationship with them.”

Now STPL uses grant money to pay an annual partner fee of \$2,650 to the diaper bank. That

allows the library to offer packages of diapers or training pants to about 50 families a month. Each family can receive up to two packages per child plus a package of wipes, and supplies are distributed the first Wednesday of each month.

“We picked that day because our local church has a food pantry that people come to on that same first Wednesday,” Luchs says. “So if families had transportation issues, or they were coming from outside the area, then they would only have to make one trip to our town to do it.”

The library’s diaper program has had no issues attracting participants. “We can’t advertise it a lot because we run out so quickly,” says Luchs. “We run out of almost everything every month. [Pull-up training pants] go quickly; I think that’s because the kids are in those sizes for a longer period of time.”

Implementing the diaper distribution program has come with significant logistical challenges, such as storage. At STPL, diaper kits are stored in the basement, meaning that on distribution day, staff members must constantly go up and down stairs to retrieve them. “We put them in big blue moving bags, like IKEA bags, kind of,” Luchs says. “They have handles that we can almost wear like a backpack to bring them up and down the steps. It’s a lot of physical labor, but we feel like it’s worth the trouble.”

### ‘As easy as possible’

St. Louis (Mo.) County Library (SLCL) began its partnership with the St. Louis Area Diaper Bank

in 2019, after Library Director Kristen Sorth and the head of the diaper bank found themselves serving on a local committee together and struck up the idea of an official collaboration.

A diaper program at the library “just made sense,” Sorth says. “The library is the perfect place to distribute things for people that need them. We have parking; it’s a safe place. And we knew people were struggling. Diapers are expensive, and they are taxed at a higher rate,” she says, referring to the 4.2% tax in Missouri, whose tax code treats them as a luxury item. “We really view diapers as part of the core needs that go into the social determinants of health.”

Families enroll in SLCL’s program by providing a child’s name, birthdate, and zip code. The library asks that children in the program be present at the time of enrollment, but they don’t have to be present at subsequent pickups, which can take place at any of SLCL’s six locations. “We try to make it as easy as possible,” Sorth adds. “You don’t need a library card to get diapers. You don’t even have to live in our district.”

SLCL’s program has distributed nearly 2 million diapers to more than 10,000 families since its inception. “We broke the diaper bank’s partnership model, because they were just overwhelmed by the number of diapers we were distributing compared to their other locations” at food banks, churches, and similar institutions, Sorth says.

Who’s paying for all these diapers at the library? The St. Louis County Library Foundation fundraises about \$13,000 each year for the diaper program. “We don’t use tax dollars, other than our employees doing the distribution,” Sorth stresses.

## “We really view diapers as part of the core needs that go into the social determinants of health.”

**KRISTEN SORTH**, director, St. Louis (Mo.) County Library

LA County (Calif.) Library (LACL) launched its diaper program in 2022 following a board motion from the County Board of Supervisors and a partnership with local nonprofit Baby2Baby, which donated an initial \$25,000 and 300,000 diapers. “We wanted to help families who were poor or disproportionately affected by the pandemic, or just challenged with the rising cost of essential items,” says Library Director Skye Patrick.

Diaper kits are available across six library locations, and participants can request one simply by walking up to the circulation desk. “We allow you to take one kit per day,” Patrick says, although “if a person came in and she was like, ‘Listen, I really need three kits,’ and we know that person has triplets, we’ll absolutely be able to assist.”

So far, LACL has distributed more than 4,000 diaper kits. “I would not be surprised if we found ourselves at the end of the year wanting to add more [diaper distribution] locations,” Patrick says. “It’s one of those things where you scratch your head and think, ‘Why didn’t we think about this more than two years ago?’” <sup>AL</sup>

**CASS BALZER** is a writer in Chicago.

◀ Continued from page 11

his college essay about the positive impact the book club left on him.

### Sharing wisdom

Little Falls’ club organizers have considered transitioning to in-person meetings but found that participants prefer the virtual format because they can join the meetings from anywhere without having to find transportation or navigate conflicts with other activities.

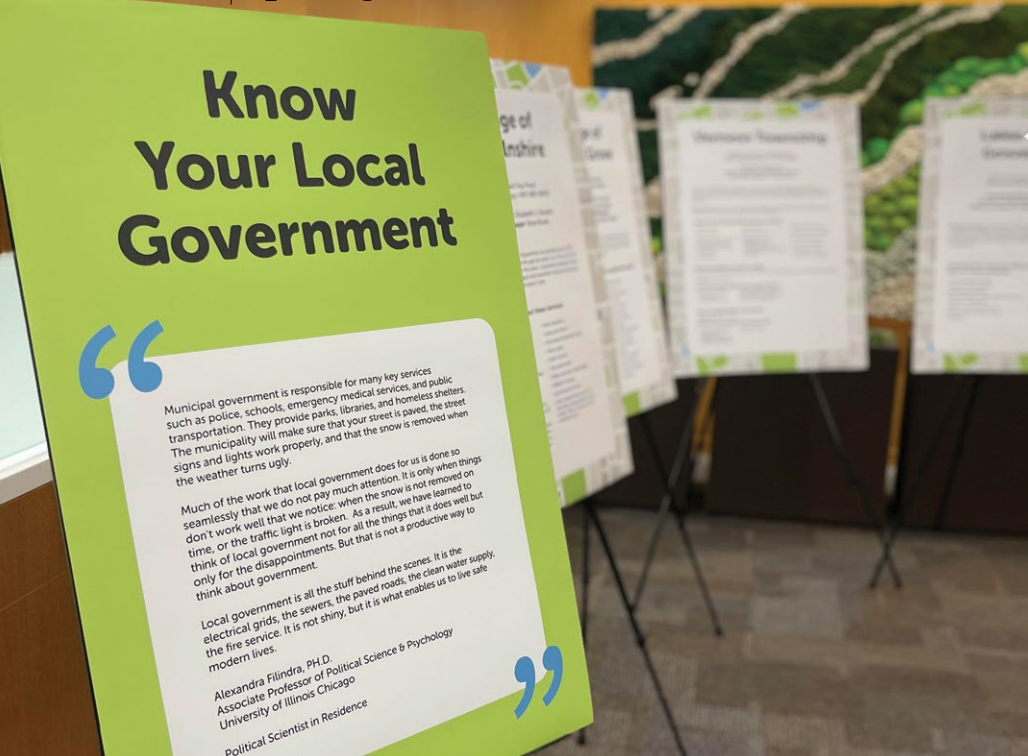
“There was one student who would call in from the gym because she had practice until 4:30 and we started at 4:30,” Leonard says. Offering multiple meetings per book, she adds, is what makes the club successful; it allows students to get comfortable around adults and gives them time to build confidence during discussions.

AHS’s Kitsis emphasizes the importance of fostering a nonjudgmental, welcoming environment. People are encouraged to come regardless of what point they are in the book, “even if you didn’t get to start [it].”

She adds, “Don’t ever feel like if you didn’t finish it, you can’t come and talk. We don’t judge anybody, and I think that makes a big difference.”

Seiden recommends acquiring large-print books for accessibility purposes. Ones that appeal to multiple ages are becoming more commonplace, she says, though it might be difficult to find them in a local or school library. “The key to these intergenerational book clubs is just finding the right texts,” Seiden says. “I think it would work regardless, but the right book just seems to become magic.” <sup>AL</sup>

**ROSIE NEWMARK** is a recent graduate of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, where she studied journalism.



Vernon Area Public Library District in Lincolnshire, Illinois, worked with municipal leaders to create a self-guided exhibit titled *Know Your Local Government*.

Filindra in summer 2023. Filindra is an associate professor at University of Illinois Chicago who holds a PhD in political science. We were drawn to her experience and research in political psychology, specifically her insights about why people make the choices they make. We contracted with her to provide lectures, recommended reading, and other interactions with patrons over the course of 2024 in exchange for a stipend.

In January, Filindra gave a lecture at the library on the primary and caucus process. We also offered related activities to help boost civic engagement and prepare patrons for voting. For example, we invited staff from the county clerk’s office to VAPLD to demonstrate new election equipment, so that prospective voters could feel confident about the integrity of the election process.

Inspired by Filindra’s research, we also worked with municipal leaders to create a self-guided exhibit in the library titled *Know Your Local Government*. The exhibit helped residents discover and connect with services provided by the village, township, and county. An interactive component, “Why I Love My Community,” helped remind patrons of the infrastructure and public services that enrich our lives.

In October, content focused on the Democratic and Republican party conventions, political decision making, and the integrity of the election process. For high school students voting in their first-ever presidential election, an election trivia program reinforced important information in a fun and engaging way (and

# The Political Scientist Is In

Helping library patrons navigate the election year

Noting the public’s eroding faith in the election process and its growing mistrust of many information sources, staffers at Vernon Area Public Library District (VAPLD) in Lincolnshire, Illinois, realized the library could help. The Pew Research Center has found that eight in 10 Americans trust libraries to help them find reliable facts, and that a majority of Americans believe libraries help them get information to aid in decision making. To build on that trust, VAPLD retained a political scientist in residence—a non-partisan, university-level subject matter expert—to educate and inform voters throughout the 2024 election cycle.

BY Ashley Johnson, Roz Topolski, and Catherine Savage

In a healthy democracy, voters have confidence in the electoral process, are well informed about the issues, and know that their voice matters. Unfortunately, rampant misinformation and disinformation have left voters unhappy and confused these days about what to believe and whom to trust.

As information professionals, we know the library can make a difference. Providing a space for civic engagement is an important part of what public libraries do. To that

end, the community engagement team at Vernon Area Public Library District (VAPLD) in Lincolnshire, Illinois, retained a political scientist in residence as a key component of a yearlong series of election-related offerings. This approach was inspired by similar programs at other libraries, such as the naturalist in residence at Madison (Wis.) Public Library.

After interviewing several professors at nearby universities, we ultimately connected with Alexandra

Photo: Vernon Area Public Library District in Lincolnshire, Illinois



offered students credit toward civic participation assignments for college-prep government classes). For adults, a lecture from Filindra on election integrity and current affairs highlighted the policies that safeguard our elections and covered late-breaking developments in the presidential campaigns.

The series concluded with a live, interactive virtual town hall, which provided a final opportunity for participants to ask Filindra any remaining election-related questions they had.

Patrons have told us our political programs were timely, thought-provoking, and engaging. When we surveyed attendees of an August program on the psychology behind political decisions, all respondents said the program taught them something new, and 83% of them

agreed with the statement “I feel that my library is a safe place to discuss civics.”

While professional residencies aren’t new for libraries, they are rare, and their novelty attracts media attention. When we introduced the series at the start of the year, our regional newspaper ran a front-page story about it. Likewise, when we shared Filindra’s answers to patron questions about the primary ballot in a press release, the paper again picked that up and ran it on the front page.

Another bonus of having a subject matter expert on retainer was the ability to quickly and authoritatively address the situations that none of us had on our bingo card. When presumptive Democratic candidate President Joe Biden withdrew from the race, for example, we knew we

Providing a space for civic engagement is an important part of what public libraries do.

could turn to Filindra to provide answers about the process and historical context. We were able to seamlessly provide information from a trusted voice without having to scramble to find a new source. <sup>AL</sup>

**ASHLEY JOHNSON** is community engagement and partnerships librarian at Vernon Area Public Library District (VAPLD) in Lincolnshire, Illinois.

**ROZ TOPOLSKI** is VAPLD community engagement program coordinator.

**CATHERINE SAVAGE** is VAPLD head of integrated communications.

# Elevate Your Learning

The San José State University School of Information has been a leader in online learning since 2009—and we’re continually innovating new ways to prepare our students for exciting, fulfilling careers in the modern workforce.

Join our award-winning Master of Library and Information Science degree program and take your library career to the next level!

- Customized curriculum
- 100% online courses
- Micro-credentials and Certifications
- One-on-one career counseling
- Diverse network of 13,000+ alumni

Let’s do this together. [ischool.sjsu.edu](https://ischool.sjsu.edu)



Accredited with Continued status by ALA since 1969



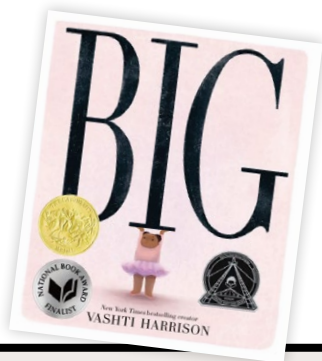
SCAN HERE TO LEARN MORE

**SJSU** SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

School of Information

# Vashti Harrison

On elevating—and celebrating—untold stories



Author-illustrator Vashti Harrison made history this year as the first Black woman to win the Caldecott Medal, which has been awarded since 1938, for her picture book *Big*. It tells the story of a big girl in a world that celebrates small, tracing her journey to self-love and showing the power of words to both hurt and heal. Harrison also received 2024 Coretta Scott King Author and Illustrator Honor awards.

*American Libraries* spoke with Harrison about the response from readers nationwide, life after winning the Caldecott, and how the publishing world can continue to elevate untold stories.

BY Alison Marcotte

## What stories have you been hearing from readers about *Big*?

Kids ask me questions about the narrative because there's a lot of visual metaphor. For example, "Does the character really grow that big?" There's a lot for readers to come to their own conclusions about—such as what the character is feeling and experiencing—and I love that. So

I always flip it back on them and ask, "Well, what do you think?" It's really cool to hear how kids are processing story and processing emotions.

Kids have an extreme sense of justice. I always feel uncomfortable reading the tough parts of the story,

particularly the parts about bullying. It never feels good. But what always does feel good is hearing kids protest: "That's not right! That's not fair!" It makes me feel great when kids stand up for something if they don't think it's right.

I have lots of good conversations with adults who process it through their own lens of "This is something that I went through. I wish I had had a story like this." It's bitter-sweet. I wish we all knew that many of us go through the same thing. Maybe we would have felt a little less alone in those really tough, sad moments.

## In your acceptance speech, you talked about the Black Caldecott Honor winners who helped pave a way for you. You, too, are now paving a way for other creators.

I would love to know that this win means that there will be some momentum. I know that there are incredibly talented people out there, and I will do what I can to lift them up so that their work can be seen and shared and hopefully lead a pathway toward more of these awards.

People always ask me, "Why do awards matter?" I went to a very

small school. I lived in a very, very small town. We didn't have big budgets at our school library, but we did have a lot of the award-winning books.

And so I think about the budget that libraries and schools have for which books they can get. Having an award emblem on a book might get it into spaces like that, so kids like me can see it. So it does mean something. And I hope any work I do encourages more diverse, interesting, talented young people to get their work out there.

## How can the publishing world further highlight diverse voices?

I will always cherish the fact that people love my books and celebrate them, and I will always cherish this award. But when someone comes to me and says, "Well, you should write a book about this or that," I always counter by saying, "There are incredible books out there that are already published. Why are we not celebrating those?"

In this effort for diverse books, I think diversity should exist across genre as well. I write serious and

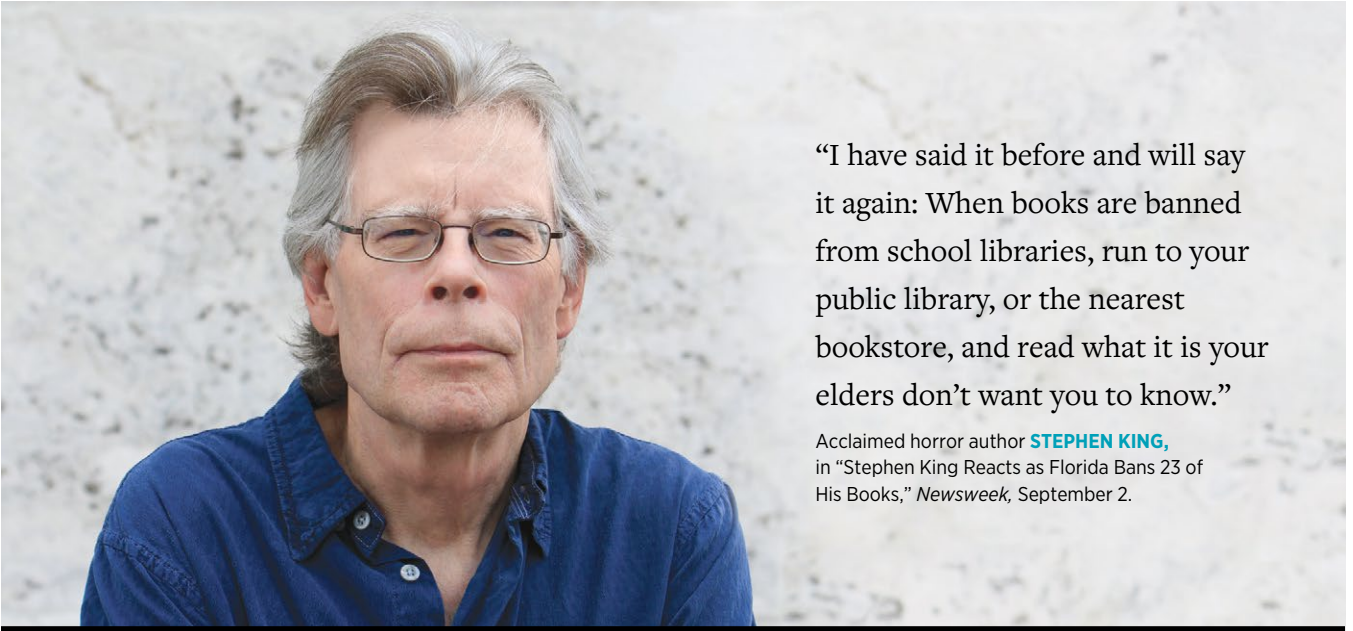
tender books, so that's just my vibe. But I would love to see some silly and goofy books.

### MORE ONLINE

For the extended interview, visit [bit.ly/AL-Harrison](http://bit.ly/AL-Harrison) after November 1.

I was thinking the other day about what books were popular when I was a kid, like *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* [by Jon Scieszka, illustrated by Lane Smith]. Black and Brown kids need jokey, goofy books and things like *Dragons Love Tacos* [by Adam Rubin, illustrated by Daniel Salmieri]. They deserve to laugh and have joy, too. There are great people making books like that, and I would like to elevate them and see those books on the bestsellers list. **AL**





“I have said it before and will say it again: When books are banned from school libraries, run to your public library, or the nearest bookstore, and read what it is your elders don’t want you to know.”

Acclaimed horror author **STEPHEN KING**, in “Stephen King Reacts as Florida Bans 23 of His Books,” *Newsweek*, September 2.

“It’s been a lesson in collaboration, a lesson in building relationships, a lesson in dreaming alongside our neighbors. Ultimately, what does it look like to restore a space and then [have] it be true to its purpose?”

Author, community organizer, and school librarian **MAURICE BROADDUS**, in “Indianapolis’ First Library for Black Residents Reopens through School Librarian’s Leadership,” *Chalkbeat Indiana*, August 19.

“We’ve seen a couple of cases where things have been stirred up or initiated by groups or people in America—it’s no one actually in the school community itself.”

**ALISON TARRANT**, chief executive of UK’s School Library Association, in “Dozens of UK School Librarians Asked to Remove LGBTQ+ Books, Survey Finds,” *The Guardian*, August 19.

“To be on a library card myself is just a different level of honor that I never thought would actually happen. You just don’t think of putting yourself on a library card.”

Librarian, mental health advocate, and influencer **MYCHAL THREETS**, in “‘Library’s Number One Fan’: Viral Librarian Mychal Threets to Be Featured on Berkeley (Calif.) Public Library Cards,” *The Daily Californian*, August 20.

“MY EYES HURT. MY HEAD HURTS. MY BRAIN IS TIRED OF LOOKING THROUGH BOOKS, AND EVERYBODY, THE WHOLE STAFF, IS FEELING THE SAME WAY.”

Library director **KAREN SPECK**, in “This Alabama Library Had to Review 8,000 Books. Here’s What Happened,” *AL.com*, August 20.

“In an age of AI, the role of the genuinely creative and original writer is more important than ever. But that means writers need to push even harder at finding those nooks and crannies of character and human experience that machine learning won’t be able to replicate. If your dream is to make a killing from formulaic romances or thrillers, I’m less optimistic.”

Author and podcast host **KATE WEINBERG**, in “How Ghosts of Ex-Boyfriends and a 16th-Century Poet Inspired Author Kate Weinberg,” *Country and Town House*, September 2.

# Stolen Pages

On the 20th anniversary  
of a confounding crime

BY Anne Ford

**F**or Susan Brown, December 17, 2004, was a perfectly normal day—until she saw the elevator doors open.

Brown, director of Transylvania University’s J. Douglas Gay Jr./Frances Carrick Thomas Library in Lexington, Kentucky, was walking past the staff elevator on the library’s main level when the doors parted and she reflexively glanced inside. That’s when her gaze locked, she says, not on the two young men standing there, but on what they held: “Great big red books that I knew probably shouldn’t be in the elevator.”



Illustration: Shane Tolentino

Those great big red books were four double-size, incalculably valuable folios of John James Audubon's 1838 *Birds of America*. Fewer than 200 sets exist. And one of them, Brown realized, was probably being stolen from her library.

On this, the 20th anniversary of what came to be known as the Transy book heist, *American Libraries* looks back at one of the most brazen—and most puzzling—thefts ever to take place in an academic library.

## THE HEIST AND ITS AFTERMATH

As Brown watched, one of the men jabbed at the elevator buttons, and the doors slid shut again. She rushed up the stairs to an upper floor in search of Special Collections Librarian and University Archivist Betty Jean “BJ” Gooch, thinking that her colleague might know what was happening. “That’s when I found her on her knees with her glasses knocked off, stricken,” Brown says. “She said, ‘They tied me up, and they took the Audubons!’ From there, the adrenaline kicked in.”

Yelling to her colleagues to call 911, Brown flew back down the stairs—and made it to the main level of the library just as the robbers, who had been waylaid by an accidental elevator trip to the basement and the ride back up, were about to walk out with their cargo.

“I started screaming obscenities at them,” Brown remembers. “They look at me, look at the books, look at me, drop the books, and slam out the side door. In retrospect, it’s dumb, but I chased them. They jump in a van, and for a hot minute I stood behind the van, and then I went, ‘Okay, nobody’s making good decisions,’ and I stepped aside. They took off.”

The Audubons were safe. But what Brown hadn’t noticed in the rush was that the robbers had been wearing backpacks. Those backpacks, as she would soon learn, contained more than \$725,000 worth of books and manuscripts from the university’s collection, including an 1859 first edition of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*.

As the adrenaline wore off and the police arrived, different emotions washed over Brown: concern for her traumatized colleague, of course, and also white-hot anger. “We were trying so hard to make our rare-books collection open and available to people,” she says. “And we got betrayed.”

In the months following the incident, as Brown and her colleagues worked with the Lexington Police and the FBI, the question on everyone’s mind was: Who were the robbers? Casual opportunists? Or professional criminals?

## THE ROBBERS’ SIDE

“The truth is, I was a disaffected teenager,” says Eric Borsuk, one of the robbers.

Borsuk—then a student at University of Kentucky (UK) in Lexington—had been recruited to help steal the books by two childhood friends, fellow UK student Warren Lipka and Transy student Spencer Reinhard. Reinhard had gotten the idea for the robbery while touring Transy’s library during freshman orientation.

“They take you in the special collections and show you these books,” including Audubon’s *Birds of America*, Reinhard told journalist John Falk for *Vanity Fair* in 2007 ([bit.ly/VF-Transy](http://bit.ly/VF-Transy)). When he was told that a similar set had recently sold for \$12 million, “it immediately had kind of sparked my imagination, like a fantasy.”

Fantasy aside, 20 years after the robbery, it’s difficult to understand how a small group of college students decided to undertake such a difficult and dangerous crime. Though Borsuk and Lipka had a lucrative campus business making fake IDs for fellow students, neither they, Reinhard, nor Chas Allen (another UK student, later brought in as a getaway driver) were hardened criminals. “The whole thing started as a game, like playing cops and robbers as a kid,” Borsuk later wrote in his memoir *American Animals* (Turner Publishing Company, 2018).

Lipka, Reinhard, and Allen did not respond to interview requests from *American Libraries*. But Borsuk agreed



Lexington Herald-Leader (Dec. 18 and Dec. 30, 2004)

to an email interview. About his motives for participating in the robbery, he says: “For me, more than anything, it was this all-pervading, cultural obsession with materialism and consumerism that drove me away toward a life of crime and self-destruction.... [In] no way is that meant to justify our actions. I was lost and thought that the crime would somehow lead to salvation or a better life, as odd as that may sound.”

### ‘I FELT VERY VIOLATED’

After months of planning, the day of the heist arrived. Reinhard stationed himself as lookout at a window in an athletic center near the library, while Allen waited in the getaway van in the library parking lot. Lipka arrived at the rare book room for an appointment he had made with Gooch, the special collections librarian, through a Yahoo email address under the name “Walter Beckman.” Once there, he phoned Borsuk to join him.

**“We were trying so hard to make our rare-books collection open and available to people. And we got betrayed.”**

**SUSAN BROWN**, director of Transylvania University’s J. Douglas Gay Jr./Frances Carrick Thomas Library in Lexington, Kentucky

Inside the rare book room with Gooch, Lipka used a Taser-like device called a stun pen to force her to the ground, and Borsuk bound her hands and feet. In his memoir, Borsuk describes Lipka reassuring Gooch that they were just there for the books and wouldn’t hurt her. Gooch, meanwhile, was later quoted in *Vanity Fair*

as remembering Lipka saying, “Quit struggling, BJ, or do you want to feel more pain?” (Through a Transy spokesperson, Gooch, now retired, declined to be interviewed for this article, stating that “what she has to say about it is out there” already.)

Borsuk and Lipka then stuffed smaller books and manuscripts in their backpacks before working together to carry the heavy Audubon set to the elevator. Despite Brown’s chase, the thieves escaped with nearly three-quarters of a million dollars’ worth of rare books and manuscripts.

For Brown, the hours after the theft were a haze of action. “You don’t get training on this,” she says. While the Lexington Police and the FBI swung into gear, “I contacted the Antiquarian Booksellers’ Association [of America] and started getting advice. I reached out to Interpol. I built a little website with images [of the stolen items] on it so that I could share that. At this point, I wasn’t sure if these were people who took the books because they have a buyer in mind. I was not convinced [law enforcement was] going to find these things.”

Meanwhile, Gooch—who had been so frightened during her ordeal that she’d feared having a heart attack—was understandably traumatized. As she told the Associated Press in 2018 ([bit.ly/AP-Transy](https://bit.ly/AP-Transy)): “Because I’m here [in the library’s rare book room] alone so much, I’ve made it into a second home, so when these guys attacked me, it was like someone coming into my home and attacking me. I felt very violated.” She initially remained at work, but a few months after the incident, took a leave of absence.

“I didn’t immediately realize what she was going through,” Brown says of her colleague. “In retrospect, I would have checked in with her more. That’s the piece that I wish I had handled better. I think we tend to be more aware of the trauma people carry now than we were 20 years ago.”

### THE FATAL MISTAKE

Meanwhile, the robbers took the stolen books and manuscripts to the auction house Christie’s in New York City for appraisal. And there they made the mistake that would lead to their capture: They gave the employee who met with them the same “Walter Beckman” email address Lipka had used to make the appointment with Gooch.

That meant that when the FBI subpoenaed “Walter Beckman’s” emails from Yahoo, they found messages to Christie’s. The Christie’s employee who had met with the robbers—and been so mistrustful of them that she hadn’t pursued the appraisal—turned over the contact information they’d given her, which included Reinhard’s actual phone number.

Less than two months after the robbery, Allen, Borsuk, Lipka, and Reinhard were arrested and the stolen items recovered undamaged. All four robbers confessed. All pled guilty to six federal charges, among them conspiracy to commit robbery, aiding and abetting the theft of objects of cultural heritage, and interstate transportation of stolen property.

“BJ Gooch’s ordeal had become a cause célèbre among librarians, many of whom wrote letters to the judge arguing against leniency,” wrote Falk in the *Vanity Fair* article about the case. In the end, Allen, Borsuk, Lipka, and Reinhard each received a sentence of seven years and three months in federal prison with no possibility of parole.

All served their sentences and were released in 2012. Allen’s LinkedIn page describes him as a filmmaker, producer, and screenwriter. Borsuk is now a writer and prison-reform advocate. Lipka earned a bachelor’s and master’s degree in film from Temple University in Philadelphia and now, according to his social media pages, works as an electrician. Reinhard is a working artist.

Borsuk’s account of the crime, *American Animals*, was published in

## TRANSYLVANIA UNIVERSITY BOOK HEIST

# A brazen plot doomed to fail

### How four friends went from college classrooms to a federal courtroom

CHARLES ALLEN



Allen worked in his father's real-estate business and had some experience with auctions and appraisals.

ERIC BORSUK



Borsuk, a Lexington Catholic grad along with Allen and Lipka, was taking the semester off from UK.

WARREN LIPKA



Lipka was the "class clown" type in high school and a soccer player. He'd had financial problems lately.

SPENCER REINHARD



Reinhard was the only Transylvania student of the four. He was known in high school for soccer and art.

By Sarah Vos  
HERALD-LEADER STAFF WRITER

Four days before Christmas, two young men, one wearing a red tie, the other in a yellow suit jacket, arrived at Christie's, the famed New York auction house, collector. "Mr. Beckman," the division, wanted to sell some

The man in yellow brought pencil sketches by naturalist Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* to the theory of evolution and to the 19th century.

Melanie Halloran, Christie's specialist who with them, thought there was something suspicious about the meeting, she told her boss the men left.

There was. The manuscripts were not international book thieves. According to court documents who grew up in the same teamates who had Kentucky's all-star last week, the Reinhard, were charged

### WHAT WAS STOLEN

Items stolen from Transylvania University's library: *On the Origin of Species* by Means of Natural Selection, a first edition of Charles Darwin's famous work in which he set forth his theory of evolution. Published in 1859.

A collection of 20 sketches, or pencil drawings, by naturalist John James Audubon, done in about 1825 in preparation for his 1856-1857 edition of *Birds of America*.

Virius Santalis (translated as Garden of Health), a two-volume natural history, described by Transylvania as "succeeding rare," published in the 1500s, with hand-painted, gold-embossed woodcuts.

A manuscript written in 1425 in Winchester, England, for the Knollys family. It is transcribed in color with intricate lettering and floral decorations.



## Sentences in Transy book heist

### FOUR MEN EACH GET 87 MONTHS IN THEFT OF RARE ITEMS FROM LIBRARY

By Beth Musgrave

HERALD-LEADER STAFF WRITER

Four high school friends who stole rare manuscripts and sketches from the Transylvania University library will spend Christmas with their families before beginning their seven-year sentences in federal prison.

U.S. District Court Judge Jennifer Coffman sentenced each of the four to 87 months in prison yesterday after a nine-hour sentencing hearing.

Eric Borsuk, Charles Allen II, Warren C. Lipka and Spencer W. Reinhard — all 20 at the time of the book heist in December 2004 — will have to serve 85 percent of the 87 months, or at least 6 years.

The men will report to the Federal Bureau of Prisons on Jan. 16. It is not known yet where they will serve their sentences. Coffman

Tale of terror  
Transylvania librarian testifies about being attacked.  
Page A7

## Four plead guilty in Transy book theft

### 20-YEAR-OLDS' SENTENCING SET FOR SEPT. 9

By Beth Musgrave

HERALD-LEADER STAFF WRITER

They admitted to robbing the Transylvania University library.

They admitted they conspired to steal rare and valuable books such as a first edition of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and sketches by renowned naturalist John James Audubon.

They admitted they tried to sell the books to Christie's, an upscale New York auction house.

One even told the media that he made a grave mistake.

But what the four defendants in the Transylvania book heist didn't say yesterday is why they did it.



Lexington Herald-Leader (Feb. 2, Apr. 22, and Dec. 7, 2005)

2018; a companion film of the same name, written and directed by Bart Layton, was released the same year. In the film, the robbers and Gooch appear as themselves.

"We were glad that [Gooch] participated in the film and got to tell her story," Borsuk says. "We'd hoped that, in a sense, the film could provide some sort of closure. Because we never got to speak with her, she couldn't possibly have known the extent of our guilt and regret. I hope she knows that we've done everything within our power to take responsibility for our actions, pay our debt to society, and become our best possible selves."

Gooch retired from Transylvania University in 2020, after 26 years. "Forgiveness is a work in progress. I have good days and bad days," she told the Associated Press in 2018. "The bottom line is, I don't bear [the robbers] any ill will. I really don't anymore."

## SECURITY AND ACCESS

According to Brown, the effects of the robbery still linger at Transylvania University. "It changed the way we do security; I'm not sure I want to say how," she says, not wanting to give potential thieves any ideas.

Beth Kilmarx, cochair of the Association of College and Research

Libraries' Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) Security Committee, has worked in special collections since the 1980s. She was aware of the Transy heist when it happened and says it is atypical of the thefts she sees today.

"High-stakes thefts are largely being committed by professional thieves using sophisticated planning and technology," Kilmarx says, noting that recent book heists in the US and Europe have been inside jobs or involved perpetrators forging paperwork, disappearing records, and making impeccable counterfeits to replace stolen materials. Many libraries and cultural heritage organizations are also reluctant to report thefts, she says, because they can reflect poorly on an institution or upset boards and donors.

While the RBMS Security Committee does not issue statements on specific thefts, the section provides guidelines on security ([bit.ly/RBMS-sec](http://bit.ly/RBMS-sec)), most recently updated in 2023, and hosts regular webinars on the topic. But try as a library might to prevent or prepare for thefts, when a community is rocked by a high-profile incident, collection access will come into question.

"We're still trying to make sure that scholars have access, that our own students have access, but we're doing a lot more through email and scanning materials when we can," Brown says. "It's not a closed collection. But it is a bit more limited than it used to be.

"One of the things I realized is that there are no winners here," Brown continues. "Yes, we got the things back, but BJ was affected, and these people have affected their own lives and their families' lives by doing this. And the echo of that all the way through their lives, BJ's life, the life of the library—that's going to ring for a long time." **AL**



ANNE FORD is American Libraries editor-at-large.

# LIBRARIES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES,

## ONE YEAR LATER

A look into ALA's largest-ever grant program, funding accessibility initiatives at rural and small libraries

BY Alison Marcotte

In 2023, the American Library Association's Public Programs Office launched the largest grant initiative in the Association's history—the Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC): Accessible Small and Rural Communities grants. During the first round of funding, 240 small and rural libraries, located within towns with populations of under 25,000 people, received awards of \$10,000 or \$20,000 to improve the accessibility of their facilities, services, and programs. *American Libraries* spoke with five libraries that participated in the program's inaugural year about their projects' impact on those they serve. [AL](#)

**ALISON MARCOTTE** is a freelance writer for *American Libraries*.







Photos: Beth Demapan

## JOETEN-KIYU PUBLIC LIBRARY

Susupe, Northern Mariana Islands | \$20,000

**J**oeten-Kiyu Public Library (JKPL) is the state library of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, a US territory in the western Pacific comprising 14 islands.

JKPL's new Sensory Corner, paid for with a \$20,000 LTC grant, includes sensory equipment, devices, assistive technology, toys, and supplies for children who require assistance for disabilities that may be physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional. The library officially unveiled the Sensory Corner at its National Library Week proclamation signing event in April.

"I was inspired by Beth [B. Demapan, technical services librarian], who has a daughter [Alexandra] who is autistic," says Library Director and State Librarian Erlinda C. Naputi. "When Alex would come to the library, there wasn't much that we had to offer besides the computer screen."

JKPL is one of the few places on Saipan, the commonwealth's largest and capital island, to offer free, autism-friendly services, Naputi says. Demapan adds that because of the remoteness of the island, the price for sensory items there could be triple the price in the mainland US. Items in the space include tablets with cognitive aid applications, fidget spinners, noise-canceling headphones, braille talking books, wheelchairs, and more.

"A lot of families, if they want to buy something sensory-wise for their child, they have to either go abroad—which it's so hard to travel—or they have to order it online," Demapan explains. "And it might be defective when it comes here. It may take forever to come here."

For those who are unable to visit JKPL, the library bookmobile brings Sensory Corner resources directly to them. Staffers are also able to help kids with special needs and their families participate in and enjoy seasonal library programs, such as the spring Easter egg hunt and summer reading events.

"Families can come together and have a support system and place where they can feel comfortable bringing their kids," Naputi says. ●



The Joeten-Kiyu Public Library in Susupe, Northern Mariana Islands, used its Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities funding to create a Sensory Corner.



A catalog of the Burlingame (Kans.) Community Library's loanable items for patrons with disabilities, purchased with Libraries Transforming Communities grant funding.

## BURLINGAME COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Burlingame, Kansas | \$20,000

Inspired by her experiences with her teenage son who has autism, Brandi Shaffer, director of Burlingame (Kans.) Community Library (BCL), used \$20,000 in LTC funding to create a more accessible and inviting library for patrons with disabilities.

BCL added an accessible entrance with an automatic door, an ADA-compliant help desk, and sensory-friendly furniture and lighting for patrons who deal with overstimulation. Shaffer purchased audio-enabled hardcover books from Wonderbook and VOX Books, life skills items like visual schedule boards and dental hygiene kits, and resource bags.

With her son, who is now 13, Shaffer says she was used to feeling isolated by the lack of local places they could easily go to as a family.

“As I sat and thought about the fact that I’m not even comfortable bringing my own child in here, as

the director, how would I expect anyone else to be?” says Shaffer. “I couldn’t pass up the opportunity to apply [for the grant] after that. I just started day-dreaming about being able to give that to somebody.”

The idea to have loanable, try-before-you-buy resources came to Shaffer after her own family’s experiences with investing in life skill and comfort resources that sometimes didn’t work for them. Items now available also include weighted lap pads and vests, potty training kits, a transport pushchair, exercise balls, wiggle feet, and seat cushions. She says she wanted other families to avoid starting from “square one with every single problem.”

Creating a more accessible library “enriches the lives of not just people with [disabilities] but their family members who love them,” Shaffer says. “Everyone benefits.” ●

## ALGONA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Algona, Iowa | \$20,000

**A**fter undergoing a full-scale interior renovation in 2021, Algona (Iowa) Public Library (APL) wanted to extend its makeover to the outdoors—and eliminate barriers to enjoying it for those with disabilities.

The \$20,000 LTC grant is going toward creating an outdoor garden and activity space for community members with mobility issues. The outdoor space will have smooth walkways, raised garden beds for wheelchair-friendly use, and accessible seating.

APL purchased ADA-compliant swivel seats and a tandem face-to-face swing that lets two people, such as a caregiver and a child or hearing-impaired adults, play and communicate nonverbally because they can see each other's facial expressions. Both were recommended by Exceptional Opportunities, a local nonprofit that provides children and adults with disabilities with opportunities to take active roles in their communities. Many of its clients attend and participate in library programming, says young adult librarian Sonya Harsha, who applied for the grant.

"The Exceptional Opportunities staff was also excited about the [possibility] of offering another way for their clients to be able to give back to the community, by helping to maintain the gardens and do light maintenance by cleaning tables and walkways," Harsha says. "So, the development of the garden space is not just a one-way project. It includes the ability to give back."

Through additional donations and capital project funds, APL is purchasing plants and adding a drinking fountain. In 2024, APL also received a second round of LTC funding for additional accessibility improvements, including updating its automatic doors and railings and purchasing accessible seating for APL's STEM classroom space.

Creating the outdoor space has brought together the community, from Exceptional Opportunities, which shared its ideas; to Chips Off the Old Block Woodworking, a local group that is building the garden beds; to the county's Kossuth Area Garden Club, which is helping with planting, growing, and harvesting.

"The garden space is an extension of what we do here: inviting people in to be a part of our community," Harsha says. ●



Grant funding allowed the Orford (N.H.) Social Library to build an ADA-compliant ramp and pathway.

## ORFORD SOCIAL LIBRARY

Orford, New Hampshire | \$20,000

**A**t Rivendell Interstate School District in Orford, New Hampshire, a high school engineering class decided to rebuild the ramp leading into Orford Social Library (OSL) as its capstone project. It was a project that had been discussed by the library for nearly two decades.

"The ramp was rotting, and the brick pathway would get covered with water," says OSL Director Laina Warsavage. "In the summer, you'd step in these puddles. In the winter, it would freeze, and it was like ice skating."

In 2019, students completed an engineering plan to rebuild the ramp, but the project stalled in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased costs of construction materials. The \$20,000 LTC grant allowed OSL to finally complete the project.

The new ADA-compliant ramp and pathway, which was raised to prevent drainage from soaking the walkway, help a variety of visitors, Warsavage explains. This includes patrons who use wheelchairs—who couldn't access OSL during winter months when the ramp would freeze—as well as older adults, parents with strollers, and an employee from New Hampshire's Interlibrary Loan Program who transports shared library materials to and from OSL in large bins. Staffers also received a second round of funding that will, in part, pay for the installation of an automatic door opener.

"Every single person should be able to come into the library," Warsavage says. ●

# LEWISTOWN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Lewistown, Montana | \$10,000

**W**ith its \$10,000 grant, Lewistown (Mont.) Public Library (LPL) is bringing outreach services to cancer patients and caregivers.

The funding went toward providing materials to Helmsley Cancer Center Infusion Services at Central Montana Medical Center, located just a mile away from LPL. These include arts and crafts kits, audiobook players with preloaded titles, and The Flower Letters, a subscription service that sends stories in installments through the mail. LPL staffers ordered the letters in bulk, and staffers at the infusion center addressed and sent them to patients.

The library's goal is to help the facility's visitors creatively and emotionally process their medical

experiences, says director Alissa Wolenetz. Between June 2023 and June 2024, Infusion Services had more than 2,400 visits, including both local patients and patients from neighboring counties.

"When you are connecting with people in a really difficult time of their lives, it's really nice to be able to know that the materials and those extra outreach services that you're providing are the highest quality they can be because of this grant," says Wolenetz.

Since it's difficult to sterilize and wipe down physical books, the handheld audiobook devices, purchased from the company Playaway, have been a successful alternative for Infusion Services. People can listen to the audiobooks during treatments or take them home with them. LPL also purchased padded headphones for patients to keep.

For the arts and crafts resources, LPL partnered with local stationery store Paper and Grace. Patients and caregivers are given watercolor kits and calligraphy sets as well as diversions such as roll-up chess and checkers and mystery boxes—games in which players must uncover clues and solve various puzzles.

"We've had so much fun with this," says librarian Sue Standley, who collaborated with Wolenetz on the grant project. "It gave this freedom to be creative."

Through this project, the library has built stronger connections with the health care community.

For instance, some cancer support groups now meet at LPL. Staffers are also working on developing more wellness programs for patrons.

"We're trying to look more holistically at working with partner organizations, like all of our local education and health care providers, to look at what could make this area of Montana its own little blue zone," Wolenetz adds, referring to regions of the world where people live longer and healthier lives. ●

Lewistown (Mont.) Public Library used grant funding to purchase a subscription to The Flower Letters, which sends stories in installments through the mail. The library provides these stories to patients at a local cancer treatment center.

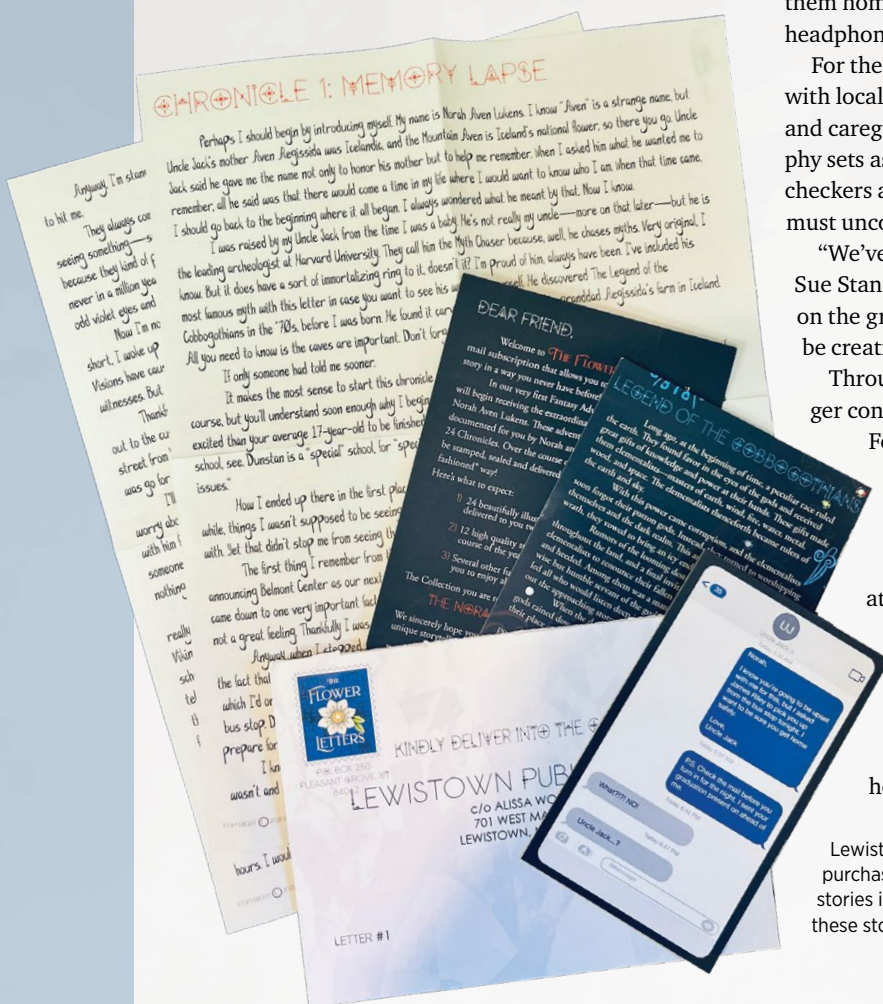


Photo: Alissa Wolenetz

# Browse the Fall/Winter 2025 Catalog!

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY TITLES FROM ALA EDITIONS | ALA NEAL-SCHUMAN

**FALL/WINTER 2025  
Catalog and Book of Games**

**ALA** Editions  
Neal-Schuman  
American Library Association

**ESSENTIALS OF  
STEM  
LIBRARIANSHIP**  
ALEXANDER J. CARROLL and JESSICA BOBYCZ  
p.4

**Person-Centered  
Management  
IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES**  
EDITED BY  
DAINI BRICHER COOK, MAGGIE J. KIRK, & DIANN BROTHERS  
p.8

**THE  
KIND  
LIBRARIAN**  
Cultivating a Culture of  
Kindness and Wellbeing  
in Libraries  
Helen Rimmer  
p.12

**STRENGTHENING  
LIBRARY  
ECOSYSTEMS**  
DORCAS HAND, SARA KELLY JOHNS,  
MICHELLE ROBERTSON, & ERYN DUFFEE  
Collaborate for Advocacy and  
p.13

**THE  
PLAYFUL  
LIBRARY**  
MEGAN LOTT  
BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS  
for LEARNING and CREATIVITY  
p.15

**The  
HIGH-IMPACT  
DIGITAL LIBRARY**  
Anna Newman, Jenny Morris, Rachel Jane Wittmann,  
Kathleen Cummings, Jane Morrison, and Megan Mayer-Habibian  
Innovative Approaches for  
Outreach and Instruction  
p.15

**RDA  
AND SERIALS  
CATALOGING**  
BO JONES  
p.36

**WONDER  
LIBRARIES**  
20 Expert Perspectives on  
What Kids Need Now  
Edited by  
Elizabeth M. McChesney  
p.41

**Manga  
Goes to School**  
Cultivating Engagement and Inclusion  
in K-12 Settings  
Ashley Hawkins,  
Emily Denton,  
Sara Smith,  
Julie Stevens, and  
Egail "Moose" Tovar  
p.47

[alastore.ala.org](http://alastore.ala.org)

[alaeditions.org/catalogs](http://alaeditions.org/catalogs)



# 10 TIPS TOWARD ACCESSIBILITY

---

An overview of guidelines that can  
optimize library instruction



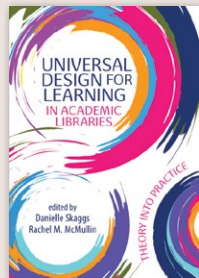
Photo: © Anna Stills/Adobe Stock

## BY Elisabeth B. White

**H**ow can librarians ensure their instruction materials are as accessible as possible?

One way is through Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines ([udlguidelines.cast.org](http://udlguidelines.cast.org)), a set of best practices to improve teaching and learning and create inclusive and equitable educational experiences for all students.

The guidelines include three principles that instructors must provide via multiple means: engagement (the “why” of learning), representation (the “what” of learning), and action and expression (the “how” of learning).



This is an excerpt from *Universal Design for Learning in Academic Libraries: Theory into Practice*, edited by Danielle Skaggs and Rachel M. McMullin (ALA Editions, 2024).

Any technology that we, as instruction librarians, use in our sessions, as well as any electronic materials we make available to students afterward, should be accessible to all. In the book *Ensuring Digital Accessibility through Process and Policy*, Jonathan Lazar, Daniel Goldstein, and Anne Taylor define *accessible technology* as “technology that can be utilized effectively by people with disabilities, at the time that they want to utilize the technology, without any modifications or accommodations.”

The guidelines are an excellent reference for planning library instruction sessions that can reach learners regardless of disability, learning styles, and preferences. However, to create a truly equitable educational experience, school library workers need to consider accessibility principles as well.

Any technology that we, as instruction librarians, use in our

It is problematic to rework materials to make them digitally accessible only after learning that a student needs accommodation, because it requires the student to disclose their disability. It’s not always easy for students to receive the accommodations they need, and instruction librarians are not always informed ahead of time if a student has a disability that would influence their ability to engage in the library session. The formal accommodation request process may also result in the student gaining access to the educational materials later than other students, putting them at a disadvantage.

We must educate ourselves on accessibility. The UDL Guidelines and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) work together to create a road map for accessible instruction. Web accessibility standards help developers and authors to make their websites fully accessible to all users. The benefits are wide-reaching. For example, closed captioning on videos is essential for individuals with hearing loss, but captions also benefit individuals who learn best from written content or who want to watch a video in a crowded place but don’t have headphones.

The most widely used accessibility guidelines are the WCAG version 2.1 ([bit.ly/AL-WebCAG](http://bit.ly/AL-WebCAG)). They are split into four areas to create the POUR framework:

1. **perceivable**, in that information is presented in ways that all users can engage with
2. **operable**, giving users multiple options for navigating and interacting with electronic materials
3. **understandable**, in that users can easily comprehend content
4. **robust**, meaning content is compatible with common device types, such as computers, smartphones, and screen readers.

While the WCAG were established with web content in mind, similar principles can be applied to any digital instruction materials, such as electronic worksheets, PowerPoint slides, or tutorials. We can use these guidelines in conjunction with the UDL framework to create inclusive library instruction for all learners.

Below I have outlined the best practices for accessible library instruction, which will help you create inclusive learning experiences for all students using UDL and WCAG.

## 1. Make your materials available outside of class

Giving your class a copy of materials in advance helps students who may need extra time to process the information. Not only is this practice helpful for those with learning disabilities or who use assistive technology, but it also benefits students who wish to engage with the content in multiple ways and at multiple times, even if they do not have a documented disability accommodation.

Creating and sharing online guides, such as LibGuides, is also helpful. HTML-based guides allow learners to easily zoom in, resize text, and use text-to-speech software. These also provide a useful reference for students to consult after class, which is especially helpful for those who have a hard time taking notes.

## 2. Use accessible file formats

All file formats are not created equal. When choosing which software to use, consider what your students have access to and are most familiar with in addition to accessibility features. For instance, both Microsoft and Google Suite are compatible with screen readers, but they do require content creators to do some work to make documents fully accessible.

Provide alternative text and use a consistent heading structure. Avoid PDFs whenever possible, as they are often difficult to use with assistive technology.

## 3. Make materials easy to find and navigate

Post your materials in a place that's logical and easy for students to find. Posting them in multiple places such as a guide on the library website and the course's page in your institution's learning management system can help.

Make materials easier to access during class time by providing descriptive, shortened URLs through free tools like [tinyurl.com](https://tinyurl.com) or [bitly.com](https://bitly.com). You could also create a QR code to allow students to quickly access materials on their mobile phones.

Break content into sections with clear headings. Try to strike the right balance between detailed descriptions and cognitive load. Screen reader users rely on headings to jump between sections of a website or document. Everyone can benefit from the automatically generated table of contents that appears in the navigation pane when headings are added in Microsoft Word or Google Docs. Headings also allow students to quickly scan content without getting distracted.

To make your PowerPoint presentations or Google Slides more navigable, give each slide a unique title. If you have multiple slides on the same topic, label them Slide Title (1), Slide Title (2), etc. You should also verify that the order in which a screen reader will read each item on a slide is logical.

## 4. Provide text alternatives and captions

The "perceivable" section of the WCAG involves text alternatives and time-based

media related to all three dimensions of UDL. To meet these standards, provide alternative text for image-based content. The alternative text should describe the main information that you hope users will glean from the image. It should be concise, and it should not repeat information from the main text.

Make videos accessible to users with hearing impairments by providing captions and transcripts. Some platforms, such as YouTube and Panopto, provide automatic captioning. Automated captions are a useful starting point, but they often have missing punctuation and other transcription errors. Edit your captions before sharing video content with users.

Turn on closed captioning when showing videos during a class session. If you are presenting from a computer with a microphone enabled, both PowerPoint and Google Slides provide a live captioning feature. Synchronous online teaching platforms such as Zoom, WebEx, and Blackboard Collaborate also provide live captioning, but they may require the meeting creator to enable that setting ahead of time.

Transcripts are another useful resource. They allow students to review content in a different format and at a different pace. For live class sessions in which you are not speaking from a script, provide additional context in your speaker notes to help students review after class.

## 5. Use animation sparingly

Animation, flashing, and videos that play automatically may induce seizures and other physical reactions in some students. Animation in PowerPoint or Google Slides can disrupt the reading order and cause a screen reader to read the same content multiple times. If you like to use some animations, such as questions or bullet points that appear sequentially during a live session, allow users to opt out. Create a separate,



screen reader–friendly version to share with students.

## 6. Be careful with color

Overreliance on color can cause color-blind users to miss important information. Students who like to read from printed materials may also have trouble interpreting images if they do not have access to a color printer. Therefore, you should not use color as the only means of conveying key content.

If you want to create contrast and draw attention to different words, passages, or parts of an image, use color in conjunction with other formatting. For example, you could use bold, italics, or underline in addition to color to differentiate text. For graphs, use different line styles (such as solid, dashed, or dotted) or fill patterns.

## 7. Provide clear instructions

When you provide worksheets or activities to students, include a description of what that content is and how it is useful to them. Reduce uncertainty and guesswork by clearly labeling where a response is needed and what type of response (such as text, number, or date) you expect.

You can also provide quick hints or links to useful resources to help students remember or locate information that may help them complete the activity. Provide your contact information so students know how to reach you if they need clarification outside of class.

## 8. Use plain language

The WCAG recommend writing web content at a middle school reading level or lower. This principle can be applied to other electronic materials as well. Defining uncommon terms, library jargon,



and acronyms will help learners follow your instruction.

Using plain language in digital materials helps novice and advanced students alike, as an individual's reading level may be lower for online materials than print materials. Online tools such as the Hemingway app and Microsoft's built-in readability feature can identify the reading level of your text and offer suggestions for improvement.

## 9. Research and test your technology's accessibility

In an ideal world, we would only purchase databases and other software that are fully compliant with the WCAG. In reality, we must do our best with what we have available. We should give preference to tools that are compatible with assistive technology in our instruction sessions.

When you must teach students to use databases with accessibility issues, you can help them by describing known issues and explaining possible workarounds. Point out accessibility and customization features such as display options and available file formats to help students use the tools more effectively. You can also recommend alternate databases with fewer accessibility issues that students may use to find comparable information. Do not be afraid to contact the database vendor to report issues.

## 10. Test the accessibility of your own materials

Microsoft products have built-in accessibility checkers that will flag common issues like missing alternative text or incorrect heading levels. Do your own spot-checking for common issues as well.

Make sure your materials are compatible with different technologies. Try loading your content on a computer, tablet, and smartphone and make sure it is easy to read and use on all three. Check how your content looks when zoomed in 200% and adjust if needed.

You can also conduct basic keyboard navigation and screen reader testing. Familiarize yourself with common keyboard shortcuts and try navigating your content using a keyboard and screen reader. NVDA ([bit.ly/AL-NVDA](http://bit.ly/AL-NVDA)) is a good free and open source screen reader option.

Look out for common issues such as information displayed on the screen but not read by the screen reader and *keyboard traps*—when you're stuck on a page element like a dropdown menu or hyperlink and can't navigate forward or backward. Focus on spotting major errors and check the guides for any software you use to get additional accessibility information. [AL](#)

---

**ELISABETH B. WHITE** is the science, technology, and mathematics librarian at Towson (Md.) University.

# Small Victories

## Microlearning gains traction in professional development

BY Lorin M. Flores



**LORIN M. FLORES** is instructional services librarian at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi. She has worked nearly 20 years as an academic instruction librarian and previously served as an adult services librarian in an urban public library setting.

The ongoing need to rapidly acquire knowledge and skills related to new technologies and developments in the library field has been a preoccupation of library workers and administrators for years. Keeping current may seem impossible, given time and budget constraints. But microlearning in the form of short online courses, or microcourses, can be an efficient and effective strategy to fulfill professional development needs.

Microlearning involves condensing instructional content into bite-sized chunks of information for maximum cognitive impact. Typically, instructional content is delivered online asynchronously, meaning microcourses can easily fit into a learner’s schedule as desired. Ideally, each course should range from five to 10 minutes to make the information graspable and maximize engagement, with the intention that learners will immediately apply the information they just learned.

Long popular in corporate environments, microlearning has been around for more than 50 years. It has been increasingly cited in scholarly literature over the past five or so years, suggesting a rising interest in adapting it for use in professional development at institutions of higher education and libraries.

Microlearning for professional development promises more efficient learning with less cognitive load, better retention, higher completion rates, and more engagement for learners than traditional professional development teaching models. Flexibility, portability, accessibility, and opportunity for learner self-direction are additional advantages that an asynchronous online microcourse approach offers. Research has suggested that microlearning may also foster a growth mindset in learners and increase motivation and engagement.

I experienced firsthand how powerful microlearning can be when my library successfully implemented a microcourse series designed to teach digital and information literacy to all first-year seminar students. At the time, we were struck by how microlearning resembles the way most of us consume information on social media. When the opportunity came up to plan the annual Instruction Librarian Retreat, reenvisioning the retreat as a microcourse series seemed like a natural first step toward establishing a vibrant educational trend.

Some professional development learners may experience discomfort with online microcourses because of the lack of in-person interaction. Including face-to-face activities as part of instructional content can ease this concern. Resistance to technology or discomfort with

digital literacy skills may pose another barrier to microcourse acceptance. Learners’ acceptance of the format for professional development is tied mostly to their perception of its ease of use and, to a lesser extent, to perceived user benefits.

Successfully implementing a professional development microcourse begins with planning the pedagogy, technology, and instructional content. The emphasis on brevity means that the format is best suited for teaching to a single learning outcome that’s focused on narrow topics.

Microcourses that include activities, instructional content, communication, and feedback have the best chance of succeeding. Varying the means of delivering information can enhance the experience; consider

incorporating videos, podcasts, websites, and other formats. Ease of use is crucial to the acceptance of microlearning for professional development, so choose a platform that is simple and familiar to your intended audience.

Microlearning and microcourses have strong potential to positively influence

professional development delivery in library work. Adopting this approach allows library workers to experience curated, hyper-relevant professional development focused on knowledge transfer and skills they can apply immediately in professional life. **AL**

Microlearning may foster a growth mindset in learners and increase motivation and engagement.

# Redefining Resilience

Steps hiring managers can take to improve the recruitment process

BY Emily Weak



**EMILY WEAK** is founder of the Hiring Librarians website. She works as a consultant in programming, community engagement, equity, and career services.

Something I always hear from hiring managers is that they want to build a resilient, diverse workforce. Sometimes we say we want a resilient workforce, but what we mean is that we want staffers who are willing to go above and beyond, or to do more with less.

These concepts are deeply entrenched in librarianship, but I think we're beginning to see how they can cause problems. The recognition of the harms of *vocational awe*, the notion that librarians, the library profession, and the institution of libraries as a whole is inherently good and therefore above reproach, seems to have set change in motion. The COVID-19 pandemic, too, has made many library workers rethink their priorities and acknowledge that they are experiencing low morale or burnout.

Instead of trying to hire people who will do more with less and who will thrive amid adversity, let's think about resilience as an organizational feature. How can hiring managers play a role in building a resilient workplace?

Resilience means hiring an adequate number of people for the tasks at hand. A resilient workplace has redundancy built in to ensure adequate coverage. Resilience and hiring do go together but only if the organization has adequately assessed its needs, projected future needs, and ability to hire and compensate the staff that will meet those needs.

Part of my work entails conducting surveys of people who are currently job hunting in the library and information service field. Their input has helped me outline a recruitment strategy with three principles to help build a resilient workforce.

**First undertake an accurate assessment of your needs.** Good hiring is grounded in this. Remove vestigial qualifications from a job description so that everyone involved has a clear picture of what's relevant to them. Any hiring effort should also include a frank look at diversity in your library. Begin to find and remove any barriers that you might be putting up inadvertently. What is keeping support staffers of color from transitioning to higher paid roles in the library? Are any of them pursuing an MLIS? They may already be performing uncompensated librarian work.

**Then communicate effectively.** Before interviews, let people know pertinent details: who will be there, what the room will be like, how long the interview will take, whether it's going to be timed or not. Provide questions in advance; this is an accessibility issue, and it can be key for applicants who are neurodivergent to have a fair shake in the hiring process.

In one of my surveys, a job hunter wrote, "The first job I applied to while I was in grad school took six whole months to email me and let me

know that I was not selected." Make sure you have communication and follow-ups built into your process. Communicate in a timely fashion, or at least let candidates know what your timeline will be.

Your individual staff members may also attempt to recruit within their personal networks. Help them do this in a way that reaches a broad range of people. Provide talking points and explain the

need to recruit beyond their usual networks.

**Finally, center kindness.** I see repeatedly in my work just how soul-crushing a job search can be, especially for Americans. We tie so much of our perception of self-worth to our jobs. Not having a job or having difficulties finding one can seem like

Instead of trying to hire people who will do more with less and who will thrive amid adversity, let's think about resilience as an organizational feature.

a referendum on our value as people. That's not even getting into the stress caused by worry about the inability to pay rent, buy food, and meet other basic needs. One job hunter I surveyed wrote: "I sometimes just sit and cry in front of my computer and hope my wife doesn't hear me." I think most of us have no desire to see other individuals in this kind of pain. As recruiters, let's do what we can to make things more humane.

*Adapted from "What Candidates Want: Revamping Your Recruitment," Core On-Demand Webinars (Aug. 2023).* **AL**

# The Upside to Asides

How—and why—to offer early literacy tips that support caregivers

BY Tess Prendergast



**TESS PRENDERGAST** is a children's librarian, has a PhD in early literacy education, and teaches librarianship and children's literature at University of British Columbia's School of Information in Vancouver.

I will never forget the surprised look on one mom's face during storytime when I dropped a tip—technically called an *aside*—about how rhyming helps babies differentiate sounds and prepares them for reading. “You mean that all this singing will help her in school?” she asked. “I thought we were just doing this for fun!”

Early literacy activities are certainly fun—but also valuable. For parents and caregivers who are already reading, writing, talking, singing, and playing with their children, offering tips might seem superfluous. But many aren't aware that simple, everyday activities—such as listing different food items in the grocery store—can benefit their child's early language and literacy development and have a lasting positive impact on their learning.

As children's librarians, we are uniquely positioned to pass on early literacy tips during our programs. Here are some pointers for devising and deploying these tips during storytimes and other interactions in the library to encourage and empower caregivers.

**Don't overthink it.** Early literacy tips don't need to be overly scientific or even very detailed. They just need to be friendly and sincere. For example, you don't have to educate caregivers about how a child's finger muscles develop through grasping. But you could mention that materials like Play-Doh, finger paints, and crayons—besides being enjoyable—develop children's fine-motor skills and help little hands get ready for writing later on.

**Be positive.** Our tips should be upbeat and absent of pressure and judgment. Their aim is to help a new caregiver feel confident in encouraging language and literacy growth. When talking about a book you're reading in storytime, for instance, you might point out that children often relate to stories that reflect their daily lives and routines. Being able to relate on a personal level to what happens in stories, such as a character brushing their teeth or taking a bath, helps kids maintain energy and enthusiasm throughout the sometimes long and slow process of learning to read.

**Be yourself.** Don't prepare a recitation that doesn't sound the way you usually speak. Your early literacy tips should be conversational and focused on the wonders of early literacy and how children learn rather than delivered as speeches. You can alter or adapt your tips depending on the situation and your audience.

**Build on the interesting or exciting.** Pay attention to what the children in your storytimes are doing and what they respond to. You can

connect those interests to early literacy. You might tell caregivers, “I am impressed with how many new words your kids are saying! Isn't it great how the books we read encourage new vocabulary? What a bonus that kids with big vocabularies usually have an easier time learning to read.”

**Inspire rather than dictate.**

Caregivers gain confidence when they receive validation that what they're doing is valuable for their child. By contrast, unsolicited advice might make them feel like they're doing something wrong. If you have a parent or caregiver in front of you at a library, they have already done something praiseworthy. Let them know it is great they came in. Encourage them to keep discovering your library's offerings—and show them some. You might direct caregivers to read-alike books that encourage play or steer them toward materials that let them engage with their child in their home language. Or simply let them know, “There are

so many things to explore here! I hope you have fun and keep coming back.”

No one is born knowing how to read, nor is anyone born knowing how to support their child's early literacy and rich language experiences. As children's librarians, we can make storytime an uplifting

place for kids and caregivers to learn together.

*Adapted from “Why and How to Offer Supportive Early Literacy Tips” (ALSC Blog, June 16).* **AL**

Early literacy tips do not need to be overly scientific or even very detailed. They just need to be friendly and sincere.

# Serving New Neighbors

Resources for embracing immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers

BY Ana Ndumu



**ANA NDUMU** is an assistant professor at University of Maryland's (UMD) College of Information in College Park and author of *Borders and Belonging: Critical Examinations of Library Approaches toward Immigrants*. Ndumu also leads UMD's Immigration and International Information Research Alliance and Libraries, Integration, and New Americans Project.

For more than a century, American libraries of all types have helped immigrants integrate, worked with municipalities to cultivate welcoming communities, and supported laws to shape our immigration system.

With immigrants making up 13.8% of our population, the US is more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse than ever before ([bit.ly/USCensus2023Data](https://bit.ly/USCensus2023Data)). But for many library workers, staying abreast of the fraught immigration policy landscape is challenging. Laws shift rapidly, with initiatives introduced or eliminated according to political agendas.

For instance, library workers may be interested in how agencies are using large information tools to manage immigration. Examples include CBP One, the app through which asylum seekers schedule appointments with US Customs and Border Protection; the software platforms of Palantir, whose products power Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) deportation raids; and LexisNexis' Law Enforcement Investigative Database, through which ICE monitors migrants.

There are also resources library workers can use to educate themselves or network with others administering to immigrant communities:

**Libraries Respond: Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers.** This curated American Library Association (ALA) guide ([bitly.com/LibrariesRespond](https://bitly.com/LibrariesRespond)) includes toolkits, educational material, advocacy tips, and easy access to past immigration-related ALA statements and resolutions. It is a reliable starting point for library workers who are new to immigrant engagement or early in their exploration of immigrants' information realities. Several resources provide practical steps for protecting immigrants' right to privacy.

**ALA's Serving Refugees, Immigrants, and Displaced Persons (SRIDP) Subcommittee.** This group includes public, academic, and school librarians—along with Association leaders and LIS professors—who foster support and best practices for library engagement. SRIDP developed *Celebrating Welcoming Week: A Guide for Libraries* ([bit.ly/WelcomingWeekGuide](https://bit.ly/WelcomingWeekGuide)), among other resources.

**Libraries, Integration, and New Americans (LINA) Project.** This research initiative from University of Maryland in College Park is designed to deepen library workers' knowledge of immigration policy and acculturation, as well as longstanding and innovative library strategies. LINA publishes a monthly immigration policy digest and offers a \$10, six-session online course that covers timely topics such as building cultural competence and threats to effective engagement like compassion fatigue and anti-immigrant sentiment.

**US Citizenship and Immigration Services data.** Library workers can use this data to learn how regulations affect community members' day-to-day experiences. The Immigration and Citizenship Data portal provides information on recent immigration and naturalization trends. The Office of Homeland Security Statistics website includes an interactive map of state-based immigration statistics on nonimmigrant arrivals, naturalizations, refugee admissions, and asylum grants.

**Credible immigration think tanks.** Organizations that provide evidence-based, nonpartisan analyses include Immigration Data on Demand, developed by researchers at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, and the Migration Policy Institute, which offers the

Migration Data Hub and various research publications. Information professionals can rely on these and others to better understand local or regional immigration contexts.

In addition to providing resources, library workers should be familiar with the different

ways in which immigrants use information tools. They should also consider technology's increasing effect on immigration processing and how social media funnels public narratives. Debates on these issues won't be resolved this year or perhaps even this century. But expanding our awareness is essential to designing relevant programs and engendering trust among immigrant neighbors. **AL**

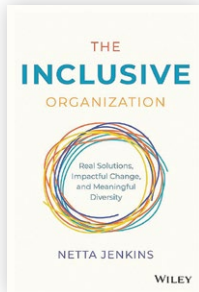
For many library workers, staying abreast of the fraught immigration policy landscape is challenging.

# Improving Inclusivity

Approaching library programs and spaces with empathy and accessibility



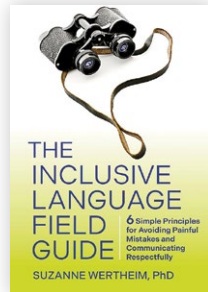
**RACHEL ROSENBERG** is a children's librarian in Vancouver, British Columbia.



## The Inclusive Organization: Real Solutions, Impactful Change, and Meaningful Diversity

By Netta Jenkins

Jenkins, a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) executive, has worked with organizations of all sizes. Here she draws on her lived experiences and years of accumulated knowledge to suggest actionable ways that employees can improve their workplaces. The book shows readers how to create a framework that their organization can use to make meaningful changes, with a focus on allocating time and resources for implementing DEI learning and policies. While the book is aimed at organizational leaders, Jenkins's insights will be useful to any library staffer, particularly in the ways she pinpoints how discriminative structures affect employees differently. Wiley, 2023. 240 p. \$27.95. 978-1-199-1013-8. (Also available as an ebook.)



## The Inclusive Language Field Guide: Six Simple Principles for Avoiding Painful Mistakes and Communicating Respectfully

By Suzanne Wertheim

This book asks readers to consider the words they use and the nuanced ways in which context affects language. Wertheim offers examples of social interactions while explaining the cultural and historical connotations of particular words. For instance, the indefinite pronoun *everyone* isn't always appropriate. (Wishing "everyone" a happy Mother's Day isn't inclusive of those who were raised without a mother, have lost their mother, or do not have a relationship with their mother.) Wertheim makes a great argument for adopting inclusive language, which can help our profession avoid inadvertently erasing or diminishing our colleagues' and patrons' life experiences. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2023. 256 p. \$21.95. PBK. 978-1-5230-0424-9. (Also available as an ebook.)



## Building Representative Community Archives: Inclusive Strategies in Practice

Edited by Hannah Leah Crummé

Using case studies, this guide outlines the differences between community-created archives, community-centered archives, and archives that document communities from afar. As oral historian Alissa Rae Funderburk explains in her chapter, "Talking White," a collection should not just preserve people's stories but should originate from the people and places the stories are about, since a storyteller from outside the community might miss important details and context. While Crummé's text is aimed at librarians who do archival work, it can also serve as an insightful blueprint for public and university librarians, as well as communities that seek to tell their stories with the help of archives, libraries, and museums. ALA Neal-Schuman, 2024. 288 p. \$64.99. PBK. 978-0-8389-3959-8.

BY Rachel Rosenberg

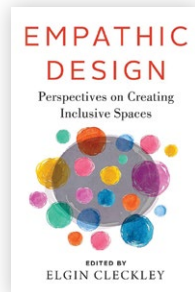


### Trans and Gender Diverse Voices in Libraries

Edited by Kalani Keahi Adolpho, Stephen G. Krueger, and Krista McCracken

This collection of essays by trans and gender-diverse people in the library field covers areas based on the library spaces each author occupies, including MLIS programs, archives, and public and academic libraries. Authors discuss topics such as visible and invisible labor, coming out as trans at work, and pronouns. The contributors also frankly discuss the work libraries need to do to be more welcoming to trans and gender-diverse communities. These essays are full of rage, sorrow, and frustration, and their honesty can help educate readers on how to better support trans and gender-diverse colleagues.

Library Juice Press, 2023. 560 p. \$75. PBK. 978-1-6340-0120-5. (Also available as an ebook.)



### Empathic Design: Perspectives on Creating Inclusive Spaces


Edited by Elgin Cleckley

Designer and architecture professor Elgin Cleckley defines *empathic design* as a process in which planners work thoughtfully to create spaces that welcome all members of a community. Since that approach aligns with libraries' missions, this title will be helpful to those planning new facilities. Each chapter details design approaches and methods that acknowledge the history and lived experiences of residents, especially those from underrepresented communities. Architect Liz Ogbu, for example, explains how she sought insight from local activists in the Baywood neighborhood of San Mateo, California, to plan a community center that has hosted workshops and cultural events and served as a food access point during the pandemic. Island Press, 2024. 208 p. \$32. PBK. 978-1-6428-3205-1. (Also available as an ebook.)



### Creating Inclusive Libraries by Applying Universal Design: A Guide

By Carli Spina

Universal design makes physical spaces appealing and accessible to users with varying needs. This valuable resource explores universal design style and how libraries can implement it for their community's benefit, discussing topics such as determining the right kind of questions to ask architects and how basic elements like lighting and furniture make a difference. Libraries may have financial or other limitations; still, Spina's work suggests that implementing these practices to whatever degree possible is a step toward equitable facilities. Rowman & Littlefield, 2021. 187 p. \$51. PBK. 978-1-5381-3978-3. (Also available as an ebook.) 

# PEOPLE

## Announcements

### ON THE MOVE

**Cynthia Goode** became librarian at Lone Star College–North Harris in Houston in July.

In July **Anna Harper** became teaching and learning librarian at University of California, Santa Barbara.

**Allison Hornbeck** became librarian and Dowle Towne coordinator at Saint Paul's School in Clearwater, Florida, in July.

In September **Delaney Jorgensen** became assessment librarian at Grand Valley State University Libraries in Allendale, Michigan.

**Rosa Lozada-Robles** became librarian at Universidad de Puerto Rico Bayamón in August.

June 3 **Anh Ly** became assistant university librarian for external relations at Stanford (Calif.) University.



**Jack Maness** became university librarian at Colorado School of Mines in Golden August 1.

In July **Veronica McGurrin** became reference and instruction librarian and archivist in public services at University of Virginia's Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library in Charlottesville.

February 5 **Larissa Montás Bravo** started as GIS librarian for instruction and engagement at University of Miami Libraries in Coral Gables, Florida.



August 19 **Steph Noell** started as head librarian of Arizona State University's Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising Library in Los Angeles.

### Kudos

June 3 **Lindsay Downs**, librarian at Sewickley (Pa.) Academy, was named the 2024 Alan C. Miller Educator of the Year by the News Literacy Project, as part of the national nonprofit's Change-Maker awards.

In July, the Illinois Library Association announced **Emily Gilbert**, information services and liaison librarian at University of Illinois at Chicago's Library of the Health Sciences, as its 2024 Illinois Academic Librarian of the Year. ●

**Renee Riggs** became head librarian at Trumann (Ark.) Public Library in March.

In January **Mariagabriella Stuardi** became special collections cataloging librarian and assistant professor at Central Michigan University's Clarke Historical Library in Mount Pleasant.

October 1 **Kara Whatley** became vice provost for libraries and university librarian at University of Missouri in Columbia.

**Saija Wilson** became repository metadata librarian at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill June 17.



### PROMOTIONS

In February **Ben Carman** was promoted to director of Plattsburgh (N.Y.) Public Library.

**Austin Curtis** was promoted to librarian at San Benito County (Calif.) Free Library in July.

May 15 **William Garrity** was promoted to university librarian and vice provost of digital scholarship at University of California, Davis.



**Robert Janke** was promoted to deputy university librarian at University of British Columbia Okanagan in Kelowna April 1.

July 1 **Bradley Long** was promoted to associate librarian at Penn State College of Medicine in Hershey.

**Shannon Richie** was promoted to librarian at Penn State University Libraries in Hazleton July 1.

July 1 **Amy Rustic** was promoted to librarian at Penn State University Libraries in New Kensington.

**Michele A. L. Villagran** was promoted to tenured associate professor at San José (Calif.) State University's School of Information August 19.

### RETIREMENTS

**Anne Greenwood** retired as librarian at Tahoe City (Calif.) Library in July.

**MaryLou Lia** retired as librarian at St. Cyril of Jerusalem School in Encino, California, in June.

**Jerry McCoy** retired as special collections librarian at Georgetown Neighborhood Library in Washington, D.C., July 31.

June 30 **Irene Padilla** retired as Maryland's state librarian and chief operating officer of the Maryland State Library Agency, after 22 years in the position.

In July **Karen Vaughan** retired as head of scholarly communication and publishing at Old Dominion University Libraries in Norfolk, Virginia. **AL**



## In Memory

**Miriam Boland**, 97, former head librarian at the Georgia Department of Human Resources, died June 5. After her retirement in 1985, she worked part time as a librarian at the Atlanta Botanical Garden.

**Candace Ford Gray**, 73, founding director of PlaneTree Health Library, died June 12. Ford Gray served the library, then based in San José, California, from 1989 until her 2015 retirement. She was a founding board member of the Eating Disorders Resource Center and made significant contributions to medical librarianship and patient education. Ford Gray also contributed to multiple editions of the textbook *Putting Patients First: Best Practices in Patient-Centered Care*. She was honored with the Planetree Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006.



**Jane McMaster**, 77, longtime reference librarian at Ohio State University's (OSU) Architecture Library in Columbus, died June 9. McMaster retired in 2013 as a distinguished professor emeritus after 42 years at OSU. She previously served as president of the American Association of Architecture Librarians and the Council of Planning Librarians. In 1998, McMaster received the Holway Jones Distinguished Service Award from the National Council of Planning Librarians.



**Lisa Ann Mecklenberg Jackson**, 57, an attorney and librarian, died May 27. Mecklenberg Jackson worked as a legislative librarian and state law librarian for the state of Montana. She was a member of the Montana Library Association, Friends of Missoula Public Library, and Missoula Public Library Board of Trustees, among other organizations.

**Jocelyn Ozolins**, 65, who served as head reference librarian at Shelter Island (N.Y.) Public Library for a decade, died in February. Ozolins previously worked at Floyd Memorial Library in Greenport, New York, from 2005 to 2014.



**Barbara Rhodes**, 67, children's librarian at Boston Public Library (BPL) for more than 40 years, died May 21. Rhodes served BPL's Jamaica Plain branch for more than 30 years, as well as worked at the Fields Corner, East Boston, and Central locations. At BPL, she expanded offerings that promoted social justice and engaged with BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth. She was an advisory board member of JP Reads, a community initiative that explores an individual book through a range of programs. In 2023, Rhodes received the Henry L. Shattuck Public Service Award from the city of Boston.



**C. James "Jim" Schmidt**, 84, former university librarian and professor emeritus at San José (Calif.) State University's (SJSU) School of Information, died November 30, 2023. A career librarian, Schmidt previously served as library director at State University of New York at Albany and Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. He was also vice president and chief operating officer of the Research Libraries Group (1981–1989), a member and chair of ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee (1985–1989), president of the Freedom to Read Foundation (1990–1992), a recipient of the Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award (1990), and a recipient of the Beta Phi Mu Award (2009). Schmidt was also a subject matter expert on joint-use libraries, following his involvement with the creation of the King Library in San José, which is jointly operated by SJSU and San José Public Library.

**Marie Thomas**, 75, who worked at Barrington (Ill.) Area Library for 35 years until her 2014 retirement, died June 3. Thomas joined the library in 1979 and held the positions of reference librarian, head of circulation services, and facilities manager. As a teenager, she worked for the Portage Park branch of Chicago Public Library. Thomas was a former president of the Reference Librarians Association. In 1995, she was honored by the North Suburban Library System as its Librarian of the Year. ●



Stop the Draft!"  
"I Like Ike"  
"I'm with Her"

From the iconic to the incendiary, political messages like these have emblazoned buttons and pins since the start of US elections.

Since 2012, Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government (HKS) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has been archiving political buttons. The collection now spans thousands of items over a century's worth of campaigns and causes.

"Pre-internet, this is a very clear way to display your loyalties and affiliations publicly," says Corinne Wolfson, digital collections librarian for HKS' Library and Research Services.

The collection has approximately 4,800 buttons and pins and 200 stickers. Most fit into one of three categories: campaigns (local and national), sociopolitical movements, and community organizations like unions. The oldest item is a William McKinley presidential pin, estimated to originate from 1896. The 1960s and 1970s were a heyday for buttons, Wolfson says. Antiwar, racial justice, and LGBTQ visibility efforts resulted in an abundance of both mass-produced and DIY buttons.

Standout buttons for Wolfson are those that satirize politicians or policies, like a 1972 pin with a caricature of President Nixon with "inoperative" written across the forehead.

"The snarkier ones are the ones that grab people's interest," she says.

HKS hopes to secure more buttons in national election years like this one. However, the library cannot directly purchase them—that would be considered a campaign contribution. Buttons must be either donated or acquired through third-party sellers.

Many of these buttons and their messages remain topical. "You could be like, 'I could wear that today. That would still speak to current issues,'" Wolfson says. "There's this throughline of history." **AL**

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

## Put a Pin in It



Photo: Harvard Kennedy School

# ALA

# eLearning



# Grow Your Skills this Fall!

## Webinars

*All Webinars begin at 2:30pm Eastern*

**Nursery Rhymes in the Modern Era: Reflections and Considerations for Storytime and Beyond**

90-minute webinar | November 5, 2024

**Human Resources Crash Course for Library Managers**

3-part webinar series  
Wednesdays, November 6, 13, and 20, 2024

**Law Librarianship for Beginners**

90-minute webinar | November 7, 2024

**Basic Copyright for Library Staff**

90-minute webinar | November 21, 2024

**Streaming Music Services for Libraries**

90-minute webinar | December 4, 2024

## ECourses

**American Sign Language with Children in Storytime or in the Classroom: A Practical Guide**

Six-week eCourse | starting Monday, January 6, 2025

**Slow Librarianship: Incorporating Mindfulness into Library Work and Services**

Four-week eCourse | starting Monday, January 6, 2025

**ADVANCED ECOURSE:**

**Serving Adult Populations from A to Z**

Twelve-week eCourse | starting Monday, January 6, 2025

**Adulting in the Library: Teaching Life Skills to Teens**

Six-week eCourse | starting Monday, January 6, 2025

**ADVANCED ECOURSE:**

**Reference Skills for Non-Reference Librarians**

Twelve-week eCourse | starting Monday, February 3, 2025



VISIT  
[eLearning.ala.org](https://eLearning.ala.org)

**ALA** American  
Library  
Association

Offering the world's best in  
education, enrichment, and  
career advancement across  
all library types and services.

# kanopy

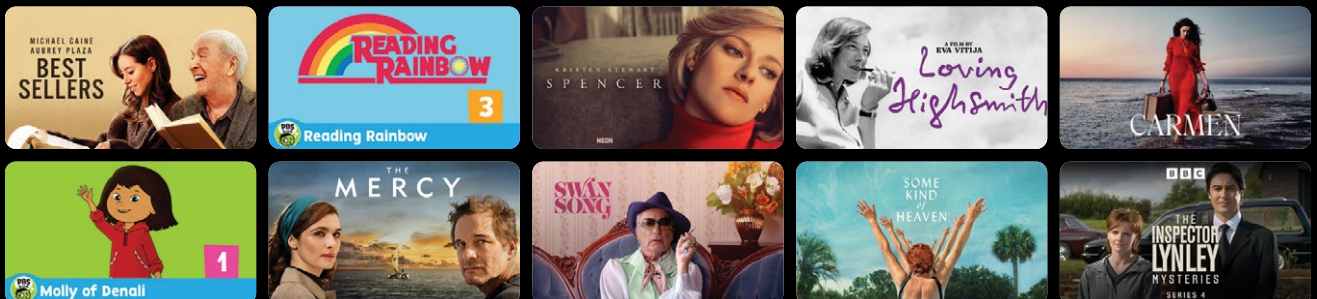
Films that matter



## Who needs movie tickets when you have a library card?

Reach new patrons and film lovers alike with streaming videos on Kanopy. Our unparalleled film catalog reinforces your current offerings and entices your community to sign up for the best card in the world — **a library card.**

Help patrons discover their next favorite film and re-discover all your library has to offer.



Scan here to learn more