

american libraries

January/February 2025

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

LibLearnX

PREVIEW p. 38

NEWSMAKER:

Neko Case p. 20

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from the
EDITOR

Dreaming Big



Sanhita SinhaRoy

In its 149-year history, the Association has never had a conference in Phoenix until now. (Divisions, on the other hand, have basked—and possibly baked—in the Valley of the Sun from time to time over the years.) In our 2025 LibLearnX Preview (cover story, p. 38), we share what the conference has in store this January as it ends its four-year run. Among the featured speakers will be author and illustrator Raina Telgemeier, whom we interviewed in 2019 (bit.ly/AL-Telgemeier), along with fellow cartoonist Scott McCloud. The two will cochair National Library Week in April. (According to my kids, I gained “aura points” when they heard about Telgemeier, whose graphic novels, including illustrated adaptations of *The Baby-Sitters Club* series, are strewn all over the house.)

Also upping the cool factor in this issue is Grammy-nominated musician Neko Case (Newsmaker, p. 20). She talked with Associate Editor Megan Bennett about her new memoir and how libraries were a safe place in her childhood where she could “sit down and just dream.”

Teens, too, are dreaming big in their libraries by participating in charcuterie programming (“Crafting Charcuterie,” p. 16). As Rosie Newmark reports, many young people are expressing their creativity through easy and aesthetically pleasing food arrangements at these fun events. (Check out our team’s masthead answers to the left to help inspire your next board.)

Speaking of the *American Libraries* team, we’ve been busy: Our crew compiled the annual Year in Review feature (p. 24) to recap some of the top stories from the field in 2024. We also tuned in to United for Libraries Virtual 2024 to highlight takeaways from the conference (“Into the Future,” p. 28). Included are tips for advocacy, fundraising, succession planning, and fighting book bans—all subjects worthy of our serious and ongoing attention. You may want to prepare for a deep dive into them with a beverage and a snack—perhaps a charcuterie board—at the ready.

Happy New Year from all of us at *American Libraries*.

Sanhita

In its 149-year history, the Association has never had a conference in Phoenix until now. Check out our LibLearnX Preview to see what the conference has in store.

Our Winter Count

With the new year, let's honor those who protect the human spirit



Cindy Hohl

It is a privilege and an honor to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with all of you as we continue to advocate for equality and wellness for all people.

Relatives, I wish you all a safe and healthy winter solstice and New Year. This is a time for quiet reflection, deep focus, and remembering how far we have come as we strive to uplift humanity. Our shared humanity is our touchstone and is always centered at the heart of everything we do as we live our precious lives together.

My hope for the future is that we live in peace among all that is living. I believe in the power of the human spirit, and I offer humble observance to those who left us this past year, the many loved ones who have walked on to another journey. May their journeys be honored by the people.

A tradition of many Native American tribes is to observe the *winter count*—a visual record that depicts the important events of the year. It is a time to come together, spend time with family and community, and share food, stories, and the love that surrounds us. An elder acts as a historian, chosen by the people to act as the recorder of the year's activities as they select the top memory that will tell the story of their people.

As we look back on our year, we as library workers may also recall the many special memories experienced by our staff members and patrons. This is an opportunity to share the impact of our meaningful work. What favorite memory—personal or professional—would you add to the list? Mine is watching the fireworks over the Las Vegas Strip with my family. Seeing the wonderment in my children's eyes will live in my heart forever.

We need healing in America, and it is time to acknowledge the Ones Who Know Things in our field. Ones are often observant protectors who pay close attention to the world around them. Ones may walk alone to capture the moments of human interaction, predicting future outcomes and offering support in times of need. This is a

lens that only a few possess because it requires a selfless act of love for the people.

As we count all that happened in 2024, I would like to recognize one name of a quiet protector: Mr. Mychal Threats. Many of you know Mychal and the library joy he sparked at Solano County (Calif.) Library, where he worked as a children's librarian, and sparked throughout the world for millions via his videos on social media.

Mychal, we join you on your healing journey and share our gratitude for the library joy that you inspire. It is not easy uplifting humanity, and you do it with an abundance of kindness.

Mychal, you serve others in a good way, and I say, Wopida Tanka (*many thanks*)!

We must also protect our vulnerable against the Tricksters who seek to disrupt harmony among us. Distraction from the adverse effects on society is intentional, and we must hold leaders accountable to ensure healthy communities. As trusted information professionals, we hold responsibility to protect equal access to accurate information. As warriors, we must recognize when the time comes to take a stand against those who seek to divide us, and this is that moment in America.

It is a privilege and an honor to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with all of you as we continue to advocate for equality and wellness for all people, and I am grateful for your support as we bridge those divides with literacy and understanding.

This is the people's library, and we will defend equal access to information and library services for everyone, because each and every one of us counts. **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.

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Moving Forward on Finances

Challenges lie ahead for the financial health of the Association



Peter Hepburn

In recent years, ALA has, unfortunately, relied too greatly on contributed revenue (such as donations and grants) and therefore needs to find and nurture other revenue sources.

When I look back at previous columns and reflect on my term as treasurer, which ends June 30, I realize just how much has happened—and been accomplished—over the past three years.

For one, I'm proud of finishing the work started under my predecessor, Maggie Farrell, on the financial piece of the American Library Association (ALA) Operating Agreement, which governs the relationship between ALA and its membership divisions. I'm also pleased with the progress made in improving communication within the Association on finances.

I am not, however, greatly encouraged by the current financial health of the Association. In past columns and in reporting to the ALA Executive Board, Council, and other forums, I have shared real numbers but have otherwise tried not to alarm members. I am an optimist, and I try to approach adversity with a can-do attitude. Unfortunately, I no longer believe that approach serves any of us well as we face the realities of the current and upcoming fiscal years.

This fiscal year will be challenging. Our final LibLearnX conference will take place January 24–27 in Phoenix, and we expect to lose heavily on it if the previous two are any indication. ACRL 2025 in April is the remaining division conference of the fiscal year, which means that divisions will contribute less than last year. ALA earns pass-through grants that go toward supporting libraries, per our mission, and contributing to overhead. But these grants will also show up as expenses in the books and have an impact on liquidity. If other revenue-generating units in ALA, such as Membership and Publishing, do not meet or exceed their targets, then the Association will be very pressed indeed.

The 150th anniversary campaign will offset some of these financial shortcomings. Gifts

to ALA—and I surely hope that the campaign is a success!—that are realized in the fiscal year will be tracked as revenue. As with much fundraising of this nature, however, the intent is to grow the endowment, which will provide long-term financial benefit to ALA. But that does not fill existing gaps in the operational side of the budget.

Last year I wrote that there was a need for a stronger push toward generating additional revenue. This remains the case. In recent years, the Association has, unfortunately, relied too greatly on contributed revenue (such as donations and grants) and therefore needs to find and nurture other sources. Continuing Education is one such source. Another is regrowing a membership to its pre-pandemic peak.

The other ongoing and necessary measure that's needed: managing expenses and realizing efficiencies. In the face of ALA's financial position, it is incomprehensible to have duplicative work across the Association and among the divisions related to publishing and conferences, for example. ALA staffers continue to tighten this aspect of the finances—efforts for which I am grateful.

Last year I wrote that our financial situation was not precarious, and I truly did not think that at the time. But in truth, it is. I regret that I leave my successor the challenges ahead, and I wish them future improved financial circumstances to navigate.

As I have done in my previous columns as treasurer, I'll conclude by recognizing ALA's Finance and Accounting Office. It has been a pleasure collaborating with Chief Financial Officer Dina Tsourdinis and her team in our efforts to keep the Association moving forward financially. **AL**

PETER HEPBURN is head librarian at College of the Canyons in Santa Clarita, California.

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Cronk, Jamison, and McCauley Seek 2026–2027 ALA Presidency

On November 11, the American Library Association (ALA) released a statement announcing the candidates running for 2026–2027 ALA president: Lindsay Cronk, dean of libraries at Tulane University in New Orleans; Andrea Jamison, assistant professor of school librarianship at Illinois State University in Normal; and Maria McCauley, director of libraries at Cambridge (Mass.) Public Library.

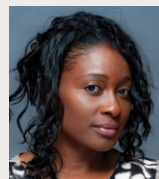
Cronk served as 2021–2022 president of Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures and is a member of the Core Five-Year Fundraising Team. As a member of ALA Council, she coauthored the Resolution to Condemn White Supremacy and Fascism as Antithetical to Library Work (2021). She is vice chair of the Association of Research Libraries' Advocacy and Public Policy Committee and serves on the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries board, the Clarivate North American advisory group, and the editorial board of *The Serials Librarian*.



Lindsay Cronk

Cronk holds an MLIS from Valdosta (Ga.) State University, an education specialist degree from Georgia Southern University in Savannah, and a bachelor's from Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia.

"Libraries are a collective superpower for learning, research, and discovery," Cronk said in the statement. "ALA champions and advances this vital work, offering all library professionals a shared home, a united voice, a thriving community of practice, and a values-driven foundation of policy. I am the loud librarian ready to amplify and advocate for it."



Andrea Jamison

Jamison is a member of the Association for Library Service to Children, the Black Caucus of the ALA (BCALA), and the Intellectual Freedom Round Table. She is a juror for the Coretta Scott King Book Awards Round Table and immediate past chair of the Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table. She is a former ALA councilor-at-large and chair of the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom's Diversity in Collection Development working group.

Jamison has a PhD in information studies and MLIS from Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois; a master's in teaching from Concordia University, also in River Forest; and

a bachelor's in business administration from Robert Morris College in Chicago.

"Today's climate of censorship and social tension has created widespread misinformation about the work of librarians," Jamison said in the statement. "I am committed to supporting efforts that counter assaults on intellectual freedom, uphold the reputation of library professionals, reshape the narrative about libraries, leverage partnerships, advocate for legislative protections for library workers, and stand in unwavering support of every librarian dedicated to serving their communities."

McCauley, a former ALA Spectrum Scholar, is a member of Core, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), the Public Library Association (PLA), and several round tables. She was 2022–2023 PLA president. She is also a member of the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association, the Chinese American Librarians Association, BCALA, Reforma: The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking, and the American Indian Library Association. She has served as an ALA councilor-at-large and member of ALA's Fiscal and Audit Committee.



Maria McCauley

McCauley holds a PhD in managerial leadership from Simmons University in Boston; an MLIS from University of Pittsburgh; and a bachelor's in theater from Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio.

"ALA is a vital organization that is a lifeline for so many in the areas of professional development, advocacy, and connection—including for me," McCauley said in the statement. "With my inclusive leadership practices and facilitation skills, I will work across the Association to strengthen ALA; inspire, guide, and connect members; and advocate for intellectual freedom, equity and inclusion, sustainability, and the public good of libraries."

Candidates will address ALA membership in a virtual forum in February. Ballot mailing begins March 10 and runs through April 2. Individuals must be members in good standing to vote in the 2025 ALA elections. For more information, visit bit.ly/ALA-elections. ●

2025–2028 ALA Treasurer Candidates Announced

Larry Neal, director of Clinton-Macomb Public Library in Michigan, and Joel Thornton, associate dean of collections and scholarly communication for University of Utah in Salt Lake City, were announced as the candidates for 2025–2028 ALA treasurer on November 10.

Neal previously served on the ALA Executive Board and Council, ALA's Budget and Review and Finance and Audit committees, and was 2014–2015 PLA president. He is currently an ALA Policy Corps fellow and serves on PLA's Budget and Finance Committee. He holds an MLIS from University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and an MBA and bachelor's from Oakland (Mich.) University.



Larry Neal



Joel Thornton

Thornton, an ACRL member and former ALA Spectrum Scholar, is BCALA treasurer. He previously served as treasurer and finance committee chair of the Fayetteville (Ark.) Public Library Foundation board. He holds a master's in operations management from University of Arkansas in Fayetteville; an MLIS from University of North Texas in Denton; and a bachelor's in business administration and accounting from Pittsburg

(Kans.) State University.

Candidates will address ALA membership in a virtual forum in February. Ballot mailing begins March 10 and runs through April 2. Individuals must be members in good standing to vote in the 2025 ALA elections. For more information, visit bit.ly/ALA-elections. ●

2025 Carnegie Medal Shortlist Revealed

On November 12, ALA named the six books shortlisted for the 2025 Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence in Fiction and Nonfiction. Established in 2012, the awards honor the best fiction and nonfiction books written for adult readers and published in the US during the previous year.

The three fiction finalists are *Martyr!* (Knopf) by Kaveh Akbar, *James* (Doubleday) by Percival Everett, and *Cinema Love* (Dutton) by Jiaming Tang.

The three nonfiction finalists are *A Walk in the Park: The True Story of a Spectacular Misadventure in the Grand Canyon* (Scribner) by Kevin Fedarko, *Challenger:*

A True Story of Heroism and Disaster on the Edge of Space (Avid Reader Press) by Adam Higginbotham, and *Cue the Sun! The Invention of Reality TV* (Random House) by Emily Nussbaum.

The awards were established through a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York. They are cosponsored and administered by ALA's Booklist and Reference and User Services Association (RUSA).

Medal winners will be announced at 10:30 a.m. Mountain on January 26, during the prerecorded RUSA Book and Media Awards event at LibLearnX in Phoenix. For more information on the awards and finalists, visit ala.org/carnegieadult.

CALENDAR

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MAR. 16

Freedom of Information Day
bit.ly/FOI-Day

APR.

School Library Month
ala.org/aasl/advocacy/slm

APR. 2–5

ACRL 2025 Conference
Minneapolis
bit.ly/ACRL2025Con

APR. 6–12

National Library Week
bit.ly/ALA-NLW

APR. 8

National Library Workers Day
ala-apa.org/nlwd

APR. 9

National Library Outreach Day
bit.ly/ALA-NLOD

APR. 27–MAY 3

Preservation Week
preservationweek.org

APR. 30

Día: Children's Day/Book Day
bit.ly/ALSC-Dia

JUNE

Rainbow Book Month
bit.ly/RBMonth

JUNE 24–27

Rare Books and Manuscripts Section 65th Annual Conference
New Haven, Connecticut
rbms.info/conferences

JUNE 26–30

2025 Annual Conference
Philadelphia
alaannual.org

AUG. 18–22

IFLA World Library and Information Congress | Astana, Kazakhstan
bit.ly/IFLA25

SEPT.

Library Card Sign-Up Month
bit.ly/LibCardSU

Executive Board Statement on Hurricane Relief

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, which ravaged parts of the Southeastern US, the ALA Executive Board issued a statement in support of libraries stepping in to serve affected communities. The October 3 statement reads, in part:

“We extend our deepest sympathies to individuals facing devastating loss and the challenges of recovery and rebuilding. Libraries are not just buildings; they are vital community institutions that provide refuge, distribute essential resources, and connect individuals to the information they need to navigate crises.

“As we reflect on libraries’ essential role in society, ALA affirms our commitment to supporting those affected by this disaster, the libraries serving as critical lifelines, and those communities with damaged or destroyed libraries to help provide funding for repairs.”

ALA has reached out to offer support to state library associations in states affected by Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton—a subsequent storm that made landfall October 9—including Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The board urged members to support those impacted by donating to local relief efforts, volunteering time, and advocating for policies and funding during and after disasters.

Learn about ALA’s Disaster Relief Fund at bit.ly/ALA-DisasterRelief. (For more on this story, see p. 25.) ●

Libraries Hold Freedom to Read Day of Action

ALA and its Unite Against Book Bans campaign brought together library systems of all sizes to celebrate their work, safeguard the freedom to read, and encourage civic participation with a Freedom to Read Community Day of Action on October 19.

Organized in partnership with the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL), Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens (N.Y.) Public Library, the celebration was a response to the wave of book banning and censorship that started gathering momentum in 2020. More than 100 events took place in 35 states and Washington, D.C., with many highlighting the importance of participating in local, state, and federal elections. Other sites held read-ins, documentary screenings, and open mike nights.

“In small and rural communities across the country, the freedom to read is essential for fostering informed residents

and diverse perspectives,” said ARSL Executive Director Kate Laughlin in an October 1 statement. “Public libraries play a vital role in upholding this American value by providing access to a wide range of materials, hosting community programs, and ensuring that all voices are heard. They serve as safe havens for exploration and education, empowering individuals to engage critically with the world around them.”

Visit uniteagainstbookbans.org to learn more about the event, access resources, and contribute to ongoing efforts to combat censorship and book bans.

Saeed Jones to Close ACRL 2025

ACRL announced on October 1 that award-winning poet and activist Saeed Jones will be the closing keynote speaker for its 2025 conference, to be held April 2–5 in Minneapolis and online. The theme for ACRL 2025 is “Democratizing Knowledge, Access, and Opportunities.”

Jones’s debut poetry collection, *Prelude to Bruise*, was a 2015 Stonewall Book Award winner and finalist for the 2014 National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry. His most recent collection, *Alive at the End of the World* (2022), received the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for Poetry. He is a cohost of *Vibe Check*, a weekly news and culture podcast that was lauded as one of the best podcasts of 2023 by *Vogue* and CBC Radio.

Early-bird registration for ACRL 2025 runs through February 7. For more on the conference, visit bit.ly/ACRL2025Con.

ACRL Releases Annual Survey and Report

In October, ACRL published *The State of US Academic Libraries: Findings from the ACRL 2023 Annual Survey*, a report covering metrics on staff, expenditures, collections, circulation, and information services at academic libraries across the country. The report is designed to help librarians and administrators assess the impact of their libraries, make peer comparisons, and track trends over time.

The 2024 report, which includes 2023 survey results, assessed responses from 1,414 institutions. The report found that doctoral universities have higher staffing levels than academic libraries of other types; total average expenditures reached almost \$4 million in 2023, a slight increase from 2022; digital materials now account for more than 98% of circulated items; and library instruction is showing signs of recovery from pandemic lows.

To read the full report, visit bit.ly/ACRL23report.

White House Lauds Libraries’ Efforts to Combat Overdoses

On October 8, the White House recognized libraries’ efforts to save lives from drug overdoses, with ALA President Cindy Hohl joining a discussion on the issue with administration officials and national leaders.

ALA is one of more than 250 organizations and businesses that have made voluntary commitments to the White House

Challenge to Save Lives from Overdose, a nationwide effort launched in 2024 to increase training on and access to lifesaving opioid overdose reversal medications like naloxone.

"I'm proud of the work that libraries are doing to respond to the overdose crisis, along with local partners," said Hohl. "I'm grateful that the White House is recognizing this work. And I hope that library workers feel proud of themselves, too. You are making a difference."

In her remarks, Hohl shared experiences from several libraries, including her home library, Kansas City (Mo.) Public Library, which trains library staffers on how to recognize overdoses and administer naloxone. She pointed to the need for community partnerships to respond to the crisis, especially with training on handling an overdose and providing support for library staff members.

For resources addressing the opioid crisis, visit bit.ly/PLA-opioid.

ALA Scholarship Applications Now Open

ALA has more than \$300,000 in scholarships available to help support students pursuing master's-level library science or school library media programs at ALA-accredited institutions. Awards range from \$2,500 to \$8,000 per year. The deadline to apply for scholarships is March 1.

Scholarships are available for students pursuing careers or interested in library automation, new media, children's services, youth services, public librarianship, and federal librarianship. Scholarships are also available for people of color, people with disabilities, and those who are currently employed in libraries but do not have a master's degree. Applications and requirements are available at bit.ly/ALA-scholar25.

Applicants interested in school librarianship scholarships must attend a program that meets ALA curriculum guidelines for the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. Visit bit.ly/AASL-CAEP for more on these guidelines. [AL](#)

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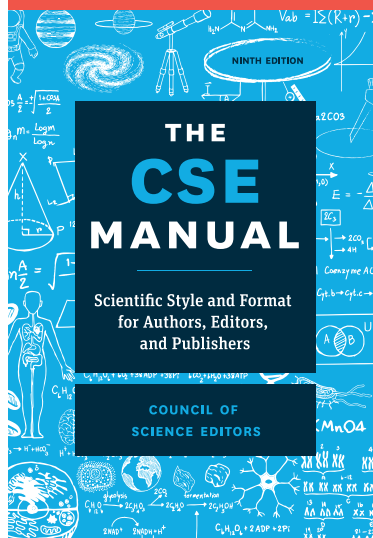
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TRENDS



Doreen Horstin, manager of San Francisco Public Library's Park branch, adds a book to the Read to Recovery shelves, which provide free addiction recovery materials to patrons.

in any way, and you can still get the information that you need," Anderson says. "That's how you build a welcome space."

Stocking the shelves

At SFPL, staff members are trained to use Narcan to reverse opioid overdoses. But Horstin says, with the city in the throes of an addiction crisis, this isn't enough.

"We can't just administer Narcan and not do anything else," Horstin says. "We're all about books. That's what we do. It's still the number one service that we offer."

In 2022, she started expanding the system's collection of addiction recovery materials. Then she connected with Matt Dorsey, now a member of San Francisco's Board of Supervisors. He pointed out that some people might want to keep and annotate their books, especially when it comes to workbooks like those published by AA. Together, they successfully advocated that the city board make these items free for all.

Recovery resources are deeply needed, and not just in San Francisco. According to the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 16.7% of Americans ages 12 and older struggled with a substance-use disorder within the previous year. Additionally, more than one in five US adults were living with a mental illness in 2021, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

No Questions Asked

Public libraries build no-return collections for addiction and mental health support

BY Aviva Bechky

Every day in public libraries across San Francisco, patrons find their way to a discreet shelf and pick up titles including Alcoholics Anonymous' (AA) *Big Book*, *Narcotics Anonymous*, and *The Zen of Recovery* by Mel Ash.

Then, without checking out these titles, these patrons leave. They are welcome to mark up the books they take. They won't return the materials. And, according to Doreen Horstin, manager of San Francisco Public Library's (SFPL) Park branch, this is just fine.

These patrons are participants in Read to Recovery, an SFPL program that has been providing free addiction recovery materials since spring 2023. The initiative is a way to quietly get thousands of books

into the hands of people who need them, ensuring that barriers such as a lack of a library card or hold times don't get in the way.

San Francisco isn't the only city with a program like this. Other public libraries across the US are designating shelves with titles that address mental illness, addiction recovery, and other stigmatized topics—materials they intend to give away or don't expect to see returned.

Brianne Anderson, youth services manager at Ames (Iowa) Public Library (APL), says she views these programs as an extension of libraries' fundamental mission: making information accessible.

"Nobody has to ask questions, you don't have to identify yourself

These levels of demand have spurred SFPL to invest heavily in Read to Recovery. Currently, four locations have these no-checkout shelves, and library staffers are working to roll out the initiative to all 28 locations and its Jail and Reentry Services program. Between January 2023 and July 2024, the system used almost \$66,000 from its Library Preservation Fund to purchase materials covering a variety of approaches to addiction recovery.

While not all libraries have this type of municipal funding at their disposal, some smaller systems are figuring out ways to make these books available—and some have been doing so for years.

In Ames, for example, library staffers decided almost two decades ago that they wanted to provide anonymous access to materials on topics like mental illness, puberty, and coming out. In 2006, APL launched its FYI Shelves, which primarily offer content for teens but are open to everyone.

Today, APL's FYI Shelves are accompanied by signage declaring NO CHECKOUT REQUIRED and hold about 25–30 books, plus resources on groups like Planned Parenthood, food insecurity organizations, and a local domestic abuse shelter. Patrons take approximately 20 books each year, costing the library only about \$100. Most aren't returned, but on the occasions that the books are placed in the return bin or directly back on the shelves, Anderson says she can tell they've been well-used.

Over the years, the program has elicited complaints but only one formal challenge, Anderson says. Not long after the shelves launched, parents pushed back on *Sex, Etc.*, a sex education magazine written

by and for teens. But the item withstood reconsideration, remaining on the shelves until it went out of publication.

APL's program has inspired other libraries, too. At Brooks Free Library (BFL) in Harwich, Massachusetts, one librarian saw a social media post about the FYI Shelves and shared it at a staff meeting. BFL Deputy Director Jennifer Pickett loved the idea.

Pickett knows books don't take the place of resources like in-house social workers, but for a small system like hers, creating the Confidential Corner—which has about 33 titles, including *The 30-Day Sobriety Solution*—felt like a feasible step to take.

"It's not that big of an ask," Pickett says. "[Forming] a library book group is harder than this was, and people are so appreciative."

Real results

For Horstin, success with Read to Recovery has so far mostly been anecdotal: Seeing books on addiction recovery get snapped up at a street fair. Hearing from family members who took books for their loved ones. Talking to a gentleman who'd been sober for years about the value of barrier-free materials.

Pickett, too, has seen positive feedback flood in after the Confidential Corner received some media attention.

"People would say, 'Oh, I was afraid to go to my library to check something out because I didn't want to be judged,'" she

BY THE NUMBERS

Literary Phoenix

28,000

Number of Indigenous artists represented in the Billie Jane Baguley Library and Archives (BJBLA), located within the Heard Museum in Phoenix. Like the museum, BJBLA's holdings include traditional and contemporary American Indian artists' art, written works, and biographical information.

\$500

Amount that Tom Brodersen spent in 1974 to purchase a bookstore stocked with secondhand books. Brodersen and two friends used that inventory to open Changing Hands Bookstore, one of the state's largest independent booksellers. The Phoenix location is also home to First Draft, a literary-themed bar.

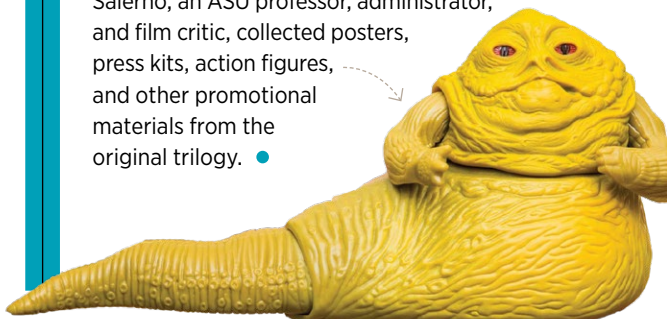


438

Age in years of the copy of *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* owned by Paradise Lost poet and political writer John Milton, recently discovered in a donation to the Rare Book Room at Phoenix Public Library's Burton Barr Central Library. It is only the third book ever found that includes Milton's handwritten notes.

50

Number of boxes of items in the Nicholas A. Salerno Star Wars Collection housed at Arizona State University (ASU) Library in Tempe. Salerno, an ASU professor, administrator, and film critic, collected posters, press kits, action figures, and other promotional materials from the original trilogy. ●



Continued on page 14 ▶



Brown County (Wis.) Library, East branch

Submissions Open for Library Design Showcase

American Libraries is accepting submissions for the 2025 Library Design Showcase, our annual feature celebrating new and newly renovated libraries of all types and sizes. The showcase will appear in the September/October issue.

We are looking for examples of innovative library architecture that address patrons’ needs in unique and effective ways. We are especially interested in submissions from libraries that are approaching design with sustainability, accessibility, and smaller budgets in mind. Partial renovations, projects under \$1 million, and school libraries are encouraged to apply.

LIBRARY DESIGN SHOWCASE

To be eligible, projects must have been completed between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025.

For consideration, send a completed submission form (bit.ly/DesignShowcaseForm25) and at least five high-resolution digital images with photographer credits to americanlibraries@ala.org via Dropbox or another file-sharing service. The deadline to apply is May 1, 2025. Unfortunately, not all submissions can be featured.

View last year’s showcase at bit.ly/Design-Showcase-24. For more information, email americanlibraries@ala.org. ●

◀ Continued from page 13

says. “There’s some serious need out there.”

Seeing books get taken helps communities quantify interest. At BFL, Pickett sees 60–90 books on topics ranging from alcohol addiction to divorce to gender identity leave the Confidential Corner each year; a few are normally returned. Meanwhile, SFPL’s Read to Recovery gave away 3,703 recovery-related books in the fiscal year that ended in June 2024.

“We can’t just administer Narcan and not do anything else.”

DOREEN HORSTIN, manager of San Francisco Public Library’s Park branch

Another sign of success: Other library systems are emulating the concept. Saratoga Springs (N.Y.) Public Library contacted Horstin, and in May 2024, it too launched a Read to Recovery program.

Anderson, Horstin, and Pickett agree that getting started doesn’t have to be complicated: Libraries can start a program just by adding more workbooks or setting aside a shelf. All say they hope other libraries follow their lead.

“It’s about helping people get the information they want,” Pickett says. “But it’s also about letting people know this is what we’re here for.” **AL**

AVIVA BECHKY is a journalism major at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Their work has appeared in Block Club Chicago, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *The Seattle Times*.

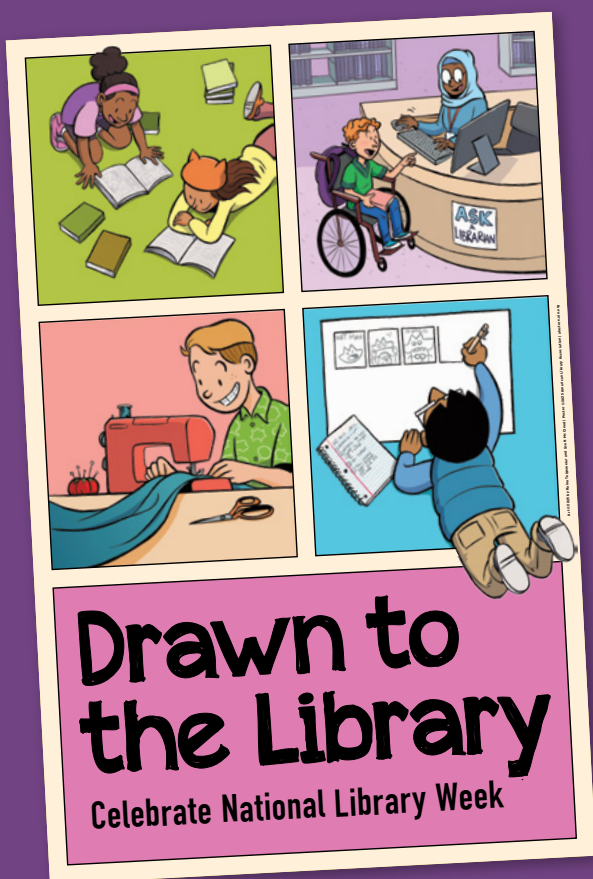
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Teens arrange food at charcuterie classes held by Carroll County (Md.) Public Library's Exploration Commons. At these classes, teens laser-cut wood to create serving boards and learn how to present edible items.

Crafting Charcuterie

Tasty programs for teens present food in a new light

BY Rosie Newmark

It's not every day you find a group of teens gathered around a table at a library, fashioning thin slices of salami into roses and creating charcuterie boards fit for elegant dinner parties—unless you're at Carroll County (Md.) Public Library (CCPL).

Inspired by the library's popular how-to charcuterie events for adults, staffers Amanda Krumrine and Nancy Farace have hosted two teen snack-board classes to engage young patrons. In these classes, teens learn how to make the boards by laser-cutting wood in the makerspace at CCPL's Exploration Commons location and later assembling the meats, cheeses, and other bites into appealing arrangements.

Exploration Commons has a fully licensed teaching kitchen and makerspace. Krumrine, the makerspace supervisor, runs the first part

of the two-part program, helping teens create their wooden boards as part of STEAM instruction. She then hands them off to Farace, the teaching kitchen supervisor, who instructs teens on presenting the food on their boards to maximum effect.

"We really try to take advantage of the fact that we have both spaces here and our staffers work together well," Farace says. "We get people who maybe traditionally wouldn't come into the kitchen or into the makerspace to see how they can cross over and what the possibilities are."

Farace says on the kitchen side of things, she teaches spatial design concepts, garnishing, and other fun assembly projects like the salami rose, where teens create a flower-like arrangement by folding thin slices of salami

or pepperoni around the rim of a glass, adding overlapping "petals" until the glass is full, then flipping it over, and presto!

"I always consider it a compliment when they come back and take the class again," Farace says. "They'll send us messages, or we'll see them in another class, saying, 'I made a board for my grandfather's birthday using what we learned in class' or 'I used my board to do XYZ.'"

Krumrine and Farace hosted programs for teens in April 2023 and 2024. They would like to add another teen class to the schedule; in the meantime, they welcome patrons ages 16 and up to the adult charcuterie classes.

Comfort food

The salami rose was also popular in the teen charcuterie classes held at Geneva (Ill.) Public Library (GPL), according to teen services librarian Kylie Peters.

Peters says she is always looking at social media trends for inspiration for teen programming. That's where she saw a lot of charcuterie board content and recruited a local chef—and a library patron—to buy all the supplies and teach the class. She was also inspired by the library's successful adult charcuterie program.

"It was perfect because there's no cooking and you don't need a lot of supplies. It works really well with the younger audience to do something hands-on," Peters says. "Our adults like cooking demos. They like to watch a chef cook something

and talk about how to cook it, but I don't feel that that would work with the teens. They want to be doing something hands-on."

GPL has hosted two teen charcuterie events, one in December 2022 and one in June 2023, which was themed around the Fourth of July. It offered separate programming to allow elementary and middle schoolers to engrave their serving boards using a laser cutter.

Peters says that while charcuterie boards may have a fancy or pretentious reputation, she thinks they are accessible to a wide audience, and the food on the boards is familiar to most teens.

She recalls, during one class, a kid exclaimed, "You can eat jam with cheese?" Another teen in the group said, "Yes, fancy people do that—now you're fancy!" Peters observes that for this child, who had never thought to pair cheese with jam, it was a revelation. "We told him, 'It's a bit bougie, but you can definitely do it. There are no barriers to trying new things.'"

For other libraries considering hosting a charcuterie board program, Peters advises having three staff members participate—one person leading, one monitoring, and another cleaning.

Shark week

This past July, Sandusky (Ohio) Library (SL) hosted a "shark-cuterie" program that aligned with the library's animal-themed week during summer reading, Children's Services Manager

Geneva (Ill.) Public Library hosted a Fourth of July-themed teen charcuterie event in 2023.

"It was perfect because there's no cooking and you don't need a lot of supplies. It works really well with the younger audience to do something hands-on."

KYLIE PETERS, teen services librarian, Geneva (Ill.) Public Library

Emily Kimball says. To fit the shark-week theme, Kimball ordered blue paper plates to represent the ocean, and the kids cut "shark chomps" into the side. They arranged foods including gummy sharks, candy bracelets with shark charms, Swedish Fish, Goldfish crackers, whale crackers, mermaid- and shark-themed fruit snacks, and octopus-shaped candy.

SL's goal was to elevate its youth food programming, Kimball says. The library serves snacks after school and in the summer during lunchtime, "so we have kids that already equate us with 'If I'm hungry, this is where I'm going to go, because you're going to supply me with food I need,'" she explains. "But how can we make it fun, and how can we get them interested in making the food or the presentation of the food? That's a whole new ball game for us."

While the program was geared toward 12-to-16-year-olds, most of the 25 participants were younger, with some as young as 8.

Kimball says the library spent less than \$50 for this class, shopping mostly at Oriental Trading and a local Dollar Tree store for supplies. She says the class was one of the highest-attended programs of the summer. Its popularity prompted her to think about other food programs to hold for teens.

"Typically, we come home, we have a snack, we just toss it on the plate or in a bowl," Kimball says. "So getting teens to think, 'I can make this pretty and I can eat it,' is our main objective. Our goal is always to enrich lives and get our teens to think outside of their box." **AL**

ROSIE NEWMARK is a freelance writer for *American Libraries*.





Color-corrective glasses, like those sold by EnChroma (pictured), are available for checkout at a growing number of libraries for patrons who experience color blindness.

to EBPL's maker kits collection, alongside other nonbook materials in circulation like telescopes and sewing machines.

"It's not like a cochlear implant, where you have to get surgery," says Vocht. "It's so easy, it's just a pair of glasses. If we can use our budget to help people with that, that's kind of what we're all about."

In Living Color

Libraries offer corrective glasses to color-blind patrons

BY Cass Balzer

Libraries are often gateways to new experiences, and a growing number are now offering patrons the chance to see the world in full color—literally.

In recent years, libraries of all sizes have begun adding color-corrective glasses to their Library of Things collections. Made possible primarily through partnerships with manufacturers, patrons can test these glasses out before committing to purchasing their own pair.

Removing barriers

Color blindness, also known as color vision deficiency, affects about 350 million people worldwide, primarily males, according to corrective glasses manufacturer EnChroma. Per the National Eye Institute, the condition—for which there is no cure—limits someone's ability to differentiate colors and see brightness and shades of specific hues. The glasses use specific light filters on the lenses that make colors easier to differentiate,

primarily red and green. Red-green color blindness is the most common form.

For Dana Vocht, youth services librarian at East Brunswick (N.J.) Public Library (EBPL), the decision to offer color-corrective glasses started in 2023 following a request from a mother whose son is color-blind. "They had seen corrective glasses, but they weren't sure if they worked," Vocht recalls. "They were kind of pricey, but [the family] wanted to try them out." Generally, color-corrective glasses can range in price from \$100 to \$400, depending on type and strength.

This led the library to purchase two pairs of glasses from the company Pilestone: one that supports milder conditions and another for more severe color blindness. Each comes with cleaner and a sunglasses strap and retails for \$139. EBPL's Friends group, which regularly supports nontraditional lending items, funded the addition. The glasses were then added

Expanding perspectives

At Plainfield-Guilford Township (Ind.) Public Library (PGTPL), a similar motivation led to adding a set of five color-corrective glasses to its collection. Library Director Montie Manning remembers seeing viral videos online of people experiencing more vibrant colors for the first time. The library was interested in adding more unique, forward-thinking items to its collection, Manning says, and the glasses aligned with the library's mission to make a difference in people's lives.

To prevent straining the library's budget, PGTPL partnered with its local Lions Club service organization, which has historically supported vision-related initiatives. The Lions Club helped secure every pair at a reduced rate from Color My World, a color-corrective glasses company owned by a local optometrist who is also a Lions Club member.

Since the beginning, the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, Manning says. The product has also surprised some patrons. "We've had a few stories where people didn't really consider themselves to be functionally color-blind," but they tried on the

glasses and noticed a difference in how they saw hues around them, he explains.

At North Carolina State University Libraries (NCSUL) in Raleigh, the color-corrective glasses lending program is part of a broader focus on accessibility and wellness. Learning Innovation Librarian Adam Rogers collaborated with EnChroma and the university's Color Science Lab to launch the initiative in 2021 with an on-campus event. Approximately 40 people attended and tried the product, and a few pairs were given away.

NCSUL has since added four pairs of glasses to its permanent Technology Lending Program and featured them in an exhibit for students and staffers to try on. Since the program began, the glasses have been checked out

81 times. But Rogers emphasizes that the value isn't measured in the number of checkouts. "This is very different than lending out some other technology, like a camera," he says. "There is an accessibility role here."

EBPL's circulation has been slow-moving so far—something Vocht hopes to increase with additional marketing and outreach—but she says the glasses have substantial emotional impact. "My colleague's husband is pretty severely color-blind," she says. "He borrowed [the glasses] and just spent time on the computer, just looking at pictures of autumn foliage and of the ocean."

Rogers echoes that sentiment. North Carolina State's university colors are red and white, and for many with color blindness, reds

"This is very different than lending out some other technology.... There is an accessibility role here."

ADAM ROGERS, learning innovation librarian at North Carolina State University Libraries in Raleigh

appear as brown or yellow. Rogers recalls seeing a student put on the glasses for the first time and, speechless, realize he was sitting at a bright red table.

"Having that impact, even with one person, is just so meaningful," he says. "Both personally and for the library's role in the community." ^{AL}

CASS BALZER is a writer in Chicago.

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Neko Case

Grammy-nominated musician discusses debut book



Growing up in remote, rural areas, singer-songwriter Neko Case found that her love of reading provided an escape. In her forthcoming memoir, *The Harder I Fight the More I Love You* (Hachette, January), she recalls repeatedly flipping through the same October 1972 issue of *Mad* magazine, poring over her stepdad's collection of archaeology books, and forcing herself to finish *David Copperfield*.

"A book can bring a whole other piece of the world to you to layer over what's happening, and you don't feel so alone," she says. *American Libraries* spoke with Case about writing her first book and the role libraries have played in her life.

BY Megan Bennett

You recount several traumatic life events in your memoir. What do you hope readers take away from your story? I'm hoping that people can really absorb—even if they're partway to realizing it—that what other people think isn't a big deal at

all. If you just literally decide that other people's opinions of you don't matter, you have a lot less to lose. It's a purer way to live. I sound like I'm oversimplifying it, because it's not that simple, but it is one great way to poke a hole in the dam of the obstacles in your way.

In the chapters that cover your early years, you describe listening to and making music as an escape. Is that still the relationship

you have with music today? I still use music in those ways, but I didn't have to think about it as much back then. I took it for granted. That's the way our society uses music; it's the most taken-for-granted art form there is. We don't realize what it takes to make it, physically or emotionally for people, and what people are willing to do to bring it to us.

You write that because of the lack of representation, you didn't realize for many years that you could be in a band, let alone the front-person. What changed? I remember being a teenager and listening to The Cramps. The Cramps were one of my favorite bands. I pored over the record liner notes a million

MORE ONLINE

For the extended interview, visit bit.ly/AL-Case after January 2.

times before I realized Poison Ivy was the lead guitar player. And I felt so ashamed

when I realized that. "How did I not see the woman?" Like, I'm so trained to not see the woman. I read the credits a million times and still didn't get it. And I was just like, "There's something radically wrong with my wiring."

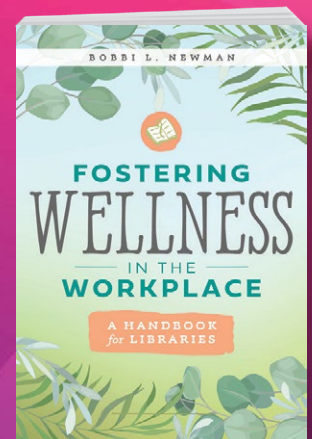
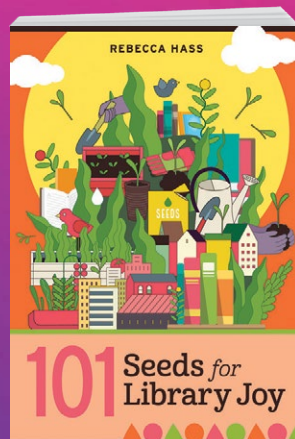
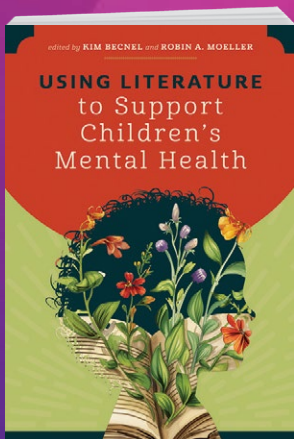
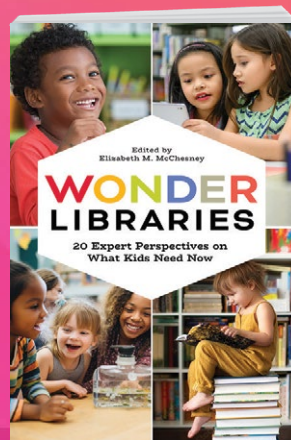
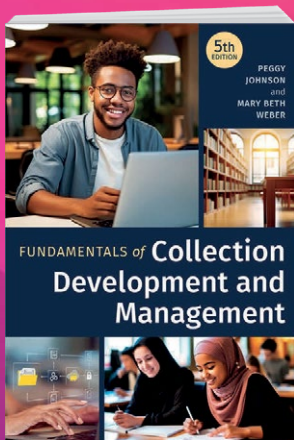
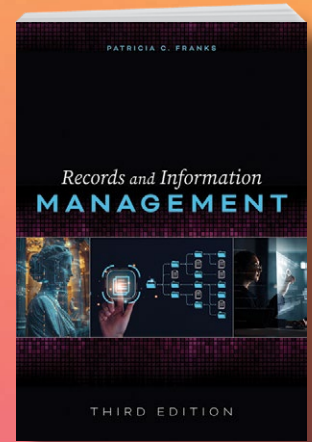
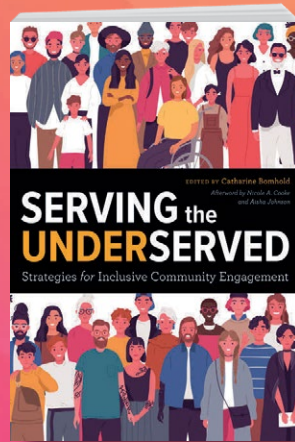
How have libraries played a role in your life? When I was young, libraries were a place where I could sit down and just dream about things with a book. They were safe spaces, for sure. They smelled like books, which was a very comforting smell. In grade school, they were also about listening to records with giant headphones on, and you didn't have to be with other people. It was encouraged to be quiet. So it was a space where, if you weren't with somebody hanging out, it didn't seem like you were not in with other kids. **AL**



Photo: Emily Shur

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“I don’t think I would’ve read as much without the Book It! Program. It gamified it in a very analog way.”

FRANK TOROK, past participant in Pizza Hut’s Book It! Program, in “How Do You Get Kids to Read? Give Them Pizza,” *The New York Times*, October 31.



“I see politicians in Colorado, in Tennessee, in South Carolina moving against my own work, tossing books I’ve authored out of libraries, banning them from classes, and I feel snatched out of the present and brought into another age, one of pitchforks and book-burning bonfires. My first instinct is to laugh, but then I remember that American history is filled with men and women as lethal as they were ridiculous. And when I force myself to take a serious look, I see something familiar: an attempt by adults to break the young minds entrusted to them and remake them in a more orderly and pliable form.”

Author and journalist **TA-NEHISI COATES**, “When *Between the World and Me* Faced a School Book Ban, Ta-Nehisi Coates Decided to Report It Out,” *Vogue*, September 24.

“I THOUGHT, ‘THAT’S A GREAT IDEA FOR AN EAGLE PROJECT.’ I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING THAT WOULD BENEFIT THE MOST PEOPLE.”

High school student **MAXTON BUSA**, in “Monroe Boy Scout to Build a Library of Things for His Eagle Project,” *The Monroe (Conn.) Sun*, November 10.

“I read compulsively. I read at the dinner table. I read in the bathroom. I always had a novel open under my desk when I should have been paying attention to how photosynthesis works.”

Novelist **R. F. KUANG**, in “Author R. F. Kuang Enthralls Fans at Fort Collins (Colo.) Book Signing,” *The Rocky Mountain Collegian*, October 31.

“Politicians invested in libraries after [World War II] because they understood it to be an act of American patriotism and a vision for American national security. They had learned, the hard way, the value of having strategic book reserves. Today, some 80 years after the Allied victory, we’ve forgotten that lesson. Those who argue that our underfunded libraries are becoming obsolete in the age of artificial intelligence and digitized books are ignoring just how vulnerable these new technologies are.”

Historian and professor **ELYSE GRAHAM**, “We Underfunded Our Libraries Once. It Almost Lost Us World War II,” *Time* magazine, September 25.

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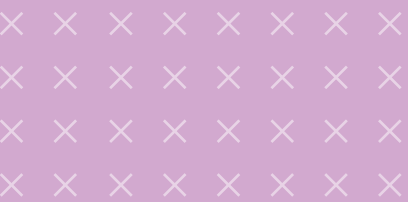
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YEAR IN REVIEW

A look back at news
that affected libraries
and the profession

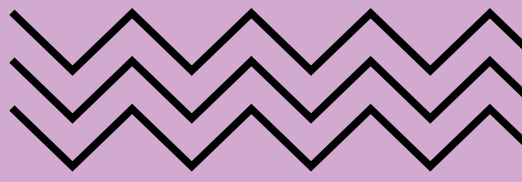


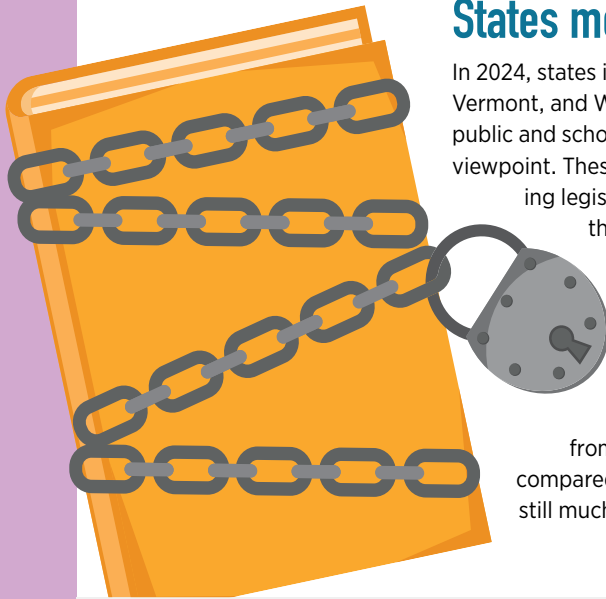
Illustration: © Rana Zeeshan/Adobe Stock

New values for challenging times

On January 21, ALA Council approved five new Core Values (bit.ly/ALA-core):

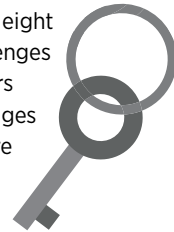
- access
- equity
- intellectual freedom and privacy
- the public good
- sustainability

Council cochairs Erin Berman and Sara Dallas explained the reasons for the changes: “This is a crucial moment for our profession, as our library community faces severe challenges and threats. Our proposed Core Values are designed to navigate these tumultuous times into a brighter future.”



States move to curb book bans

In 2024, states including Colorado, Maryland, Minnesota, Vermont, and Washington passed laws that disincentivize public and school libraries from banning books based on viewpoint. These states join California and Illinois in adopting legislation that aims to deter censorship. Under these laws, books can still be challenged, but reconsideration processes must be documented and followed. ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom reported that nationwide, during the first eight months of 2024, book challenges were down from 2023 numbers from the same period—414 challenges compared with 695 challenges—but were still much higher than prior to 2020.



Internet Archive loses copyright lawsuit appeal

In September, the nonprofit digital library Internet Archive (IA) lost its fair-use-based appeal in *Hachette v. Internet Archive*. Four publishers sued IA, alleging its digitized book collection, available online for free, constituted copyright infringement. If IA loses a pending copyright case against several record labels, experts warn the site may shut down.



Hurricanes decimate Southeast

In September and October—a mere two weeks apart—hurricanes Helene and Milton made landfall in the Southeastern US. The storms caused unprecedented damage across Florida, Georgia, North Carolina (pictured), South Carolina, and Tennessee, collectively claiming hundreds of lives and destroying entire communities. Libraries served as a lifeline, providing electricity and internet access, running help centers, and distributing library cards to people who were displaced. Meanwhile, the ALA Disaster Relief Fund raised more than \$20,000 for libraries in affected communities.

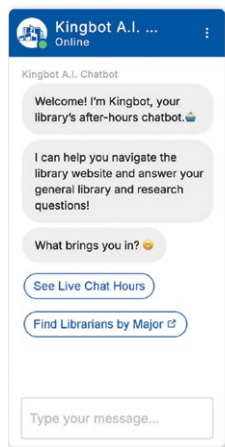


FCC brings back net neutrality

In April, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted 3–2 to reclassify broadband as a public utility, effectively restoring rules for *net neutrality*—or the open and fair flow of information over the internet—introduced during the Obama administration.

This reinstatement means internet service providers (ISPs) cannot block, favor, or throttle content based on type.

The FCC also plans to make ISPs more accountable for outages, network security, and protecting consumer data.



Libraries continue to experiment with, adopt AI

In 2024, usage of artificial intelligence (AI) continued to grow in nearly every professional sector, including libraries. With the expansion of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, libraries have integrated AI into daily operations while also creating policies and toolkits for working with the emerging—and controversial—technology (see bit.ly/AL-MA-24issue). At the same time, library vendors are exploring ways to integrate AI into new products, including customer service technology (bit.ly/2024-LSR).

Kingbot, the after-hours chatbot developed by San José (Calif.) State University's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library

Cyberattacks, ransomware hit major library systems

Following a high-profile cyberattack on the British Library in 2023, many US libraries also fell victim to ransomware plots in 2024. Hackers targeted systems including Delaware Libraries, Douglas County (Colo.) Libraries, Seattle Public Library (pictured), and Solano County (Calif.) Library, demanding ransom in cryptocurrency and crippling systems in ways that affected catalogs, public computers, library websites, room reservations, building hours, and Wi-Fi. Most libraries opted to rebuild infrastructure rather than pay ransoms, and attacks have prompted many to hire security specialists to shore up vulnerabilities.



E-Rate funding can now be applied to Wi-Fi hotspots

In July, the FCC voted to allow libraries and schools to use federal E-Rate funding to purchase lendable Wi-Fi hotspots. Since 1996, the FCC's E-Rate program has provided libraries with discounted internet access and Wi-Fi equipment to better connect their communities. Hotspot lending in libraries grew considerably at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, including with the help of emergency FCC funding. This change to E-Rate rules is intended to continue the success of those efforts.



Photos: © Tomasz Zajada/Adobe Stock (hotspot); Seattle Public Library (sign)

Intellectual Freedom Summit convenes

More than 120 anticensorship advocates convened September 17 at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., for a daylong Intellectual Freedom Summit. The third of its kind in ALA's nearly 150-year history, the summit aimed to strengthen partnerships and sharpen strategy in the battle against book challenges. The previous Intellectual Freedom Summit—held in 1953—produced the Freedom to Read Statement, a response to US Sen. Joseph McCarthy's attempts to remove reading materials deemed controversial or inappropriate from libraries and other institutions.



ALA cancels LibLearnX 2026

On March 11, ALA announced that its Executive Board has decided LibLearnX: The Library Learning Experience will not be held in 2026, citing financial reasons and other factors. The announcement noted that efforts are underway to determine alternatives for presenting popular events like the Youth Media Awards, Martin Luther King Jr. Sunrise Celebration, and I Love My Librarian Awards. LibLearnX 2025 will be held January 24–27 in Phoenix (see p. 38).



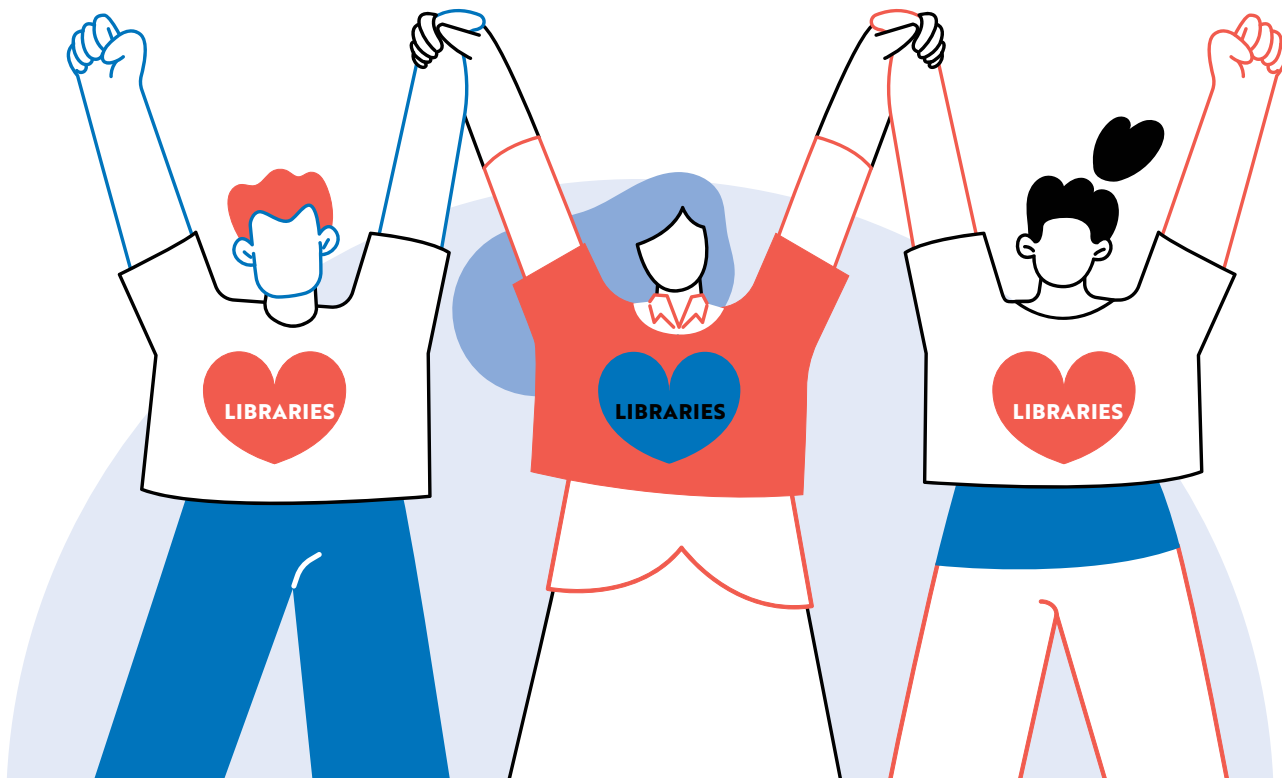
IRRT marks 75th anniversary

ALA's International Relations Round Table (IRRT) celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2024. Founded to promote interest in library issues and librarianship worldwide, IRRT developed initiatives designed to enrich relationships between librarians in the US and abroad, including the International Sister Libraries program and IRRT publication, *International Leads*.

ALA accredits first MLIS program outside of North America

The master's in library and information studies program at University College London (UCL) became the first outside of North America to receive ALA accreditation. UCL has been teaching librarians for more than 100 years. The accreditation strengthens ALA's global bonds and will provide more opportunities for graduates, said ALA President Cindy Hohl.





INTO THE FUTURE

United Virtual focuses on the advocate's role in defending intellectual freedom, raising funds, and sustaining libraries

by *American Libraries* staff



ERIC
KLINENBERG

Sociologist, author, and New York University professor Eric Klinenberg believes that libraries are the greatest social infrastructure our country has.

“I don’t know of another institution that has the capability to make such a diverse set of people feel dignified and welcome when they walk in the door,” Klinenberg told attendees at the outset of United for Libraries Virtual, a three-day virtual conference hosted by United for Libraries (UFL) July 30–August 1, 2024.

Klinenberg’s latest book, *2020: One City, Seven People, and the Year Everything Changed* (February 2024, Knopf), examines the seminal year in which the COVID-19 pandemic upended life for nearly everyone. During his keynote speech, he praised the mission of libraries and activated listeners in furthering their good work.

He noted his message comes at a time when some in American society are challenging libraries’ relevance and librarians’ professionalism.



“Libraries work for the benefit of the whole community—and yes, the whole community might include people we don’t agree with.”

HEATH UMBREIT, adult services librarian at Morrill Memorial Library in Norwood, Massachusetts

“In a certain way, librarians are the essential workers of 2024,” Klinenberg said. “I can’t imagine many professions where people are more under fire than librarians these days, given attacks on libraries, on library funding, on books, on ideas.”

He continued: “The job for all of us who don’t work in libraries is to make sure that librarians are honored and respected and protected and taken care of.”

Klinenberg’s words set the tone for United Virtual, which offered a slate of programs focused on how trustees, Friends groups, and foundations can support libraries and their workers in the areas of advocacy, fundraising, marketing, succession planning, and fighting book bans. *American Libraries* highlights some key takeaways from the conference.

GETTING AHEAD OF BANS



When a resolution was introduced in the city council of Huntington Beach, California, that would ban and restrict books for minors at the public library, Dina Chavez thought the measure would be easily defeated. Chavez, president of Friends of the Huntington Beach Public Library, says that prior to 2023, the library had received only five book challenges in five years.

Instead, the resolution passed 4–3, Chavez explained in the session “Championing Library Freedom: How Friends Groups Can Fight Back When Our Library Is Under Attack.” Her Friends group has found itself rallying supporters for over a year with hopes of reversing the ordinance. Supporters have attended council meetings, put up yard signs, and written letters to local media outlets.

“It was so surprising to see this kind of attack,” Chavez said. She urges Friends groups experiencing similar situations to focus on gathering resources rather than worry about the exact messaging.

To start, libraries should build coalitions with national-level organizations like the American Library Association and American Civil Liberties Union as well as local groups that can help advocate for intellectual freedom. In Huntington Beach, for instance, locals raised awareness by forming a banned book club and setting up a table outside of the library with books that had been removed from the collection.

“If we knew then what we know now, we’d be doing more to find these allies,” Chavez said.



DINA CHAVEZ

She also recommended teaching elected officials about collection development policies and focusing on successful programming that benefits the community. When making points, Chavez urged advocates to refrain from getting personal and avoid mentioning public figures by name.

Heath Umbreit, adult services librarian at Morrill Memorial Library (MML) in Norwood, Massachusetts, agrees that education is essential in getting ahead of censorship attempts. At the session “Rising to the Challenge: The Trustee’s Role in the Culture Wars,” they spoke about opposition to MML’s Pride Month celebrations and lessons that trustees can put into practice.

“When you come across antilibRARY information, please correct it,” Umbreit said. “Libraries work for the benefit of the whole community—and yes, the whole community might include people we don’t agree with.”

In addition to educating patrons, Umbreit said trustees have an obligation to educate themselves. This means learning the responsibilities and expectations of their role, understanding library policies and operations, talking to staffers about their greatest difficulties, and attending regular trainings—including media trainings.

“Boards of trustees and librarians are all part of the same team, so we need to pull together toward the common goals of access and community benefit,” Umbreit said.

Above all, Umbreit stressed that trustees should not go on the attack against antilibRARY activists. “Please, if you do nothing else, deescalate exaggerated rhetoric,” they said. “Make it clear that name-calling and baseless accusations are inappropriate, that violent backlash is never acceptable, regardless of how someone might feel about any given book or individual program.”

EVERYDAY ADVOCACY



Many presenters at United Virtual said they wished their library had better relationships with community members, media, elected officials, and potential advocates before a challenge or ban occurred. But a need for allies doesn’t just kick in amid a threat to intellectual freedom. A library might need help passing a bond measure or fixing a leaking roof, for instance.

“When you need that relationship, it’s too late to build that relationship,” observed Kathy Dooley-Smith, president of the Friends of Tennessee



“The more we thank our donors, the more we’re going to raise. End of discussion.”

RACHEL HEINE, director of development at Columbus (Ohio) Metropolitan Library

Libraries. She presented the session “Libraries Are Better with Friends: How to Foster a Strong Group of Advocates” and offered pointers for running an effective Friends group that can help funnel support to the library ahead of an emergency.

Dooley-Smith said that Friends groups should start by making their mission, bylaws, and objectives clear to members. She recommends creating a “Friends 101” checklist that spells out what the group needs to function properly and scheduling regular sit-downs with library leadership.

She also suggested that Friends groups broadcast their good work to patrons. Groups can publicize their advocacy by writing social media posts and newsletters, delivering reports at board meetings, creating library displays that explain their role in the organization, and reaching out to local news outlets.

In addition to media connections, library advocates should work to cultivate ongoing relationships with local, state, and national officials. Presenters at “Advocacy: The Importance of Leveraging Your Community” recommended that libraries should have a list of names they can turn to when a crisis strikes.

“One of the things we’ve seen the most the last three years is people being caught off guard,” said Carolyn Foote, a retired Texas librarian and author who cofounded the FReadom Fighters advocacy group alongside Becky Calzada, American Association of School Librarians president.

Foote suggests that library workers and supporters meet with their representatives by scheduling a visit or calling their office and offering themselves as an expert. “Ask for the legislative aide,” she said. “We found that that was really the most important connection we could make.”

Internal advocacy is just as important as external, Calzada said. It looks at processes and decision makers before a crisis occurs, which can prepare staffers for a challenge or legislation that attempts to limit access to library materials.

“Often, policies that are not very recently updated have gaps, and that is where we see problems come up,” Calzada

said. She urges library workers and supporters to regularly act out scenarios, like what to do if a commissioner requests that all books on a certain topic be removed from circulation.

Unsure who the potential advocates in your community are? MacKenzie Ledley, executive director at Pulaski County (Ind.) Public Library, suggests that trustees try an exercise called *power mapping*, which involves drawing on one’s personal and positional networks to create a living document of influential contacts.

“We like to talk about [power mapping] as the six degrees of separation concept,” Ledley said at “Preparing for Troubling Times: Tips for Trustees.” “It is a very helpful tool that can be used to move decision makers up and down the ladder of engagement.”

By identifying those in the community who make decisions—and being aware of opportunities that support their interests—trustees can go beyond their direct connections to build relationships. If a legislator is working on an economic development bill, for example, Ledley suggested inviting them to check out the library’s economic development resources.

“Power mapping is something you can do in your pajamas, you can do it at home, you can do it when your flight is delayed,” said Ledley, who stressed that these contact lists have been successful in her own community.

“Is it possible for a rural conservative community to value the principles of intellectual freedom?” she asked. “I can tell you, yes, it is wholeheartedly possible, I’ve seen it happen.”

FINDING THE FUNDS



Trustees, Friends groups, and foundations are often tasked with fundraising for their libraries. But what types of efforts actually pay off?



KATHY DOOLEY-SMITH



CAROLYN FOOTE



BECKY CALZADA



MACKENZIE LEDLEY

Think twice before undertaking a 5K event or silent auction, said Rachel Heine, director of development at Columbus (Ohio) Metropolitan Library (CML), who presented the session “Fundraising Tips and Tricks: Some Novel Ideas.”

In addition to being expensive, “events are a time suck,” Heine said. Instead, she suggested five ideas for raising money: major gifts, grant writing, year-end giving, planned giving, and expressions of gratitude.

With major gifts, Heine said, start with current and frequent donors and be clear that you will be making an ask. If your institution can do only one big annual ask, it should be at the end of the year—despite the competition.

“It’s the absolute best time, and it’s the most successful,” Heine said. “That’s why everyone’s doing it then.” CML’s year-end giving campaign starts on Giving Tuesday and goes through January 15.

She also reminded libraries to show gratitude to all donors: “The more we thank our donors, the more we’re going to raise. End of discussion.” Institutions can do this by sending narrative emails or handwritten notes from volunteers, kids, staffers, and others who have benefited from contributions.

Cathi Alloway, a consultant with Library Strategies, agreed that gratitude should be prioritized. One of the reasons, Alloway shared at “Donor Engagement: Acquiring and Inspiring Committed and Faithful Supporters,” is because retaining donors is more lucrative than trying to acquire them. Yet according to the Fundraising Effectiveness Project, the average retention rate for charitable givers is only 40%–45%.

“They drop primarily for one reason: They got an insufficient amount of gratitude,” Alloway said. She recommended sending acknowledgments to donors that include a signature from a library director or board member within a month of receiving a gift. Additional communications, like newsletters, annual reports, and facility tours, can help donors understand the impact of their dollars. And events that celebrate donors, such as annual brunches, luncheons, or family-friendly happy hours, allow supporters—regardless of their gift size—to feel seen and appreciated.

“You need to show them the love,” Alloway said, “because they’re going to give it back to you in even more ways.”

SECURING TOMORROW



Raising funds is one way that trustees, Friends groups, and foundations can work to sustain libraries. But marketing and succession planning are also instrumental in ensuring longevity.

The Chicago Public Library Foundation (CPLF) focuses less on raising money and more on growing awareness. At “Marketing Is the Future: How to Build a More Sustainable Library Foundation Model by Integrating Marketing in the Organizational Culture, Strategy, and Practice,” members from CPLF discussed how leveraging digital content and engagement data has yielded transformative results in converting audience members into donors.

“So much of marketing is just trying things and testing messages and listening to our audiences,” said Brenda Langstraat Bui, CPLF’s president and CEO. She and marketing director Rica Bouso discussed how the foundation expanded its offerings during the pandemic to include podcasts, videos, and storytimes—and began tracking the kinds of content that brought visitors to the website.

By analyzing the popularity of their offerings, CPLF was able to successfully reduce the number of times the average person came to their website before clicking the “donate” button.

Another way libraries can stay strong is by anticipating inevitable board departures. During “Securing Tomorrow: Effective Succession Strategies for Library Boards,” presenters explained that succession planning can promote resiliency ahead of a trustee leaving.

Maura Deedy, executive director of Libraries of Eastern Oregon, said libraries should start with an assessment of the current board, including how members’ skills and capabilities match potential leadership vacancies. Assessments should consider tenure, levels of experience, community connections, geographic diversity, and diversity of identities.

Boards should then analyze this data to decide whether gaps can be filled with internal or outside talent, said Stephanie Chase, founding principal of the Constructive Disruption consultancy.

“Board members really need to recruit and engage,” Chase said. “You need to be willing to work your network. And most important, you need to be willing to build new networks.”

For more on the programs offered at *United for Libraries Virtual*, visit elearning.ala.org. ALA



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LANGSTRAAT BUI



CATHI
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MAURA
DEEDY



STEPHANIE
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Words Matter

Creating a
harmful-
content
statement
to build an
inclusive
catalog



BY Rachel Newlin
and Aaron Bock



Over the past decade, librarians and archivists have become increasingly concerned with outdated and offensive language in metadata and collections. In 2022, the Schaumburg Township (Ill.) District Library (STDL) adopted a harmful-content statement—also called a “harmful-language statement” or a “statement on harmful content”—to recognize and reckon with problematic language in the library catalog.

Harmful-content statements help libraries focus on describing materials in a way that is respectful and informed by their communities. At STDL, our statement focuses on empathy, transparency, and goal-setting for the future. It is a tool for ongoing accountability, making a priority of work that is often given too little attention. The statement should be a catalyst for meaningful conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

The literature on this topic generally focuses on questioning neutrality, the importance of transparency, and changeable solutions. These ideals informed our strategy and guided our decision making when crafting our statement.

How we started

STDL serves a population of 130,000 residents in a cluster of suburbs northwest of Chicago—Elk Grove Village, Hanover Park, Hoffman Estates, Roselle, Schaumburg, and Streamwood. The library’s facilities consist of a central library, in Schaumburg, and two branches, in Hanover Park and Hoffman

Estates. More than 1 million visitors come through the doors of the three locations every year. The library houses a collection of more than 440,000 items and an e-media collection of more than 200,000 items.

While the population the library serves is primarily non-Hispanic white, the Hispanic and Asian populations have almost doubled in the past 20 years, with numerous languages spoken at home. The foreign-born population is around 31.3%.

In late 2020, STDL formed a DEI committee in response to the brutal murder of George Floyd and many other people of color. While the committee primarily focused on staff training and initiatives, the changing culture of the library overall played a role in garnering support for creating a harmful-content statement.

Public libraries do not generally own high-profile historical collections, so they have not been at the forefront of harmful-content statements. As more libraries adopted these statements, however, they have become an

opportunity to discuss the ethics of description—especially descriptions relating to queer concepts, disability, and communities comprising those who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

The idea that our mid-sized suburban library could contribute to this work seemed both doable and worthwhile. A cataloging librarian, the access services

director, and the executive director of our library collaborated on the first draft of the statement and published it on STDL’s website in June 2022.

Developing, exploring

After we crafted our statement, certain takeaways stood out for us and for other libraries considering this work. These areas are important for acquiring the necessary institutional support while ensuring that efforts are successful.

Whereas academic libraries use their unique collections as a starting place, we began with our intention to improve description. We started drafting a new strategic plan around the same time we began having conversations about the statement, and we believed the plan should include a DEI metadata goal. The access services director asked if this could be included as a library-wide goal, a suggestion that received enthusiastic support from the administration.

We wanted to integrate three main components into our harmful-content statement: (1) recognition of bias in the catalog; (2) a commitment to remediating bias by using alternative



This is an excerpt from *Inclusive Cataloging: Histories, Context, and Reparative Approaches*, edited by Amber Billey, Elizabeth Nelson, and Rebecca Uhl (ALA Editions, 2024).

STDL's Harmful-Content Statement

Our collection, much like our community, is diverse and dynamic. Part of organizing materials in our collection includes the use of standardized metadata and descriptions in our catalog. At the library, we are committed to creating inclusive descriptions that accurately describe our materials. However, we recognize that there may be language in our collection descriptions that is outdated, insensitive, or inaccurate. Such descriptions do not reflect the library's viewpoint, but rather the social attitudes and circumstances of the period or place in which it was created. We are dedicated to finding ways to mitigate use of harmful language in descriptions in our catalog.

We acknowledge that we are often describing communities of which we are not a part. We recognize our responsibility to describe our collection respectfully and carefully. We also recognize that we may sometimes fail and are dedicated to a process of constant reflection and improvement.

How are materials described, and why are some of the descriptions harmful?

When processing our collections, staff make choices about what language to use when describing our materials. Some of these descriptions were written many years ago, using language that was acceptable at the time. Librarians often use a standard set of terms, such as the Library of Congress Subject Headings, to describe materials. Some of these standardized terms are outdated, offensive, or

insensitive. Staff sometimes make mistakes or use poor judgment. We are committed to working to improve access and update descriptions that are harmful.

How are we working to address this problem and help users better understand this content?

1. Working directly with misrepresented and under-represented communities to improve the ways they are represented
2. Informing users about the presence and origin of harmful content
3. Proposing changes and additions to standard vocabularies to promote more inclusive and accurate access to works
4. Implementing vocabularies from alternative vocabulary and classification systems
5. Including descriptive metadata in the original script for works in languages that do not use the Latin alphabet
6. Favoring terms used by the communities and individuals being described in our collections
7. Engaging in ongoing discussions dedicated to examining our legacy and historical cataloging practices

How can I report harmful content?

Maintaining updated and accurate description of materials is an ongoing process and we may not always make the right decisions. We encourage feedback from all members of our community, so that we can learn and adjust our practices.

Source: Schaumburg Township (Ill.) District Library ●

vocabularies, removing offensive subjects, and implementing descriptions in the language of the material (i.e., Spanish-language materials described in Spanish); and (3) providing a place for library users' feedback on harmful content they encounter.

To start, we reviewed the list of statements regarding bias in libraries and

archives available on the Cataloging Lab website (bit.ly/BiasStatements), as we narrowed down the type of statement we wanted to craft. We had two main goals for our statement: to speak directly to our audience, and to be clear and concise.

In drafting our harmful-content statement, we started from a shared outline and adapted pieces of the statements

we liked best, focusing on some main themes: social responsibility, person-first language, the importance of world language resources being accurately described, and implementing alternative vocabularies. It was important for us to use our statement as an affirmation of an ongoing commitment to continue working toward these critical cataloging goals.

Soliciting feedback

The harmful-content statement lives on the About Us page of our library's website, along with our library's vision, mission, and values statements, and is one of the first things a website visitor might see. While some libraries we researched opted to create a new form where site visitors can report harmful content, our administration likes the simplicity of having one place for all feedback and then directing those comments to the most appropriate place. The feedback link on our statement directs to our general comments and suggestions page.

This approach ties directly into our values statement of service, trust, and dedication. We worked with Digital Services to provide a link to our statement in every catalog record, allowing concerned patrons to access the feedback form. We did consider asking for a policy that would require consistent placement of our statement, but having links in accessible locations and on high-traffic pages has fit our needs.

Most of the feedback received so far has come from other library professionals; to date, we have received no feedback from our patrons. We are glad to have a space for feedback if someone notices something harmful, but we are just as happy to have a space that gives our community members more information about how items end up in the catalog.

As we make more changes to our catalog to fulfill the statement's goals, we expect we may get more feedback. The goals may change, and we will continue updating the statement as necessary, which may also impact the feedback that we receive.

Making progress

After a few months, we convened a group of staff volunteers to begin tackling the project of updating outdated and offensive subject headings in our catalog. Before our first meeting, we wanted everyone to have the same context in mind. We assigned readings outlining the problematic history of subject access in libraries and providing some

solutions for minimizing harm. After completing the readings, the group agreed to create a signed statement of intention to help guide the decisions we made as a group. The adopted intentions included:

- Accepting that no solution is permanent
- Describing people using the terms they prefer
- Acknowledging that neutrality is not possible
- Being transparent in our reparative work

This work is ongoing. We meet monthly to evaluate headings identified by library staffers as problematic and worthy of investigation. The bulk of catalog headings we evaluated involve terminology about issues related to disability, LGBTQ+, and BIPOC themes. While our group includes representation in some of those categories, we are entirely white people. As such, we are careful about making changes to headings involving communities and histories that we do not know much about, and we assign these headings for further research before making any determination.

We can flip and update headings in the discovery layer without any updates needed in the integrated library system. This process means the bulk of the work has been deciding on new terminology. It is a slow process, but a fruitful one. Once we make a first pass through the subject headings audit, we will tackle other goals outlined in our statement.

As we continue this work, we feel the harmful-content statement provides an invaluable guide in holding us accountable to this work, both to ourselves as an institution and to our community. To have the goals outlined and available, we are transparent about what is not currently being done as much as what is.

We found that the process of crafting a harmful-content statement that includes proactive goal-setting provides a great space for collaboration, transparency, and cataloging with empathy. It has allowed us to dedicate time and resources to projects that

The goal, ultimately, is metadata creation that is inclusive, empathetic, transparent, and representative of our entire community.

might otherwise have taken a backseat to the everyday needs of the library. We strongly recommend attaching your own statement and initiatives to strategic planning or other similar initiatives, as it creates momentum and accountability that are hard to replicate.

We found value in cultivating a collaborative space where all areas of the library could contribute, so we recommend creating a team of folks from many different librarianship backgrounds. Lastly, we recommend regular review of the statement in recognition that new solutions may be necessary over time. The goal, ultimately, is metadata creation that is inclusive, empathetic, transparent, and representative of our entire community. ^{AL}



RACHEL NEWLIN is cataloging librarian at Schaumburg Township (Ill.) District Library (STD.L). She holds an MLIS and a bachelor's in political science from Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois. She has worked in libraries in various capacities since 2012.



AARON BOCK is director of circulation and access services at STD.L. He holds an MLIS degree from San José (Calif.) State University and a bachelor's in history from University of Colorado. He has worked in public libraries since 2008, with a focus on public service and technical services.

2025

LibLearnX

PREVIEW

Phoenix | January 24-27

EDITED by Alison Marcotte

Welcome to the Valley of the Sun, the Big Saguaro, the Silicon Desert. Phoenix is known for its picturesque landscapes, hearty succulents, and scorching heat, but come January 24-27 the city will usher in a different kind of vibrancy and warmth: the community, creativity, and connections of the American Library Association's (ALA) LibLearnX conference.

LibLearnX 2025, dedicated to the learning experience of library workers, will bring together authors, thought leaders, and subject matter experts at the Phoenix Convention Center for educational programs, awards, celebrations, and networking opportunities. This year's programmatic theme is "Reimagine, Refocus, Reset: Charting a Path for the Future." LibLearnX will not be held in 2026, while the Association considers what's next for the conference and its most popular events (bit.ly/LLX-future).

Returning to LibLearnX this year are Timely Topics, session collections pertaining to critical issues in librarianship. Topics include the defense of intellectual freedom, information practitioners' relationship to artificial intelligence (AI), and accessibility practices that go beyond compliance.

This preview offers a sample of what to expect. For registration information and a complete list of events, including up-to-date information on dates, times, and locations, visit liblearnx.org.

FEATURED SPEAKERS

New York Times-bestselling authors and illustrators **Raina Telgemeier** and **Scott McCloud** will open LibLearnX with a discussion of their upcoming collaboration, *The Cartoonists Club*, **8-9:30 a.m. Saturday, January 25**. In this middle-grade graphic novel, characters Art, Howard, Lynda, and Makayla form a club to learn about making comics. The book aims to inspire readers to tap into their imaginations to create their own storytelling adventures.

Nick Brooks, critically acclaimed author of *Promise Boys* and award-winning filmmaker, will discuss his forthcoming book, *Up in Smoke*, **1-2 p.m. Saturday, January 25**. This young adult



RAINA TELGEMEIER



NICK BROOKS



SCOTT MCCLOUD



HARSHITA JERATH

thriller follows Monique, a girl determined to clear her brother's name for murder, and Cooper, a boy desperate to keep his own name out of the line of fire.

Children's author **Harshita Jerath** will talk about her recent picture book, *Cooler Than Lemonade*, **3-4 p.m. Saturday, January 25**. Illustrated by Chloe Burgett, the story is about discovering ideas in unexpected places, never giving up, and finding the perfect recipe for success.

Kyle Edwards is an award-winning Anishinaabe journalist and writer from the Lake Manitoba First Nation and a member of the Ebb and Flow First Nation in Manitoba.

Edwards will appear as part of the ALA President's Program, **8:45–10 a.m. Sunday, January 26**, to discuss his new novel, *Small Ceremonies*. The book is a coming-of-age story that follows the hopes and struggles of a group of Native high school students from Winnipeg's North End, illuminating the experience of growing up forgotten, urban, poor, and Indigenous.



KYLE EDWARDS

Felicia Cocotzin Ruiz is a storyteller and *curandera*, or traditional healer, who writes and speaks about culinary medicine, folk herbalism, and Native American food sovereignty. She will discuss her picture book, *Nana Lupita and the Magic Sopita*, illustrated by Carlos Vélez, **3–4 p.m. Sunday, January 26**. The semi-bilingual book follows characters Luna and her brother Sol on a search for the magic ingredient in their grandmother's secret sopita recipe.

Tech journalist and prize-winning author **Vauhini Vara** will close LibLearnX with a talk about her forthcoming book, *Searches: Selfhood in the Digital Age*, **11 a.m.–noon, Monday, January 27**. *Searches* explores how Big Tech is both shaping and exploiting our human need for connection, and proposes that by harnessing our collective creativity, we might transform our relationship with machines and one another.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

It's Not Bragging If It's True: Reimagine Your Interview Experience

1–4 p.m. Friday, January 24

Hear from Johnson County (Kans.) Library's operations managers—who have interviewed more than 500 candidates for their system—about how to up your interview game and get that dream job. In this interactive session, participants will embrace discomfort and build confidence with mock questions and self-marketing strategies.



VAUHINI VARA

The Library as a Civic Space for All: Bridging Divides One Conversation at a Time

1–4 p.m. Friday, January 24

Presenters will share StoryCorps' methodology for building connections between

people who seem to have nothing in common, and its researched impact on individuals and communities. Attendees will leave with low-lift program ideas to try at their libraries.

Wellness Is Not a Perk: Reimagining Work-Life Balance for Library Workers

1–4 p.m. Friday, January 24

Wellness isn't a bonus or productivity booster but an intrinsic part of a fulfilling work experience. Employees of Oklahoma State University Library

in Stillwater will delve into strategies for fostering a work culture—whether remote, hybrid, or in person—that prioritizes caring for ourselves and one another.

Ditching Dewey: How Refocusing to Library of Congress Cataloging Supports Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

10:50–11:10 a.m. Saturday, January 25

For academic libraries, the Library of Congress Classification can provide more efficient access to diverse voices and inclusive topics than the Dewey Decimal System. Join this presentation to learn why University of Arkansas Fort Smith changed its cataloging scheme and how the switch is supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts.

Handbook of Black Librarianship: An Empowering Resource

11 a.m.–noon Saturday, January 25

Since the first edition was published in 1977, the *Handbook of Black Librarianship* has served as an invaluable resource on leadership, history, and empowerment for Black/African American librarians in all library settings. Presenters will examine the history of the handbook, late coeditor E. J. Josey's vision, the process of bringing the third edition to fruition, topics and issues the book addresses, and why this resource is still necessary in the 21st century.



FELICIA COCOTZIN RUIZ

Creating Interactive Literacy Activities for Your Patrons Living with Dementia

1–2 p.m. Saturday, January 25

Discover practical ways to develop programs and resources designed around the interests, needs, and abilities of patrons living with dementia. Based on the principles of person-centered care, this session will provide guidance for focusing on participants' strengths rather than their losses.

The Rhythm of Connection: Infusing Music, Movement, and Culture into Youth Programming

1–2 p.m. Saturday, January 25

Explore the transformative power of rhythm, music, and movement in creating engaging and culturally relevant youth programming. Shaunterria Owens, a youth services specialist at North Miami (Fla.) Public Library with 20 years of experience as a storyteller and Zumbini instructor, will show attendees how to seamlessly weave these elements into storytimes, outreach initiatives, and other services.

Birding Backpack Lending Program: Providing Access, Creating Partnerships, Enhancing Programming

2:15–2:35 p.m. Saturday, January 25

Birding backpacks—which contain binoculars, a field guide, and local trail maps—give patrons access to equipment they might not otherwise be able to afford. Learn how lending these backpacks can be an entry point to inclusive nature programming, such as nature storytimes, outdoor teen book clubs, bat-watching nights, and citizen science programs.

Critical Indigenous Librarianship: Centering Indigenous Peoples in Library Spaces, Collections, and Research Services

2:30–3:30 p.m. Saturday, January 25

Presenters from the Labriola National American Indian Data Center at Arizona State University in Tempe will discuss how to approach Indigenous space- and place-making in non-Indigenous libraries, as well as strategies to center Indigenous perspectives and approaches in collection stewardship and research services.

Watching Clouds for NASA: Reimagine Your Library as a Center for Community Science

2:30–3:30 p.m. Saturday, January 25

In this session, hear from libraries engaging patrons with citizen

science programs and NASA resources. Gain an understanding of how to use the GLOBE Observer app to observe clouds, as well as ideas for activities, funding, experts, and partners that can support a community science program.

Reinvigorating Green Spaces for Library Services

10:15–10:45 a.m. Sunday, January 26

Has your library considered collaborating with a community garden? Presenters from Queens (N.Y.) Public Library share this effective way to introduce patrons to outdoor spaces, provide programming in a unique venue, foster relationships with local partners, and incorporate green events at your own facility.

Adapting to Change: What Do Students Want in Collections and Services from Academic Libraries Post-Pandemic?

11–11:30 a.m. Sunday, January 26

In recent years, the library at California State University, Monterey Bay has seen a decline in physical book circulations and reference questions but an increase in makerspace attendance and romance novel requests. What do students want from their post-pandemic academic library? In this session, participants will sketch out their own student surveys so that they can make data-driven decisions regarding trends that boost engagement.

Guerilla-Style Usability Testing: The Importance of Flexibility and Mobility in Reimagining the Library Website

1–1:20 p.m. Sunday, January 26

How do students really use the library website, and what do they think about it? This presentation will look at student feedback and analytics, including usage patterns and preferences, to rethink and redo a functional yet underutilized website through the practices of trial and iteration.

Overcoming Recruitment Challenges: Implementing the Search Advocate Program for Inclusive Hiring Practices

1:40–2 p.m. Sunday, January 26

How do we recruit a pool of diverse candidates, especially in the academic library setting? Participants will learn about the Search Advocate program, launched campuswide by the Office for DEI at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, leaving with

For more information

Find details on registration, LLX Marketplace exhibitors, conference accessibility, and social media accounts to follow at liblearnx.org. ●

strategies to make hiring more inclusive and mitigate bias in the recruitment process.

iPara Todos! Leveraging the Latinx Kidlit Book Festival to Support Your Curriculum and Community

1:40–2 p.m. Sunday, January 26

The Latinx Kidlit Book Festival is a free multiday virtual event held during Hispanic/Latinx Heritage Month (Sept. 15–Oct. 15) that showcases Latinx authors, illustrators, books, and publishers. Find out how you can integrate content and educational tools from the festival into your library activities and curriculum in a way that fosters empathy and representation.

Pathways to Librarianship: Designing an Inclusive Profession

4–5 p.m. Sunday, January 26

This presentation will cover the barriers to participation in the library profession for people of historically marginalized identities and provide an opportunity to discuss community solutions that remove these barriers.

TIMELY TOPICS

Below is a handful of sessions representing the conference's Timely Topics: intellectual freedom, AI, and accessibility beyond compliance.

AI in the School Library: Navigating a New Course in Digital Learning

9:45–10:45 a.m. Saturday, January 25

School librarians will share how they support educators in using AI technology that advances lifelong learning while meeting the diverse learning, cultural, and social-emotional needs of individual students.

Storytelling in Action: A Practical Approach to Intellectual Freedom Advocacy

9:45–10:45 a.m. Saturday, January 25

As libraries continue to face a swell of censorship issues and book challenges, advocates have an opportunity to reclaim the narrative and tell the story of how libraries impact communities. Presenter Kerol S. Harrod, professor at Texas Woman's University in Denton, will share ways to incorporate storytelling elements into advocacy speeches, op-eds and letters to the editor, interviews, and elevator speeches, as well as practical tips for dealing with media requests.

ALA Governance Institute

1–5 p.m. Friday, January 24

The ALA Governance Institute (AGI) offers skills for impactful leadership and effective decision making, whether in association governance or for career development. This year's in-person event will be open to the first 185 registrants who sign up. Institute faculty will include seasoned ALA member leaders, ALA staff members, and other subject matter experts. •

Governance Meetings

Saturday, January 25

11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. ALA Council Orientation

2:30–3 p.m. ALA-APA Council

3–5 p.m. ALA Council I

Sunday, January 26

2–3 p.m. ALA Executive Board Candidates Forum

3–5 p.m. ALA Council II

Monday, January 27

1–5 p.m. ALA Executive Board Meeting •

To Infinity and Beyond: Integrating a Wellness Perspective into Our Library Accessibility Services

9:45–10:15 a.m. Saturday, January 25

Presenters from Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario, will discuss successful accessibility initiatives, including the opening of the Wellness Desk in the library, hands-on workshops for students with disabilities, and the creation of sensory-friendly study spaces.

Unbannable: The Impact of Book Bans on Library Patrons and How Libraries Can Push Back

1–2 p.m. Saturday, January 25

This session will explore how library-driven initiatives, including Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library's Books Unbanned, Chicago Public Library's Book Sanctuary, and the Digital Public Library of America's Banned Book Club, are actively combating censorship and safeguarding access to knowledge for all.

Adaptive Libraries: AI Applications for Inclusive Design 4:30–4:50 p.m. Saturday, January 25

How can we use AI to improve user experience and wayfinding for our patrons with disabilities? At this session, hear perspectives from patrons with disabilities and professionals from different library types on adaptive, next-generation tools for universal design and enhanced reach.

Books for All: Creating and Curating Collections to Serve Children with Vision Loss

11–11:20 a.m. Sunday, January 26

Learn how libraries can provide equitable access to resources for children with vision loss and the educators who teach and empower these children.

AI in Action: Reimagining Metadata and Cataloging with Chatbots and OpenAI

12:15–12:35 p.m. Sunday, January 26

How can academic librarians use tools like OpenAI to assign headings and keywords to digital and traditional collections? Presenters will speak about the applications—and ethical implications—of leveraging AI in cataloging tasks.

An Introduction to Law for Librarians

2:30–3:30 p.m. Sunday, January 26

In this program from ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, speakers will introduce legal topics to help library workers understand the rights they have when curating information, when providing access to information, and in protecting themselves from threats by patrons, local officials, or state leaders.

Let's Talk Accessibility: Five Ideas to Support Equitable Library Service and Practice

10:20–10:40 a.m. Monday, January 27

Accessibility should be the default. But when it's not, where does one begin? Learn about five methods Kwantlen Polytechnic University Library in Surrey, British Columbia, has integrated to enhance accessibility and service equity.

SPECIAL EVENTS

ALA Gives Back

9–10:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Friday, January 24

ALA has partnered with Burton Barr Central Library, the main location of Phoenix Public Library, on the LibLearnX 2025 community service project. Help assemble packets for a seed

library where patrons can check out a variety of fruit, vegetable, and perennial seeds. Tickets for this volunteer opportunity are complimentary but registration is required.

I Love My Librarian Awards

6–8 p.m. Friday, January 24

The I Love My Librarian Award honors the accomplishments of exceptional public, school, college, community college, and university librarians. Join ALA in celebrating the 10 librarians selected this year for their outstanding public service. A welcome reception with food, drinks, and music immediately follows the ceremony.



Martin Luther King Jr. Sunrise Celebration

6:30–8 a.m. Sunday, January 26

The annual Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Observance and Sunrise Celebration commemorates King's legacy and recognizes the connection between his life's work and the library world. This year's event will center themes of protest and resistance, feature a tribute to the late Satia Marshall Orange, and include appearances from author and professor Gloria J. Browne-Marshall and librarian and documentarian Rodney Freeman Jr.


RUSA Book and Media Awards

10:30–11:30 a.m. Sunday, January 26

The Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) annually recognizes the year's best in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, audiobooks, and reference materials at these awards. During this prerecorded event, RUSA, in coordination with *Booklist*, will announce the winners of the 2025 Carnegie Medals for Excellence in Fiction and Nonfiction.

ALA Youth Media Awards

8–9:30 a.m. Monday, January 27

More than 20 awards recognizing outstanding books, videos, and other materials for children and teens will be announced, including the Newbery and Caldecott medals, the Coretta Scott King Book Awards, and the Michael L. Printz, Pura Belpré, Stonewall, and Schneider Family awards. 

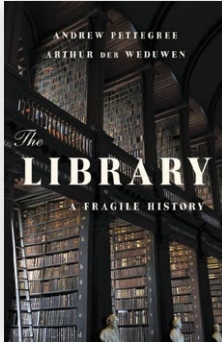
All times listed are Mountain. Times and dates of sessions may be subject to change. Check the LibLearnX scheduler for the most up-to-date information.

A Storied History

Titles covering the history of libraries and library workers



REANNA ESMAIL is lead librarian for instruction at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

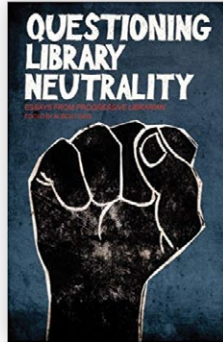


The Library: A Fragile History

By Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen

The global history recounted in this six-part title demonstrates the role information access plays in societies, with the final two sections focusing on the US and the West. Although its length may seem overwhelming, this is a straightforward read whose clear message that libraries are rooted in their dependence on people and communities should resonate with anyone interested in the history of our institutions.

Basic Books, 2021. 544 p. \$22.99. PBK. 978-1-5416-0372-1. (Also available as an ebook.)

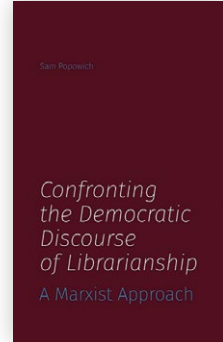


Questioning Library Neutrality: Essays from Progressive Librarian

Edited by Alison Lewis

By organizing previously published essays from the Progressive Librarians Guild chronologically, this volume illustrates the history of the ongoing debates around library neutrality and offers a look into how libraries have historically approached intellectual freedom, censorship, and social justice. Selected essays share stories going back to the 1960s, including those of a Florida librarian who was contacted by the FBI during the height of the Patriot Act, and E. J. Josey, a Black librarian and activist who was denied membership to his state's library association because of his race.

Library Juice Press, 2008. 152 p. \$35. PBK. 978-0-9778-6177-4.



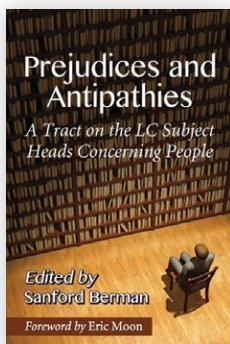
Confronting the Democratic Discourse of Librarianship: A Marxist Approach

By Sam Popowich

Following the history of libraries and capitalism in tandem, Popowich pairs theory and history to challenge assumptions about libraries as a democratic ideal. While perhaps more philosophical than traditionally historical, the approach allows readers to see how systems of power have affected current library practices. Theory is used here to construct and deconstruct received ideas about libraries, including those about their origins. This book is especially relevant for understanding the debates and challenges libraries face today.

Library Juice Press, 2019. 334 p. \$45. PBK. 978-1-6340-0087-1.

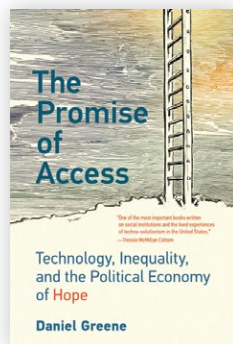
by Reanna Esmail



Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People

Edited by Sanford Berman

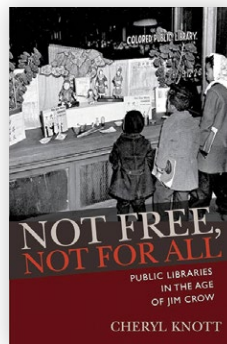
Much can be learned from the changes and challenges to Library of Congress subject headings. First published in 1971, this 2013 reprint includes an updated foreword and reflections on its impact. Berman's seminal text examines bias in library cataloging and description, the ways that controlled vocabularies affect how librarians see and organize the world, and the power and responsibility that comes with this task. Though now more than a decade old, the reprint demonstrates how library description is not a static history but one that requires constant evaluation and rectification. McFarland & Company, 2013. 229 p. \$29.95. 978-0-7864-9352-4.



The Promise of Access: Technology, Inequality, and the Political Economy of Hope

By Daniel Greene

While not about the history of libraries per se, this text examines the history of the supposed digital divide and policies to increase digital access. Greene explores how *technochauvinism*, the belief that technology is the best fix for a problem, offers lackluster solutions to social and economic inequality that don't address systemic issues. Rather, these solutions transform processes and places for internet access, especially schools and public libraries. For readers interested in library history, this study provides additional context for the ways digital access policies have led to library initiatives and affected operations. MIT Press, 2021. 272 p. \$35. PBK. 978-0-2625-4233-3.



Not Free, Not for All: Public Libraries in the Age of Jim Crow

By Cheryl Knott

It is tempting to romanticize libraries and their histories. But, as many of the books on this list reveal, libraries can uphold—and in some cases, further—oppressive social systems. Knott explores the segregation efforts of primarily white middle-class women in the pre-Civil Rights Act South and the efforts of Black Americans to create their own information spaces. Knott's historical study encourages readers to contemplate who libraries are for and what purposes they really serve. University of Massachusetts Press, 2015. 322 p. \$29.95. PBK. 978-1-6253-4178-5. **AL**

PEOPLE

Announcements

ON THE MOVE

In July **Alexandria Austermann** became youth services librarian at Genesee (Mich.) District Library.

September 30 **Ashlie Brewer** became digital projects coordinator at the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Jean Darnell became director of library services at the School District of Philadelphia in September.



September 23 **Collin Drummond** joined University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as open knowledge and research impact librarian.



Toni Jacquez became librarian at Burlington (Okla.) Public School in August.

Martin R. Kalfatovic became managing director of International Image Interoperability Framework Consortium July 8.

In September **Christina Sirianni** joined Margaret E. Heggan Free Public Library in Sewell, New Jersey, as adult services supervisor.

Jessie Spragge was named librarian for Calaveras County, California, in September.

September 2 **Mara Strickler** became deputy director of community services overseeing St. Helena (Calif.) Public Library.

July 15 **Katie Vermilyea** became young adult librarian at Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library's Adams Street branch.



Jana Wiersma became youth and makerspace librarian at St. Helens (Ore.) Public Library in August.

Kudos

Jalynn Feininger, librarian at Watertown (S.Dak.) Middle School, was recognized as the New Librarian of the Year at the South Dakota Library Association's annual conference in September.

The West Virginia Board of Education and Department of Education named **Nicole McCulley**, librarian at Center McMechen Elementary School and Glen Dale Elementary School in Marshall County, the state's Service Personnel of the Year on September 10. ●

October 4 **Shelby Harken** retired as head of technical services at University of North Dakota's Chester Fritz Library in Grand Forks.

Linda Loutsch retired as middle school and high school librarian at Remsen (Iowa) St. Mary's Schools in May.

In August **Jeannie Stewart** retired as youth programs specialist at Wilkinson Public Library in Telluride, Colorado.

Margaret "Meg" Van Patten retired as director of Baldwinsville (N.Y.) Public Library October 31.

AT ALA

September 9 **Carya Haas** became program coordinator for continuing education at the Public Library Association.

Amy Katzenberger joined ALA as director of development September 9.

September 2 **Bill Ladewski** became director of Member Relations and Services while continuing as executive director for the Reference and User Services Association.

Tiffany Larocque became program officer for member services at the Association of College and Research Libraries in August.

September 9 **Paula Mauro** became senior editor of digital content for *American Libraries*.

Kerri Price returned to ALA as director of the Office for Accreditation September 9.

In September **Donna Seaman** was promoted to editor in chief of *Booklist* while continuing as adult books editor.

Cory Stevenson was promoted to associate director of community engagement and experience for Member Relations and Services in September. AL

PROMOTIONS

Caroline Johnson was promoted to director of Statesboro-Bulloch County (Ga.) Library September 1.

June 1 **Lisa Lothian** was promoted to head of outreach services at Nantucket (Mass.) Atheneum.

July 1 **Katie Tyson** was promoted to assistant director at Logan County (Ky.) Public Library.

RETIREMENTS

June 21 **Gale Bacon** retired as director of Belgrade (Mont.) Community Library.

Jennifer Durham retired as director of Statesboro-Bulloch County (Ga.) Library in August.

In July **Nancy Giddens** retired as librarian of Calaveras County, California.

Mary Jo Giudice retired as director of Dallas Public Library October 1.

In Memory

Abraham Haskell “Hank” Epstein, 90, an innovative library technologist, died August 24. In the 1970s, Epstein worked with the Library of Congress and Stanford (Calif.) University to develop an application for managing card catalog data in computer format using the emerging MARC standard. He later reprogrammed MARC-standard applications for various microcomputers in the 1980s and started a company, Information Transform Inc., to market these products and provide consulting services.

Marjory June Hopper, 91, retired children’s librarian, died August 31. Hopper worked at Los Angeles Public Library for more than 30 years, most recently at the John C. Fremont branch. She received many awards, including the City of Los Angeles Community Service Award, the Hollywood Coordinating Council’s Outstanding Community Service Award, and the Woman’s Club of Hollywood’s Award for Excellence to the Community.

Madeline Lippman, 93, retired school librarian, died September 7. Lippman worked as a librarian for Baltimore City Public Schools, first at Dickey Hill Elementary/Middle School and then Lakeland Elementary/Middle School. In retirement, she served as a library volunteer.

Steve Marquardt, 80, former dean of libraries at South Dakota State University (SDSU) in Brookings, died August 3. Marquardt served at SDSU from 1996 to 2006. Prior to that, he was director of libraries at University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire for 14 years. He dedicated himself to advocacy for censorship-free libraries in Cuba.

Ann L. Moore, 86, who served 23 years as director of Fayetteville (N.Y.) Free Library (FFL), died September 12. Moore started as assistant librarian at FFL before her promotion to director in 1982. She is credited with expanding reference services, creating a local history collection, and consolidating the county’s interlibrary loan system. Moore also worked as a bookmobile librarian in the Southern Tier region of New York and as a part-time librarian for Solvay (N.Y.) Public Library in retirement. She was an active member of the New York Public Library Association.

Ronald Murphy, 88, retired chief of operations at Montclair (N.J.) Public Library (MPL), died March 2. Murphy started



his more than 30-year career in libraries as a research associate for MPL’s Neighborhood Information Center Helps Everyone pilot, where he supplied community members with referrals and crisis information on food, shelter, and employment. In 1979, he was promoted to MPL’s head of circulation. Murphy was dedicated to outreach and inclusion, starting MPL’s first African American book discussion group, bringing story-times to parks, and cofounding the library’s African Ballet Ensemble, which performed at ALA conferences. He was a founding member of the Black Librarians of New Jersey and active in the New Jersey Library Association, Public Library Association, and Black Caucus of the ALA, where he contributed to the formation of the Spectrum Scholarship Program.

Autumn Jane Qualls, 42, librarian at Neosho (Mo.) Middle School for 20 years, died August 21.

Theodore F. “Ted” Welch, 90, an advocate for collaboration with and understanding of Japanese libraries, died November 25, 2023. Welch served as a cataloger of Japanese materials at the Library of Congress. From 1969 to 1983, he worked at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, as assistant university librarian for public services, assistant university librarian for development, and founding executive director of the Center for the Study of US-Japan Relations. In 1983, he became director of libraries at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, where he transitioned to an appointed professorship in Japanese. In 1999, Welch became professor of Japanese and director of development at the Center for Japanese Studies at Portland (Ore.) State University. From 1969 to 1994, he organized a series of library conferences focused on policy and issues of concern related to higher education in the US and Japan. He served on ALA’s International Relations Committee and the Association of College and Research Libraries’ Asia–North Africa Section, as well as chaired ALA’s Advisory Committee on Liaison with Japanese Libraries. In 2004, he was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette, by Japanese Emperor Akihito for his contributions to US-Japan relations. ●



Curtains Up

Theater for young audiences may not receive the same recognition as productions by Shakespeare or Tennessee Williams, but it deserves its time in the spotlight, says Caelin Ross.

“You can learn so much ... from plays written for, with, and by youth,” says Ross, performing arts librarian at Arizona State University (ASU) Library in Tempe, noting that young imaginations allow for more “interesting and experimental” presentations.

Ross oversees ASU’s Theatre for Youth and Community Collection. Founded in 1979, the university says it is the largest of its kind in the world.

The collection, which Ross estimates to be approximately 5,000 linear feet (or the size of 16 football fields), holds research materials like curricula and books, as well as scripts, production design samples, sketches, and costumes. The oldest item is a 1620 collection of dramas called the *Tragoediae sacrae*,

part of a rare-book set that reflects the ways early European youth theater intertwined with arts, education, and religion.

Other standouts are production items from playwright David Saar’s 1993 award-winning play *The Yellow Boat*, based on his 8-year-old son Benjamin’s death from AIDS-related complications. They include paintings by Benjamin that inspired the title.

As the holdings reflect, Ross says, adults have realized over the past several decades that kids don’t need goofy characters or moral lessons at the end. They can handle more nuanced, diverse content.

“They’re not human ‘becomings,’” she says of young thespians and theatergoers. “They’re human beings, and they deserve art now for art’s sake.” **AL**

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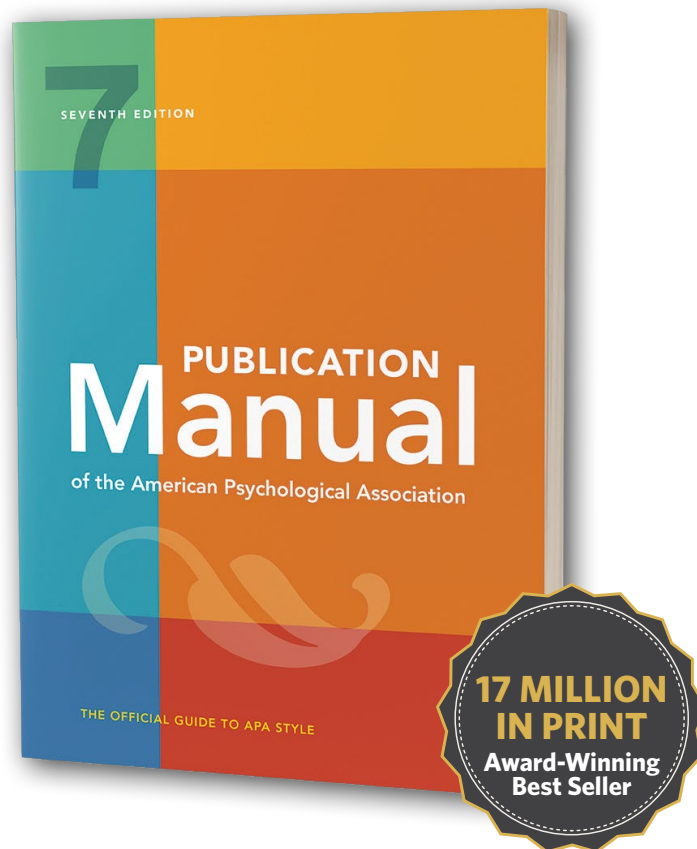
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