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THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

July/August 2025



2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE Wrap-Up

p. 4

NEWSMAKER:
Geena Davis

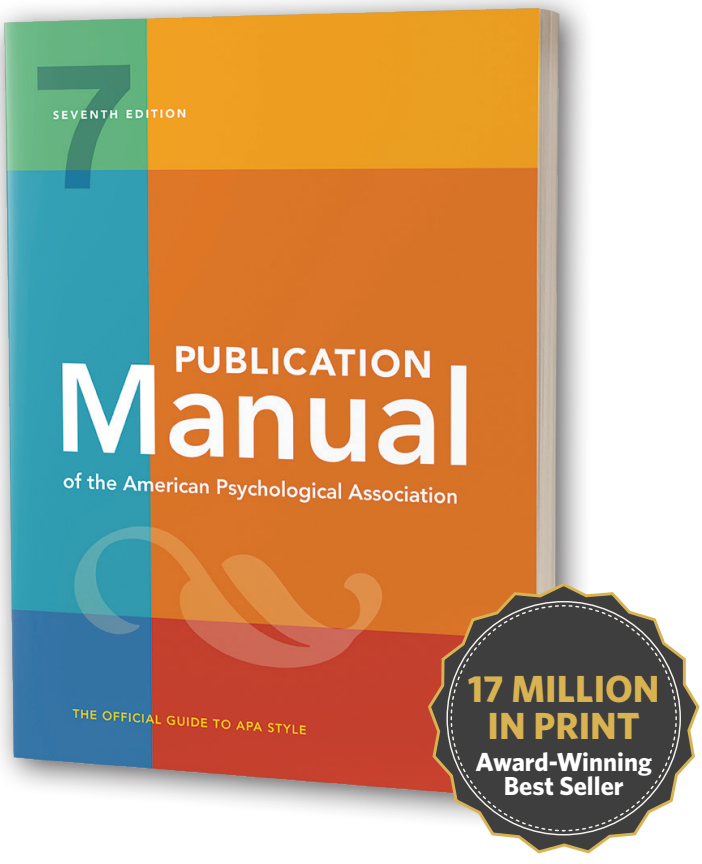
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from the **EDITOR**

Collective Engagement



Sanhita SinhaRoy

In June, thousands of us gathered in Philadelphia, the birthplace of American democracy, for ALA's 2025 Annual Conference and Exhibition, celebrating libraries and weighing in on the issues facing the profession.

If you missed any of the inspiring programming or speakers, turn to our cover story ("2025 Annual Wrap-Up," p. 4) for highlights. As Editor-at-Large Anne Ford writes in the intro, "In these dark times, when the very mission of libraries is being scrutinized and politicized, attendees took comfort in collective engagement and critical discussions about intellectual freedom, diversity, and other crucial topics." To read more detailed coverage of sessions and headliners—including Carla Hayden, Roy Wood Jr., and George Takei—visit bit.ly/AL-alaac25, where our team filed more than two dozen articles from Philly.

Another high-profile speaker at Annual was actor and activist Geena Davis (Newsmaker, p. 10). She talked with Managing Editor Terra Dankowski about writing and illustrating a picture book, her institute on equitable representation in media, and how fans continue to react to her various films.

In his annual recap of the Library Marketplace, Marshall Breeding reports on the high-impact services and solutions on display in the exhibit hall ("Solidarity amid Uncertainty," p. 12). He also notes what attendees were talking about most. In addition to conversations about artificial intelligence, consolidations, and digital content, a focus on politics was palpable, he writes. "Interruptions in federal funding—along with ongoing book bans and threats of censorship—were pervasive themes in the exhibit hall, informal discussions, and program content."

Those conversations are "why we show up," writes ALA President Sam Helmick in their inaugural column (From the President, p. 3). In this turbulent year, attending Annual was a political act in itself, they write, reminding us "that the right of assembly remains intact and that efforts to silence this profession will not succeed." It is, as Helmick writes, an unstoppable movement.

In this turbulent year, attending Annual was a political act in itself.

Sanhita

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from the **PRESIDENT**

Why We Show Up

Annual Conference in a defining year



Sam Helmick

As the United States prepares for its 250th anniversary and the American Library Association nears its 150th next year, more than 14,000 library workers, advocates, and allies gathered in Philadelphia this summer—the birthplace of the First Amendment—to affirm that our values are not negotiable.

As library professionals, we often traffic in the timeless—in books, archives, and community memory. But this year's ALA Annual Conference reminded us that timing matters, too. At a moment when the core tenets of librarianship—intellectual freedom, the right to read, equitable access to information—are under direct attack across the country, gathering in Philadelphia felt as much like a profound act of civic engagement as it did impactful professional development. There was an unmistakable sense that showing up mattered.

Throughout the conference, we experienced moments that crystallized why our work remains essential amid censorship, disinformation, and threats to public service infrastructure. One of the most powerful was a program featuring Carla Hayden, our 14th Librarian of Congress, who addressed growing political pressure on her office—and our field—with conviction and grace. Her steadfast leadership anchored the values of truth, access, and democratic service.

Keynote speakers echoed that urgency too. Actor and civil rights activist George Takei shared his personal story of being a Japanese American incarcerated during World War II, a reminder of the consequences when truth is silenced and communities are marginalized. Bestselling author Brené Brown challenged us to lead with courage and vulnerability. Actor and comedian Roy Wood Jr., with incisive wit, offered a sharp, necessary lens on power, culture, and what it means to serve divided communities.

More than 500 sessions tackled the biggest challenges and opportunities facing our field—from navigating artificial intelligence and fostering mental health to strengthening library funding and upholding intellectual freedom.

Annual Conference was a laboratory of ideas, a haven of solidarity, and a rallying ground for solutions. Again and again, we witnessed library workers leading with creativity and care, even when their presence is politicized or their resources stretched.

The exhibit hall was also alive with purpose. Start-up companies that are helping to advance accessibility shared space with legacy publishers reimagining discovery and engagement. Librarians who have defended the freedom to read stood beside authors whose books have been widely banned. Our profession does not operate in isolation—we are part of a larger ecosystem: educators, authors, technologists, publishers, organizers, artists, and residents working toward a more informed, just society.

I was especially moved by those who traveled from places where attending a professional event like ALA is viewed as controversial. Your presence was courageous. It reminds us that the right of assembly remains intact and that efforts to silence this profession will not succeed.

To every attendee, speaker, volunteer, exhibitor, and staff member who made this conference not just possible but extraordinary: Thank you. You reminded us that our work is urgent—and our movement unstoppable. We return to our libraries not only renewed but resolved.

We assembled in Philadelphia because we could—and because we must. Because even 150 years in, our story is still being written. And it is worth sharing. Let's keep showing up. Let's keep writing this story together. AL

We assembled in Philadelphia because we could—and because we must. Because even 150 years in, our story is still being written. And it is worth sharing.

SAM HELMICK is community and access services coordinator at Iowa City Public Library.

2025 Annual Wrap-Up

Convening in the Cradle of Liberty

EDITED BY
Anne Ford

"Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech," wrote Benjamin Franklin in 1722. As Philadelphia's most famous son, Franklin—and his belief in personal expression as the cornerstone of democracy—made the city and its convention center apt hosts for the American Library Association's (ALA) 2025 Annual Conference and Exhibition, held June 26–30.

A total of 14,292 people registered for the event, whose programs included many dedicated to anticensorship efforts, programming challenges, funding cuts, and other existential threats. In these dark times, when the very mission of libraries is being scrutinized and politicized, attendees took comfort in collective engagement and critical discussions about intellectual freedom, diversity, and other crucial topics.

Michigan Gov. **GRETCHEN WHITMER** opened the conference, telling her audience, "The question I get from people



Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer





Above: Former Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden; right: actor George Takei

the most is: How do I stay optimistic?" and offering wide-ranging advice, such as tips for handling bullies ("you take their weapon and make it your shield"). Whitmer also praised the libraries in her state—including the one in her hometown of East Lansing, Michigan. "I have found so much joy in my public libraries," she said. "It's about opening opportunity to everyone, no matter who you are and where you come from."

CARLA HAYDEN, who was named senior fellow at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation shortly after the conference, made a rare public appearance following her abrupt dismissal as the Librarian of Congress earlier this year. In her conversation with Newbery Medal–winning author **KWAME ALEXANDER,** Hayden thanked supporters and said that she draws hope from history. She also highlighted the Library of Congress's digitization projects as a proud achievement of her tenure. (A favorite item: Rosa Parks's peanut butter pancake recipe.)

The discussion concluded with a series of rapid-fire questions, one of which inadvertently demonstrated the folly of opposing diversity. Alexander asked Hayden what food she doesn't like. She responded immediately, "Brussels sprouts." Alexander—a fan of the vegetable—was surprised. Hayden said, "Just because I don't like them doesn't mean that you can't eat them. Diversity is just having choices."

Another speaker, Academy Award–winning actor **GEENA DAVIS,** talked not only about her debut picture book (*The Girl Who Was Too Big for the Page*, Philomel Books) but also about the Geena Davis Institute, a first-of-its-kind research and advocacy organization that examines equitable representation in media. (See Newsmaker, p. 10.) The institute was founded in 2004, shortly after Davis's daughter was born and she began noticing a lack of female characters in children's cartoons. "We are essentially conditioned from minute one to see girls as less valuable than boys," Davis said. Two decades in, the institute looks at all types of representation—race, ethnicity, body size, age, disability—across Hollywood and elsewhere.

Actor **GEORGE TAKEI** of *Star Trek* fame appeared at Annual to discuss his new memoir, *It Rhymes with Takei* (Top Shelf Productions), which focuses on his coming out as a gay

Photos: EPNAC and Rebecca Lomax/*American Libraries*

man at age 68. In the book, he discusses how for many years he presented a public persona that was similar to who he really was, but not entirely the same—a sort of "rhyme of himself." At the end of his talk, Takei expressed the affinity, rather than the difference, that's inherent in rhyme. "ALA is okay," he declared, "and it rhymes with Takei."

Author, researcher, and podcaster **BRENÉ BROWN,** ALA President's Program featured speaker, thinks good leadership will get us through this political moment. "This is what it's going to take to protect our democracy, to protect our work," she told the audience. Having spent time embedded in organizations to study their development, change, and culture, Brown said the best leaders are learners, not knowers; share power *with,* not put power *to;* and are inclusive.

As our democracy is tested, Brown said, we'll also need more courage and critical thinking. "Courage is the willingness to show up and be all-in when you don't know the outcome—which is basically your jobs every day," she said. The critical thinking piece, she said, will come from reference sets and pattern recognition. "Where do you get that? Reading!"

RESISTING RESTRICTION

Self-censorship was the subject of a talk by **TARA COOPER,** librarian at Columbus (Ohio) City Schools, who explored how external pressures, policy choices, and personal biases can contribute to this kind of restraint. Because there is no record and no appeals process, it's a far more insidious process than outright book bans—and harder to fight. Self-censorship sometimes feels like self-preservation, whether protecting one's job, emotions, or reputation. The antidote to soft censorship is courageous, intentional leadership, Cooper said. "We are the librarians. So let's go save the world."

Censorship may be less likely to happen in academic libraries, but "the number of challenges in academic libraries is not zero," said **BLAIR SOLON,** collection analysis librarian and assistant professor at University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, in "Can It Happen Here? Book Challenges, Censorship, and Academic Freedom in Academic Libraries." Solon echoed ALA's recommendation that all libraries have material-reconsideration policies grounded in values statements like the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement.

In "Censorship in the Courts: Current Litigation throughout the United States," **THERESA CHMARA,** general counsel for ALA's Freedom to Read Foundation, and **DEBORAH CALDWELL-STONE,** director of ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, dove into some current censorship-related legal cases and the arguments underlying them.

One of the most prominent ongoing cases, *Fayetteville (Ark.) Public Library v. Crawford County,* hinges on a state statute that criminalizes content deemed





Above: Blair Solon, collection analysis librarian and assistant professor at University of New Mexico in Albuquerque; right: Tara Cooper, librarian at Columbus (Ohio) City Schools



“If being an ALA member was not important, certain people would not be working so hard to make it illegal for you to join ALA.”

EMILY KNOX, interim dean and professor at University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign’s School of Information Sciences, at “ALA at 150: Envisioning the Next 50 Years” on June 28.

“IT DIDN’T SAY, ‘*DEAR* CARLA.’ ”

Former Librarian of Congress **CARLA HAYDEN,** on the brief termination letter she received from the White House, in her Featured Speaker session on June 28.

“I thought no one would want to hear about collection development, especially 16-year-olds, but they had so many questions.”

LUCY PODMORE, librarian at Northside Independent School District’s Clark High School in San Antonio, at “Hyping History: Highlighting History in a High School Library” on June 29.

“It is our honor as librarians and educators who have the opportunity to work with youth to bring that pride into our spaces so that children are consistently validated—not only in who they are but what they can be. This ruling has taken that validation away from children everywhere.”

Author, educator, and consultant **VERA AHIYYA,** in response to the US Supreme Court ruling in *Mahmoud v. Taylor* (2025), at “Free Children Read Freely: Banned Books in Storytimes for Young Children” on June 28.

“You are the custodians of the words that we all need. Things are going to change at some point. But if you can hang on while we go through this, it’s invaluable to our world, our country, and our communities.”

Actor and author **GEENA DAVIS** (see Newsmaker, p. 10) at the Closing General Session on June 30.

Council Matters

During the American Library Association's 2025 Annual Conference and Exhibition, held June 26–30 in Philadelphia, ALA Council took the following steps:

- Preceding Council I, during the ALA–Allied Professional Association (ALA-APA) Council meeting, a motion carried to dissolve the ALA-APA Council (ALA-APA CD#8). ALA-APA Council's responsibilities will be managed by the ALA-APA Executive Board with delegation to ALA-APA committees where appropriate.
- The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) will be reunified, with dissolution of YALSA recommended to take effect in 2026 (CD#27.1).
- A motion to pass an extension for 2021's Resolution to Achieve Carbon Neutrality for ALA Conferences (CD#53) from 2025 to 2027 carried (CD#44.1). The extension will allow Conference Services time to evaluate the feasibility and financial impact of absorbing the cost of carbon offsets into the cost of doing business for Annual or to investigate alternative options.
- A resolution to create an artificial intelligence (AI) cross-divisional working group passed (CD#30.1). The working group will be charged with developing a unified, critically informed ALA position on AI and libraries for Council consideration.
- A motion to approve the Committee on Professional Ethics' draft interpretation of Article IV of ALA's Code of Ethics, regarding copyright, passed (CD#24.1).
- A new ALA strategic plan was approved (CD#53). Goals include advocacy, member experience, organizational redesign, financial sustainability, and professional development.

Read full coverage of Council matters on The Scoop blog.

obscene or harmful to minors and leaves librarians and booksellers who "make available" such content vulnerable to prosecution. ALA celebrated the December 2024 US District Court ruling that the statute is unconstitutional, though the decision is now under appeal. "Fortunately," Chmara pointed out, "while there have been attempts to have criminal actions against librarians, those have been soundly rejected by both law enforcement and by district attorneys."

Several leading voices on intellectual freedom shared insight into major issues facing libraries of all types in the US during a session titled "Free Expression in 2025: Challenges for Libraries." The basic mission of libraries to provide information to citizens is in question. A late-May decision in the case *Little v. Llano County* may mean that "there's no right to receive information at the library, [and] elected officials can dictate what we read in libraries," said Caldwell-Stone, who expects that the case will go to the Supreme Court, and noted that it is an existential threat to the very basis of public librarianship in the US.

Caldwell-Stone also warned about bills currently in consideration in some states that would replace library worker expertise with citizen and parent committees and eliminate the legal exemption from prosecution for library workers and educators in the course of their jobs. "We have people on our side. We need to think about how we reach out to them, how we strategize, how we push back," she said. "This is an authoritarian movement that we're being swept up in."

Retired librarians may be at an advantage when it comes to that kind of advocacy work. "I can speak out. I'm not going to lose my job and salary," said **BARBARA STRIPLING,** retired academic librarian and former president of both ALA and New York Library Association, during the session "Retired Librarians as Changemakers: Working Together on Advocacy." She observed: "It's really an ideal role to be a changemaker."

For **JANICE WELBURN,** retired dean of Marquette University Libraries in Milwaukee, advocacy starts with dialogue. Welburn said she and her husband often carry signs at Washington, D.C.–area protests—including signs about why funding the Institute of Museum and Library Services is important—to spark conversations with like-minded people.

At "Leading Passionate, Engaged Staff through Uncertain Political Times," three library directors described the external threats and internal pressures they are currently facing, as well as the tenuous balance they must strike to both address hot-button issues and controversies while validating and supporting employees.

"We're trying to uphold the tenets of intellectual freedom, we're trying to have diverse collections, we're trying to make sure people see themselves in the library," said **KIMBERLY B. KNIGHT,** director of Virginia Beach (Va.) Public Library. "[Staffers] want us to fight, they want us to stand up.… But we also want to speak strategically, tactically."

While Knight said that some staff members felt striking a balance was "bowing down" to the public, she said







Clockwise from top: comedian Roy Wood Jr. (left) with now–ALA President Sam Helmick; Mary Graham, Calgary Public Library service delivery manager; Kimberly B. Knight, director of Virginia Beach (Va.) Public Library

that her goal was to keep the library open and providing services: "We want to have these stories for our communities and not *be* the stories."

An alternative take on advocacy came from comedian **ROY WOOD JR.,** who appeared with now–ALA President **SAM HELMICK** to discuss his forthcoming book, *The Man of Many Fathers: Life Lessons Disguised as a Memoir* (Crown, October). Wood tied storytelling—whether stand-up, memoir, or library collections writ large—to broader efforts to advocate for beloved people and issues. "To me, advocacy isn't about pushing yourself to emotional or physical exhaustion," he said. "It's about being present, showing up, doing your part, and knowing that sometimes just being seen—or helping someone else be seen—is enough."

Amid hard conversations about censorship, advocacy, and other demanding topics, stress-mitigation practices become even more crucial. At the standing-room-only session "Don't Just Shake It Off: Using Debriefing Tools to Support Front-Line Library Staff," Calgary Public Library (CPL) Service Delivery Manager **MARY GRAHAM** and CPL Library Experience Supervisor **BECKY POTTER** described how CPL implemented debriefing tools to help staff cope with stressful situations at all branches.

Graham and Potter realized that debriefing was already happening informally in the staff room and around water coolers, but it wasn't formalized or structured. Their goal was to provide support that would allow front-line workers to process incidents and return to their baseline. The debriefing process includes guiding questions and is designed to remind staff that they did their best and they are supported.

The hope is to break the cycle in which "you have a small incident, and maybe the same day you have another small incident … and then all of a sudden you're fed up with everybody and you don't want to do this anymore," said Potter.

Geena Davis

Actor and activist on taking up space



Hollywood has no shortage of polymaths, but Geena Davis might be in a category of her own. She has won Academy Awards for both acting and advocacy, founded the groundbreaking nonprofit Geena Davis Institute, written the memoir *Dying of Politeness* (2022), and even excelled at competitive archery—at one point contending for a spot on the US Olympic team. But one thing she hasn't done until now: write and illustrate a children's book.

With *The Girl Who Was Too Big for the Page* (Philomel Books, April), Davis offers a funny and self-referential take on embracing differences. She talked to *American Libraries* at the American Library Association's 2025 Annual Conference and Exhibition in Philadelphia about her new book, striving for equitable representation in media, and the roles for which she's most often recognized.

BY Terra Dankowski



***The Girl Who Was Too Big for the Page* is your debut picture book. What inspired you to write and illustrate a story about self-acceptance and taking up space?** Partly because it's very much my story. Growing up, I was always the tallest kid in class, and it really impacted my feelings about myself and my self-esteem. It wasn't until I stopped growing—which was a huge relief, because I thought, "How long is this going to go on?"—and became an adult that I realized that I love it. When I learned how to play a sport for the first time, which was baseball for the movie *A League of Their Own,* I was like, "Wait a minute: It's okay to inhabit my body, and it does things." It was such a revelation. So I always had in mind that I might like to make a children's book about that.

Do you have any plans to write or illustrate other children's books or share more of your art with a broader audience? Yes, my next book is called *The Girl Who Was Too Small for the Page,* and she's about that big [pinches fingers]. You have to use a magnifying glass to read it [laughs]. No, but something—some other idea—will have to come to me. I would love to.

The Geena Davis Institute recently celebrated 20 years of research and advocacy for equitable representation in media. What do you think has improved in Hollywood since the institute began collecting data? What still needs to change? When we started, the first thing I did was get a study done that looked at 30 years of children's movies and television. What we found was only 11% of films had any character that was female who could have been called a lead character. In 2018 and 2019, we reached [gender] parity with the lead characters in kids' TV and movies. COVID set us back some, but now that things are ramping up

again, I think we'll get right back there. We've made a lot of progress. The representation of characters of color is almost at population representation. That's what I want to happen on screen, for the population to reflect the real population—which is naturally very diverse and half female.

The slogan of the institute is, "If they can see it, they can be it." You've taken on a lot of strong, complex characters over the years. Is there a role that fans tell you over and over was especially empowering for them to watch? It's funny, because a certain percentage of people will say, "I love your movie," and I'm like … okay? So I started asking. It's always *Beetlejuice* for those who think I made one movie. But *A League of Their Own* is a big one, because I get almost the same number of young women and girls who say "I play sports because of that movie" as when it first came out. I had no idea that I would be in a movie that would last that long, and people would still find it relevant. *Thelma & Louise,* I get a lot. A certain segment of the population loves *The Long Kiss Goodnight*. It's nice to have so many films that people responded to like that.

What role have libraries played in your life? When I was a kid, we weren't well off by any stretch. So our books came from the library in my small hometown. I loved the smell, it was very distinctive, and it felt very special when you got a book from the library. You had to treat it nice. You had to get it back. I just loved the entire experience. ●



Marshall Breeding, independent library consultant and Library Technology Guides editor

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In the face of adversity, libraries continue to look ahead—and determine how to stay on the cutting edge of technology. In the annual Top Tech Trends panel, moderated this year by **AMANDA GRAY PERRY,** web and digital user experience librarian at University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, library experts discussed ways in which artificial intelligence (AI) and other technologies have been affecting libraries this year and how they may evolve in the future.

AI technology is developing rapidly. "Usually a cycle of technology is a decade long," said **MARSHALL BREEDING,** an independent library consultant and the editor of Library Technology Guides. "But here we're already on the third generation of the use of AI in library systems."

Specialized AI tools, which work from either more limited pools of data or by customizing existing large language models, are proving powerful for library workers. **JENNIFER GOODLAND,** reference and instruction librarian at San Juan College (SJC) in Farmington, New Mexico, shared how she used a customized ChatGPT instance to generate open educational resources. SJC is a Native American–serving nontribal institution and must meet reservation education requirements. By importing tailored materials, Goodland was able to use AI tools to create custom multimedia textbooks that reflect the student body and even integrate materials from tribal elders. This has increased local control over education.

BRIAN PICHMAN, director of strategic innovation at Evolve Project, predicted that computer vision will soon play a larger role in AI tools in libraries. You could take a picture or video of your stacks, and then AI could tell you which books are out of place and which might be missing. He also suggested that the time savings from efficiency tools like meeting transcriptions and summaries, as well as email tools that organize and summarize your inbox, are worth exploring. These are tools that "aren't scary, aren't black box or evil," he said. AL

ANNE FORD is *American Libraries* editor-at-large. Terra Dankowski, Greg Landgraf, Paula Mauro, Sallyann Price, and Carrie Smith provided reporting for this article.

Solidarity amid Uncertainty

Library Marketplace offerings highlight a need for strategic impact

BY Marshall Breeding

Although libraries are currently facing a climate of political and financial upheaval, that didn't stop information professionals from showing up in force to the American Library Association's (ALA) 2025 Annual Conference and Exhibition (June 26–30). The conference brought 14,292 registrants to Philadelphia, up from last year's attendance of 13,532 in San Diego.

With more than 600 vendors and a variety of live stages and pavilions, the Library Marketplace showcased products for libraries facing intense new challenges. Services and solutions that focused on libraries' ongoing needs for efficiency and impact were in high demand.







Above: Then–ALA President Cindy Hohl (left) with Chris Burghardt, senior vice president at Clarivate; right: the empty Institute of Museum and Library Services booth

PALPABLE POLITICS

The **INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES** (IMLS) booth, which sat empty save for volunteers and a sign that implored passersby to support library funding, was a focal point of the Library Marketplace. The Trump administration intends to eliminate the agency with its FY2026 budget, and ALA is currently involved in a lawsuit to prevent the dismantling of the organization.

IMLS supports library projects and services across the country, including statewide resource sharing, investments in open source technologies, and a broad range of other valued assistance. Interruptions in federal funding—along with ongoing book bans and threats of censorship—were pervasive themes in the exhibit hall, informal discussions, and program content.

The **LIBRARY OF CONGRESS** (LC) booth was another point of interest. Former Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden, who was fired by the White House on May 8, was a featured speaker at the conference. Her former colleague Robert Newlen, now acting Librarian of Congress, gave an inspiring booth presentation about continuing to fulfill the library's mission and work, despite the actions of the administration. Also noteworthy was that LC pushed its implementation of FOLIO, an open source library services platform, into production during the week of Annual. Many cataloging and metadata presentations and discussions mentioned this event, its implications for BIBFRAME, and other topics related to cataloging and authority control.

INVESTING IN ADVOCACY

CLARIVATE not only promoted an array of products under its **EX LIBRIS, INNOVATIVE,** and **PROQUEST** brands but also highlighted investments in library advocacy. At its booth reception, then–ALA President Cindy Hohl recognized the company for being the first to join the Association's public supporter program, launched in February. As one of the larger companies in attendance, Clarivate shared its progress in product developments and recent adoptions of its major technology and content offerings.

SMALLER CONSOLIDATIONS

While there haven't been many major business events this year, a few smaller deals were revealed at the conference. **LIBRARYIQ,** sister company of **LIBRARY SYSTEMS AND SERVICES,** announced that it had acquired the data analytics and engagement company **ORANGEBOY. BAKER & TAYLOR** sold its collection development solution, CollectionHQ, to **VALSOFT CORPORATION** but will continue to market and support the product.

These products fit within a niche of library-specific data services that help institutions make informed management

Photos: EPNAC and Rebecca Lomax/*American Libraries*

decisions. Other companies within this space include **COUNTING OPINIONS,** which provides services that help libraries analyze the performance of programs and collections, and **SIMPLYANALYTICS,** which demonstrated its data visualization and analytics offerings.

BOOKS, EBOOKS, AND DIGITAL CONTENT

Book vendors again accounted for the busiest aisles in the marketplace. The exhibit hall brought together an interesting mix of large publishing firms and smaller presses spanning all genres. Attendees lined up to meet authors and collect the latest titles.

Zine and comics publishers and producers attracted considerable interest this year. The overflowing tote bags and stacks of boxes awaiting shipment gave a glimpse into the massive transfer of inventory that happens at conference.





Above: Author Alex Segura signs copies of *Dick Tracy* at the Hoopla booth; right: Jason Downs, sales director at Lyngsoe Systems, talks with attendees.

AMAZON BOOKS exhibited again, highlighting its customized services and metadata for libraries. Many libraries use Amazon for items they need quickly, such as for patron requests or an alternative to interlibrary loan.

OVERDRIVE, the largest aggregator of digital content for libraries, and **HOOPLA,** known for its audiobooks and video content, attracted many booth visitors. The CloudLibrary ebook platform, previously offered by **BIBLIOTHECA,** was featured at the **OCLC** booth this year as part of its suite of services for public libraries.

INGRAM CONTENT GROUP demonstrated its print and ebook publishing and distribution services for authors, publishers, retailers, and libraries. **GALE, PART OF CENGAGE GROUP,** featured its products and services for public and academic libraries and school educators. In addition to primary source archives, databases, and other collections, Gale offers e-learning content for workforce development.

Publishers and distributors of scholarly and academic content—including **ELSEVIER, SAGE, SPRINGER NATURE,** and a variety of university presses—maintained a solid presence. While print books were conspicuous in the marketplace, most publishers were promoting ebook versions in tandem. Ebooks and other digital content continue to make up ever-larger proportions of libraries' collections.

LIBRARY MANAGEMENT AND COLLECTION DISCOVERY

OCLC positioned its WorldShare Management Services and WorldCat Discovery products as a comprehensive dual solution for academic and research libraries. OCLC Wise is a strategic offering for public libraries in North America. The nonprofit also promoted its CapiraMobile app. OCLC devotes considerable resources to library advocacy and educational programming.

EBSCO gave demonstrations of its many offerings, including EBSCOhost databases, EBSCO Discovery Service, NoveList, and content marketplace services GOBI and Mosaic. The company also discussed its recent accomplishments on the technology services side, such as the completion of its FOLIO implementation at LC.

SIRSIDYNIX, now under the ownership of Harris Computer, showcased its Symphony and BLUEcloud products for library management as well as its CloudSource OA suite of discovery solutions optimized for open access content. **LIBLIME** highlighted Bibliovation, its library management system designed primarily for public libraries, military base libraries, and smaller academic libraries.

THE LIBRARY CORPORATION featured its Library.Solution and Library.Solution for Schools integrated library system (ILS) products and shared booth space with **TECH LOGIC,** a sister company that offers automated materials handling and self-service solutions. **BOOK SYSTEMS** and **INSIGNIA SOFTWARE** provided demonstrations of library automation systems for smaller libraries.

The open source sector was represented by several support providers, including **BYWATER SOLUTIONS** (which supports Aspen Discovery and Koha) and **EQUINOX OPEN LIBRARY INITIATIVE** (which supports Aspen Discovery, Evergreen, and Koha). **LYRASIS** provides support and governance for open source software projects including ArchivesSpace, CollectionSpace, DSpace, and Fedora. The organization recently consolidated services surrounding the digital content platform **PALACE PROJECT,** absorbing some aspects previously managed by the **DIGITAL PUBLIC LIBRARY OF AMERICA.**

SPRINGSHARE displayed its growing suite of products delivered through its software-as-a-service platform. This included its flagship LibGuides content management system used by many academic libraries, products LibAnswers and LibChat (which support online reference services), LibCal (which powers a library's events calendar and room schedules), and the recently introduced LibSites (a website management tool with a drag-and-drop interface). Springshare also offers Patron Point, a marketing automation platform for libraries.

CAIA SOFTWARE AND SOLUTIONS presented CaiaSoft, its inventory management system for library storage facilities, while **IRON MOUNTAIN** and **CLANCY RELOCATION AND LOGISTICS** showcased remote storage services for libraries and archives at their respective booths. **RECOLLECT** promoted its cloud-based management and discovery solution for special collections across libraries, archives, galleries, museums, and related organizations.

CIVICA, which offers the Spydus library management system, made its Library Marketplace debut this year. Though the product is well established in other regions of the world, it only recently accelerated marketing and support in North America. The company also provides software products for areas of local government services.

UNIQUE MANAGEMENT SERVICES highlighted its MessageBee product, which integrates with a library's ILS to distribute notices and other messages through SMS. The company also showcased its Material Recovery service, which helps libraries recover materials not returned by patrons and collect associated fees.

SOLUTIONS FOR TECHNICAL SERVICES

Several companies in the Library Marketplace promoted bibliographic services, including **BACKSTAGE LIBRARY WORKS, BAKER & TAYLOR** (for its BTCat), and **OCLC,** with its broad range of cataloging and resource-sharing services. The recent legal action between OCLC and Baker & Taylor was a topic of conversation at conference.

EBSCO and **WT COX INFORMATION SERVICES** were among the organizations offering libraries ways to manage their subscriptions.

MANAGING SCHOLARLY CONTENT

JSTOR is well known for preserving and providing access to scholarly journals. The organization recently launched JSTOR Digital Stewardship Services to help libraries responsibly manage their local digital collections.

TDNET, a company that primarily focuses on discovery and linking services, recently introduced its TDNet AI. The product leverages artificial intelligence (AI) to simplify search and summarize results across complex and extensive scholarly resources.

Several exhibitors demonstrated how their technologies can directly connect library patrons to content. These included **THIRD IRON** and its LibKey suite of services. **OPENATHENS** offers an authentication service based on modern protocols that provides seamless access to scholarly resources. This product is available both through EBSCO and OpenAthens.

MOVING AND DELIVERING MATERIALS

Several booths featured automated materials handling, sorting, self-service, and other products that help libraries efficiently manage their physical inventories. These included **ARCUS, BIBLIOTHECA, COMPRISE TECHNOLOGIES, D-TECH INTERNATIONAL, FE TECHNOLOGIES, LYNGSOE SYSTEMS, MEESCAN, TECH LOGIC,** and **TODAY'S BUSINESS SOLUTIONS.** Each of these companies offer distinctive hardware and software solutions with diverse designs and features. Offerings from these companies range from affordable products for smaller libraries to sophisticated, large-scale solutions for libraries with complex needs.



Book vendors accounted for the busiest aisles in the Library Marketplace.

ENVISIONWARE specializes in products that support many aspects of public library operations. Offerings include self-service kiosks, materials handling products, a tool for reserving equipment and rooms, analytics software, an automated 24-hour library, holds lockers, and smart cabinets. On the bookmobile side, **FARBER SPECIALTY VEHICLES** showcased options for customized library vehicles.

ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING PATRONS

Tools and technologies designed to help libraries deliver enriched interfaces and services for patrons attracted considerable interest at conference. **BIBLIOCOMMONS** showcased BiblioCore, a discovery interface that works with any major ILS, and BiblioWeb, a solution that provides comprehensive website management for public libraries.

LIBRARY MARKET offers LibraryCalendar and LibraryWebsite, customizable solutions for public libraries with high expectations for usability and design. **COMMUNICO** demonstrated its many products and components for public libraries, including Attend (a calendar and event management tool), its Interact self-service kiosks, and Reserve (for room booking and asset management). The company recently launched its Explore discovery interface as well as support services for Koha.

STACKMAP showed its unique service for displaying visual maps in library catalogs to help patrons find collection items within a physical space. **SOLUS** has become established in the mobile technology sector and demonstrated its app and content management platform.

LIBRARYTHING featured Talpa, an AI-based search service that can be integrated with other library management products. The organization's main product, LibraryThing, is a popular service for managing personal collections, while many small libraries use LibraryThing for Libraries. LibraryThing also partners with **PROQUEST** to produce the Syndetics Unbound service for catalog enrichment.

AI COMES OF AGE

The AI technologies that vendors are incorporating into their content products and services have become more advanced. Libraries insist on results free from misinformation and bias. As AI-enhanced search becomes a more routine option across scholarly content platforms and library discovery services—and controlled through frameworks such as retrieval augmented generation—practices have become more sophisticated. AI will continue to move rapidly through the library sector, and we can expect its influence to expand across discovery services as well as in the way that content products are curated and organized.

The library vendor community makes substantial investments in the Library Marketplace, which forms a vital part of the Annual Conference experience for attendees. This serves as a sample of the organizations present and isn't intended as a comprehensive guide. AL

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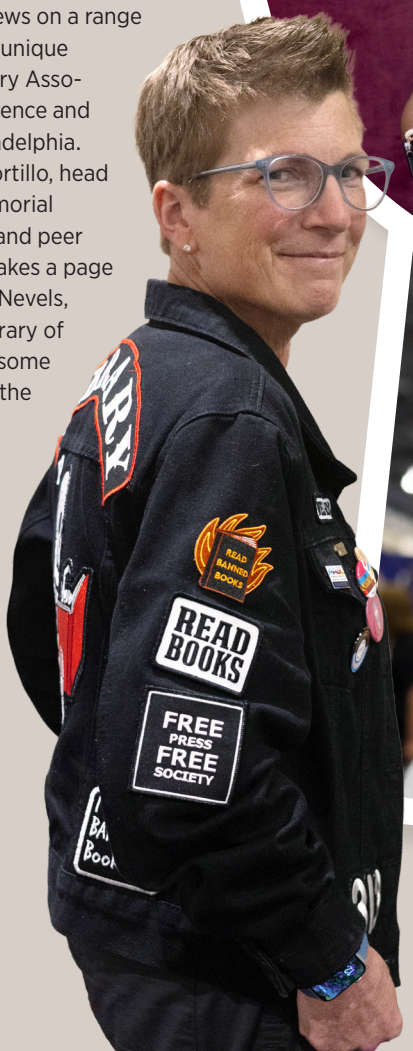




Speaking Out

Attendees expressed their views on a range of topics—and each in their unique way—at the American Library Association's (ALA) 2025 Annual Conference and Exhibition, held June 26–30 in Philadelphia.

Clockwise from top: Elizabeth Portillo, head of youth services at Finkelstein Memorial Library in Spring Valley, New York, and peer leader at Urban Librarians Unite, makes a page for the collaborative zine; Tiwanna Nevels, assistant state librarian at State Library of North Carolina in Raleigh, sits with some of her favorite challenged books in the Big Chair (sponsored by Sage, the Banned Books Week Coalition, and ALA's Unite Against Book Bans); Melisa Yang, recent graduate of University of South Carolina in Columbia, shows off a button she made in support of library funding at the Busy Beaver Button Company booth; and Amy Hermon, librarian at Royal Oak (Mich.) High School and host of the *School Librarians United* podcast, models her jacket patches. AL





Photos: Rebecca Lomax/*American Libraries*



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