

american libraries

September/October 2025

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

2025

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PLUS: ALA Awards,
Driving Simulators,
Smokey Bear Collection





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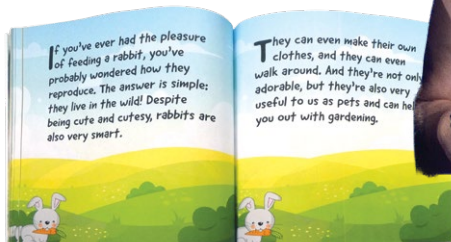
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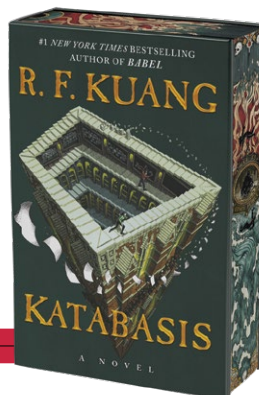
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Community-Driven



Sanhita SinhaRoy

As it does most years, the 2025 Library Design Showcase (cover story, p. 16) includes multimillion-dollar building projects, featuring new, renovated, and expanded library spaces—all beautiful. But I'm just as impressed with the coziness of McCallum High School's redesign project (p. 21). The school, based in Austin, Texas, spent \$200 total to create an intimate and inviting library space. It's a budget-friendly example of how libraries are radically reimagining ways to connect with patrons and promote sustainability.

One such community-focused system is Toronto Public Library (TPL). In "An Accessible Expo" (Spotlight, p. 12), TPL staffers Melanie LaFleche and Winona McMorrow write about the library's inclusive workforce development initiatives, launched in 2023 to help address Canada's stark unemployment rate among autistic adults. The thoughtfully designed program has evolved since then, exemplifying how libraries can lead the way on accessibility, equity, and community-driven programming.

Patrons at several public libraries are also driving programming—quite literally. In "License to Learn" (p. 10), Cass Balzer reports on how libraries have installed simulators to help people learn how to drive. The simulators enable teens, older adults, those recovering from medical conditions, and others to practice operating a vehicle in a low-pressure environment.

As road-trip season winds down, threats to our national parks and forests continue, and we're reminded of the most iconic advocate for public lands: Smokey Bear. In our Bookend ("The Original Happy Camper," p. 40), we explore the US Forest Service Smokey Bear Collection, based in Beltsville, Maryland.

Finally, with this issue we say a fond farewell to Associate Editor Megan Bennett. Among her many contributions, Meg wrote and edited dozens of stories for both print and online in her nearly three years at *American Libraries*. We wish her all the best in her next chapter.

Sanhita

Libraries can
lead the way
on accessibility,
equity, and
community-
driven
programming.

Sustainability at Our Core

Serving as good stewards of our land and libraries



Sam Helmick

When we treat libraries as communities rather than commodities, we serve with love and respect, ensuring they remain strong, welcoming, and sustainable for all.

Sustainability is a promise we make to future generations that libraries will continue to be cornerstones of community life and prosperity. Recognized as a core value of our profession, sustainability is one of the five essential values guiding our work and decisions to balance environmental stewardship, societal well-being, and economic feasibility.

Aldo Leopold, a writer born in my hometown and a pioneer in modern conservation, once wrote, “We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” His words resonate powerfully with our work in libraries. Just as we are stewards of the natural world, we are stewards of our libraries—spaces that do not simply belong to us, but to which we belong. When we treat libraries as communities rather than commodities, we serve with love and respect, ensuring they remain strong, welcoming, and sustainable for all.

As libraries—like those featured in this issue’s Library Design Showcase (p. 16)—reimagine their spaces, many incorporate elements like natural light, energy-efficient systems, and flexible, welcoming environments. These design innovations not only support environmental goals but also foster community well-being and creativity—core aspects of what makes libraries vibrant, open places.

We see this commitment reflected in the ALA Core Value Interpretation for Sustainability, approved by ALA Council at the 2025 Annual Conference in Philadelphia. It states: “As trusted institutions, libraries play a vital role in building sustainable communities while adapting to modern challenges.... Sustainable choices preserve physical and digital resources and keep services useful now and into the future. By supporting climate resiliency, library workers create

thriving communities and care for our common good for a better tomorrow.”

To help guide this work, ALA and the Sustainable Libraries Initiative developed the National Climate Action Strategy for Libraries. This framework helps libraries:

- reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- develop disaster preparedness plans and community hazard response strategies
- provide climate justice education
- build partnerships with climate-focused organizations

In rural libraries, sustainability may involve serving as a warming or cooling center, strengthening food security efforts, or partnering with first responders. In academic settings, it might include addressing the environmental impacts of artificial intelligence and creating robust emergency plans to safeguard collections and ensure continuity of service.

Here are five things you can do today:

1. Learn about sustainability as our newest core value and consider how it intersects with your work.
2. Explore the National Climate Action Strategy for Libraries Implementation Guide for next steps.
3. Join the ALA Sustainability Round Table to connect with colleagues.
4. Use the Sustainable Libraries Initiative’s Road Map to Sustainability app, developed with OCLC, to plan your actions.
5. Check out WebJunction’s Sustainable Libraries resources and webinars to build your own climate action plan.

By embracing sustainability fully, we strengthen our promise to our communities: that libraries will remain pillars of possibility—now and for generations to come. **AL**

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

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EXPLORE OUR NEW LIBRARY FOCUSED HUB

ALA Names Daniel J. Montgomery as New Executive Director

The American Library Association (ALA) has selected Daniel J. Montgomery, chief operating officer and president of the Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT), as its next executive director. He will replace Interim Executive Director Leslie Burger when he starts at ALA on November 10.

Montgomery has worked on behalf of public education and the rights of workers for more than two decades. He was elected to a three-year term as IFT president in October 2010 and was unanimously reelected in every subsequent election. As COO he was responsible for managing and executing policy and programs on behalf of 400 local affiliates and their members and a staff of 100 professional and support personnel in 11 offices statewide.



Daniel J. Montgomery

"As someone who believes strongly in public education, I am eager to bring my passion for service and leadership to ALA," Montgomery said in a June 27 statement. "Education and libraries are a part of the same fabric, and they are foundational to a healthy democracy. And they need defending now more than ever."

"We are excited that Dan Montgomery will join us as our new executive director," said then-ALA President Cindy Hohl in the statement. "Dan's strong background in public service and public education is a great fit for our goals. Dan is exactly the leader we need in these times."

The steering committee says it chose Montgomery because of his commitment to public institutions, his comfort working across diverse and difficult political situations, his service to both cities and rural areas, and his experience managing a complex, member-driven organization.

He has a bachelor's from University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and a master's in education from the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. ●

Universal Service Fund Constitutional

ALA applauded the US Supreme Court's June 27 decision to uphold the Universal Service Fund (USF), a system of telecommunications subsidies administered by the Federal Communications Commission. USF includes the E-Rate program, which provides libraries and schools billions of dollars each year for broadband access and connectivity. More than half of all public libraries apply for funding to subsidize the cost of internet connectivity through E-Rate each year.

Sign Up for National Voter Registration Day Partnership

ALA encourages libraries to sign up for National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) 2025, a nonpartisan civic holiday

celebrating the fundamental right and responsibility of American citizenship. This year's observation takes place on September 16.

Register by September 1 to become an NVRD community partner at bit.ly/ALA-VoteReg. Partners receive guidance, promotional materials, and access to online learning opportunities to support voter registration and education.

Historical Artifact Program Wins 2025 Jaffarian Award

Stone Bridge High School in Ashburn, Virginia, has received the 2025 Sara Jaffarian School Library Program Award for its historical artifact footlocker program.

The program, selected from a record number of applicants, provides hands-on learning through circulating footlockers

containing artifacts from World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War. They are available to all 37 secondary schools in the district and reached over 4,000 students in the first year.

The \$5,000 award, supported by ALA's Cultural Communities Fund and administered by its Public Programs Office and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), recognizes excellence in humanities programming in school libraries that serve grades K–12.

Learn more about the award guidelines and previous winners at ala.org/jaffarian. Applications for the 2026 award open in February.

Nominations Open for ALA Honorary Membership

Nominations are open for honorary membership, the Association's highest

Updates on Federal Funding for IMLS and Digital Equity

ALA continues to closely monitor and respond to ongoing efforts by the Trump administration to cut funding for library programs and broadband. As of June 6, a federal court has declined to block the administration's efforts to dismantle the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) while the case proceeds. The case, *ALA v. Sonderling*, was brought by Democracy Forward and Gair Gallo Eberhard LLP on behalf of ALA and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, the largest union representing library workers in the country. A federal district court in Rhode Island had issued a preliminary injunction in a separate case on May 6, prohibiting the agency from shutting down while that case is pending.

"The extent to which some libraries have already canceled services and programming, and even lost staff in some cases, is evidence of the importance of IMLS," said then-ALA President Cindy Hohl in a June 6 statement. "ALA will not rest until libraries in every state receive the funding promised and IMLS is back in full force to meet the information needs of all Americans."

ALA has gathered advice for libraries experiencing federal grant cancellations (bit.ly/LibGrantAdvice) and encourages all interested parties to share stories of local library impact through Show Up for Our Libraries (bit.ly/ALA-ShowUp) and the annual #FundLibraries campaign (ala.org/fund-libraries). ●

honor, bestowed on a living person whose contribution to libraries or librarianship is so outstanding that it is of lasting importance to the advancement of the whole field of library service.

Honorary members are elected for life by an ALA Council vote upon recommendation of the ALA Executive Board. Nominations will be reviewed by the ALA Executive Board and presented to Council for vote during its January 2026 Virtual Council Meeting. Newly elected honorary members will be formally recognized at the Opening General Session during ALA's 2026 Annual Conference and Exhibition in Chicago.

Submit nominations by September 1 at bit.ly/ALA-HonMem26. Learn more about ALA honorary membership at bit.ly/ALA-honorary.

Clarivate Becomes First ALA Public Supporter Sponsor

On June 9, Clarivate announced it will be the first sponsor of the ALA Public Supporter Program, which engages the public in library advocacy.

The Public Supporter Program, which launched in February, provides the public with access to information and resources about library advocacy, news, and ways to get involved in protecting libraries. The program aims to bolster ALA's efforts to ensure libraries continue to provide essential services and resources to communities, promoting literacy, education, and access to information.

Contributions to the Public Supporter Program help advance library funding at the local, state, and federal levels; grants to small and rural libraries; the freedom to read; and internet for all.

CALENDAR

SEPT.

Library Card Sign-up Month
bit.ly/LibCardSU

SEPT. 17-20

2025 Association for Rural and Small Libraries Conference
Albuquerque, New Mexico
bit.ly/ARSL2025

OCT.

TeenTober
ala.org/yalsa/teentober

OCT. 5-11

Banned Books Week
bannedbooksweek.org

OCT. 8

Banned Websites Awareness Day
ala.org/aasl/bwad

OCT. 16-18

2025 AASL National Conference | St. Louis
bit.ly/AASL25

OCT. 19-25

National Friends of Libraries Week
bit.ly/ALA-NFLW

OCT. 20-26

International Open Access Week
openaccessweek.org

NOV.

International Games Month
bit.ly/ALA-igm

NOV. 12-14

Core Forum | Denver
coreforum.org

2026

ALA's 150th Anniversary
ala150.org

APR. 1-3, 2026

PLA 2026 Conference
Minneapolis
placonference.org

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Jewish American Heritage Month Grants for AASL Members

Fifteen AASL members have been awarded \$500 collection development grants from Philadelphia's Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History as part of Jewish American Heritage Month in May.

The grants allow recipients to create or expand their collections with content that provides context for and explores Jewish experience, achievement, and identity as an antidote to antisemitism. View the full list of recipients at bit.ly/JAHM-grant-25.

Grants Awarded for Service to New Americans

Sixteen libraries have received Building Library Capacity Grants to serve immigrants and refugees. The \$10,000 awards are supported through a three-year grant from the Mellon Foundation to bolster

library operations and services for new Americans including literacy and skill development, collection development, staffing, and outreach.

Public libraries empower new Americans through English-language lessons, workforce skill development classes, civics and citizenship sessions, and books and information resources in various languages of their community.

View the full list of grantees at bit.ly/NewAmericans2025.

AASL Releases *Standards 2nd Edition*

Published by AASL and ALA Editions, the second edition of *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* will be published this fall.

The updated *Standards* position learners as active seekers and creators of knowledge, emphasizing their participation in a learning process that is supported by school librarians and libraries. School librarians will find insights on

how to design, support, and assess competency-based learning experiences across grade levels and content areas.

Learn more about the research and development process behind the *Standards* and answers to frequently asked questions at standards.aasl.org/2ndedition.

The book is available for preorder at alastore.ala.org/AASLstandards2.

Sandy Berman Receives SRRT's Herb Biblo Award

ALA's Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) named Sanford "Sandy" Berman, retired cataloger and advocate for social justice in librarianship, as the 2025 winner of the Herb Biblo Outstanding Leadership Award for Social Justice and Equality.

The \$4,000 award, funded by an SRRT and ALA endowment and Library Juice Academy, recognizes an individual for outstanding leadership in promoting social justice and equality within the library profession.

Berman and Biblo were both involved in SRRT's early years. Berman co-authored the 1990 ALA Policy on Library Services to Poor People and helped to create what has now become the Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Task Force within SRRT. His 1971 book, *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People*, helped lead to the development of critical cataloging and classification practice.

More information about Berman's contributions to social justice can be found in SRRT's newsletter at bit.ly/SRRT-spring-25.

GNCRT Announces Will Eisner Graphic Novel Grants

ALA's Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table (GNCRT) and the Will and Ann Eisner Family Foundation announced the 2025 recipients of Will Eisner Graphic Novel Grants for Libraries. The grants, funded by the Will and Ann Eisner Family Foundation,

New Report Spotlights Prison Libraries' Strategic Role

An ALA report released on June 23 explores the essential role of prison libraries in lowering recidivism by better preparing incarcerated people for their release, as well as why further investments in prison libraries are essential to reducing the social and economic impacts of incarceration. *Investing in Prison Libraries: A Cost-Effective Path to Safer Communities and Second Chances*, part of the ALA Policy Perspectives series, is coauthored by Erin Boyington, Amelia Bryne, and Emily Durkin.

The report outlines how fully funded and staffed prison libraries address the extraordinary information needs of millions of incarcerated and detained people in the US and create opportunities in a cost-effective way. These facilities help provide patrons with expertise, reading material, and a range of programs and resources to support skill-building and reentry, including programs for maintaining family ties and job search support.

Recommendations for policymakers, advocates, philanthropists, and the carceral community include supporting federal funding as outlined in the Prison Libraries Act of 2023; leveraging existing federal programs and regulations; developing a framework for data collection; and boosting public awareness.

Read the full report at bit.ly/PrisonLibraries2025. ●

ALA Delegates Join UN Sustainability Forum

In mid-July, ALA sent a delegation to the United Nations (UN) High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development. ALA's participation signifies an important step in elevating libraries as key partners in global development and reflects ALA's commitment to aligning library advocacy with the United Nations 2030 Agenda, according to a July 14 announcement. This year the focus of HLPF will be advancing Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

On July 21, ALA and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library of New York Public Library presented a special program, "Imperatives for Growth: Libraries as Catalysts for Inclusive Employment, Skills, and Prosperity," that explored how libraries are driving progress toward equitable economic opportunities and contributing to Goal 8.

The program was organized by the UN Sustainable Development Goals Subcommittee of ALA's International Relations Committee. ●

include support for graphic novel collection development, events, and a travel stipend to ALA's Annual Conference and Exhibition.

The Growth grant, awarded to a library that would like to expand existing graphic novel services and programs, was awarded to Medina County (Ohio)

District Library for "My Journey, My Voice," a project for youth to express emotion through sequential art.

The Innovation grant, for a new service, program, or initiative, was awarded to the Friends of the Round Valley Public Library and the Round Valley branch of Mendocino County (Calif.) Public

Library. Its project "Graphic Adventures: Empowering Young Readers" will use comics and graphic novels to promote literacy and reading comprehension in elementary and middle schools.

Learn more at ala.org/gncrt/eisner. Grant applications for 2026 will open in October. AL

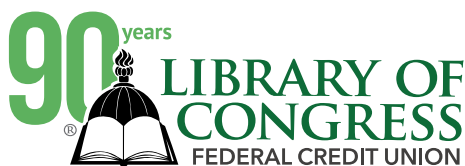


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TRENDS



A patron at Orange County (Fla.) Library System takes the wheel of a virtual driving simulator. The technology has helped people with limited access to traditional driver's education feel more confident on the road.

License to Learn

Driving simulators help library patrons hit the road

BY Cass Balzer

Not everyone has access to a safe, reliable car. And even those who do sometimes need a little help feeling comfortable behind the wheel. That's why, in July 2024, Anne Arundel County (Md.) Public Library introduced a free driving simulator at its Michael E. Busch Annapolis Library (MEBAL).

"If you have anxiety, you can build your worst-case [driving] scenario and then play through it as many times as you need to realize that you have power over that scenario," says Gabriella Norton, a librarian at MEBAL who helped bring the technology to the library. "What could you do if, God forbid, an actual deer jumps out at your car when you're going down into the rural parts of Maryland, you know?"

In a growing number of public libraries, virtual driving simulators

let users practice everything from parallel parking to driving at night in a safe, low-pressure environment. Anyone with limited access to traditional driver's education can benefit, whether they're a teen preparing for licensure, an older adult whose driving skills need sharpening, a stroke survivor who is recovering their skills, or a formerly incarcerated person trying to get back on the road.

"We're happy to help anyone who wants to learn how to drive," says MEBAL Manager Diane Benner, who points out that in Maryland, fulfilling state requirements for new drivers (30 hours of classroom learning and six hours of behind-the-wheel training) can cost hundreds of dollars. While a driving simulator doesn't let users accrue state-mandated driving hours, "it gives them that extra practice."

Shifting gears

Driver education was once a standard part of high school curricula across the country, supported by state-level staff and public funding. Today, many programs have been outsourced to for-profit providers instead. To address that gap, libraries are stepping in to provide accessible, no-cost tools for learning the rules of the road.

MEBAL's grant-funded simulator has quickly drawn attention for its ability to model freeway merges, slippery roads, and even DUI scenarios in a safe, low-stakes environment. (In the DUI setting, users experience delayed response times, such as shorter braking distances.)

"You can actually change your car type, too," Norton says. "It can do a standard sedan, a truck, an SUV. You're going to need a lot more space merging" in the SUV versus a smaller car, she points out.

Fayetteville (Ark.) Public Library (FPL) introduced its driving simulator in 2021 after learning that the local public school system had no driver's education classes, says Melissa Taylor, manager of FPL's Center for Innovation, a hybrid makerspace focused on technology, artistic endeavors, and career exploration.

"In addition to young people and teenagers, we also have a big community of refugees and immigrants who are moving here and who need to get their driver's licenses," Taylor says. The library has also partnered

"I've had to tell adults not to do doughnuts. But most people are very respectful."

MELISSA TAYLOR, manager of Fayetteville (Ark.) Public Library's Center for Innovation

with a local cycling organization to offer distracted-driving awareness programs that emphasize pedestrian and cyclist safety.

FPL differs from other libraries that offer driving simulators in that it also offers simulators for operating airplanes, semitrailer trucks, and heavy equipment such as backhoes and forklifts. But the most popular is the car simulator, which receives between 50 and 60 reservations a month.

One of those belonged to "a younger kid who came in with his family—I think he was 11 or 12," Taylor recalls. "He needed to practice driving so he could drive a work truck on the family's ranch. That turned into him practicing on the hydraulic excavator simulator, because they had just bought an excavator." (Arkansas law allows the operation of vehicles on private property without a driver's license.)

Maintaining the machines

The driving simulator at Orange County (Fla.) Library System's (OCLS) Dorothy Lumley Melrose Center for Technology, Innovation, and Creativity has been around since the center opened in 2014. That gives Department Head

Jim Myers the street cred to point out that this technology isn't maintenance-free—especially since OCLS saw about 250 reservations on it last year alone.

"After 10 years of reservations, the seat starts to not adjust, those types of things," he says. Last year, OCLS updated the simulator's software and replaced its motherboard at a cost of about \$5,000.

To minimize expenses like those, prevent misuse, and ensure a safe learning environment, libraries with driving simulators typically set firm boundaries on their use. Most have minimum-age requirements, mandate users to undergo orientation sessions or staff supervision, and set time limits on equipment use to ensure equitable access.

"It's not a videogame car," Taylor says of FPL's simulator. "You have to be using it for its intended purpose. We don't want to hear people gunning it and racing it and trying to flip the car. It has hydraulic parts; it has motorized pieces. The more wear and tear those receive, that's where we're doing the majority of our maintenance. I've had to tell adults not to do doughnuts. But most people are very respectful."

To help keep the simulator in good shape, she also calibrates it weekly and occasionally replaces parts like gear shifters. "That's one of those things you don't really prepare for in library school—how to disassemble and repair an FAA-approved flight simulator or a student driving simulator when the bearings are falling out of the shifter," she says. "It's actually really fun." **AL**

CASS BALZER is a writer in Chicago.



BY THE NUMBERS

Fashion and Beauty

754

Number of 20th-century vintage sewing and knitting patterns in the library at Arizona State University's Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in Los Angeles.

1,500

Number of fashion designers whose files can be found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art Costume Institute's Irene Lewisohn Costume Reference Library. These files represent the history of fashion from the 16th century to today.

250

Number of sources interviewed for *Anna: The Biography* (Gallery Books, 2022), Amy Odell's *New York Times*-bestselling title recounting the life and work of longtime *Vogue* editor in chief Anna Wintour.

561

Number of shoes—210 pairs and 141 single shoes—held in the Fashion Institute of Technology's library in New York City. The prototypes from the Arsho Baghsarian Shoe Design Collection include pumps from Christian Dior, sandals from Margaret Jerrold, and more made between the 1960s and early 2000s.

2,200

Number of cosmetic and personal care items archived in the National Museum of American History's Medicine and Science Collection. The collection includes makeup, skincare, haircare, and other beauty products dating back nearly two centuries. ●





Author Andreas Souvaliotis appears at Toronto Public Library's sensory-friendly Autism Employment Expo, which drew nearly 200 autistic adults and support people.

participants. We achieved this in part by hosting the expo at TPL's North York Central Library, which offers a large space with lighting that can be muted. Our audiovisual technician adjusted that lighting appropriately. We also decided to create a dedicated quiet room with items such as fidget tools and noise-canceling headphones.

We contacted Toronto agencies that specialize in connecting autistic people to jobs, which led to partnerships with the Geneva Centre for Autism and the national government-funded Ready, Willing, and Able program. Other participants included community organizations that provide more general support services for autistic adults, and autistic-led organizations that offer peer support. Of the seven employers who attended the expo, most offered neurodivergent hiring initiatives, including EY (formerly known as Ernst & Young) and NATO Canada. A detailed event guide was sent to participants in advance, outlining what to expect.

On the day of the expo—October 26, 2023—nearly 200 autistic adults and support people, some of whom traveled from two and a half hours away, made the event a sold-out success. Once onsite, attendees selected color-coded badges to indicate the amount of communication they were comfortable with. A white badge meant “I am able to regulate my own interactions,” while a green one meant “I would like to interact, but have difficulty initiating.” Yellow indicated “I prefer to be the one to initiate conversations,”

An Accessible Expo

Employment fair focuses on neurodivergent talent

In 2022, as part of the City Librarian's Innovation Challenge, Toronto Public Library (TPL) asked staff to submit ideas for workforce development initiatives. Recognizing Canada's high unemployment rate among autistic adults, TPL librarians Tim Feller and Melanie LaFleche suggested an event at which neurodivergent job seekers could connect with employers and employment resources in a sensory-friendly environment. Their vision came to life in 2023, when nearly 200 people attended TPL's Autism Employment Expo.

BY Melanie LaFleche and Winona McMorrow

In 2017, only about a third of autistic Canadians ages 20–64 reported being employed. That's a staggeringly low level compared with the nearly 80% employment rate among Canadians without a disability in the same age range. In addition, most library services for autistic people are aimed at children, leaving adults with autism spectrum disorder underserved. A library-driven, neurodivergence-friendly employment event was a clear way to help address both issues.

Toronto Public Library (TPL) librarians Melanie LaFleche and

Tim Feller brought that vision to life as Inclusive Futures: Autism Employment Expo, an event designed to connect autistic adults to employers and job resources in a sensory-friendly setting. Mindful of the longstanding disability rights slogan “Nothing about us without us,” they and other TPL staffers spent months not only researching the needs of prospective attendees but also gathering input from autistic job seekers found through a Facebook group and local autism organizations.

Thanks to that input, it was clear from the beginning that the event had to reduce sensory overload for

while a red badge meant “I do not want to have any conversations at this time.”

Feedback was very positive, with one guest noting in a survey, “There was an undeniable mood of hope, progress, understanding and inclusivity.” Another guest shared, “Fidget toys and color-coded communication labels were a thoughtful touch that made us feel seen and understood.”

The following year, the expo evolved into Autism Employment Resource Day. Based on feedback from attendees, more exhibitors were added, with an emphasis on community service agencies that support autistic job seekers. The event also featured a few employers and two autistic speakers who discussed autism, confidence, and disability rights at work. Similar

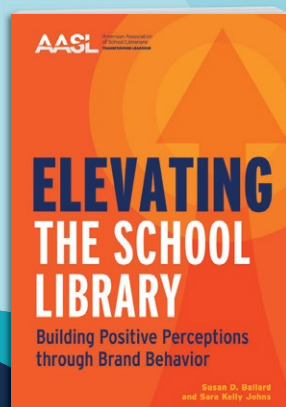
to the expo, the event featured a break room, this time organized by Retreat, a local project focused on neurodivergent-inclusive spaces. It included comfortable seating, sensory regulation aids, and support from neurodivergent staff. To make the event even more sensory-friendly than the previous year’s, staff brought in floor lamps to provide softer or more directional light, while members of our facilities team helped mitigate unwanted sounds by removing a ticking clock and turning off automatic hand dryers in washrooms in favor of paper towels.

Both autism employment events were well received by attendees and exhibitors, with many participants expressing their interest in seeing more events designed for neurodivergent

Nearly 200 autistic adults and support people made the event a sold-out success.

people. We look forward to hosting more innovative programming to meet the changing needs of our communities. We hope these events encourage other public library systems to support the needs of autistic and neurodivergent people and to develop inclusive offerings that reflect their experiences. **AL**

MELANIE LAFLECHE is a librarian at Toronto Public Library (TPL). **WINONA MCMORROW** is senior services specialist for accessibility services at TPL.



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R. F. Kuang

Award-winning author on journeying to the underworld in latest fantasy novel



For Rebecca F. Kuang, academia is more than a fictional setting. After writing *The Poppy War* in 2018 as an undergraduate at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., Kuang went on to study at two of the world's most famous universities, Cambridge and Oxford in the UK. Her fourth book, the historical dark-academia fantasy *Babel: An Arcane History*, was followed by *Yellowface*, a lacerating critique of racism in modern publishing.

Currently a PhD candidate in East Asian languages and literatures at Yale, Kuang returns to both fantasy and higher education in *Katabasis* (HarperCollins, August), a tale of two students in Cambridge's Department of Analytical Magick who journey to hell in search of their famed, feared, and abruptly deceased advisor, Professor Grimes. *American Libraries* spoke with Kuang about academia, the afterlife, and the beauty of libraries.

BY Donna Seaman

What inspired you to create a katabasis, a story of a hero's journey to the underworld?

I've always loved underworld stories. I adore the original Orpheus and Eurydice myth [about a musician who travels to the underworld to bring back his deceased wife]. And I like extremes.

MORE ONLINE

For the extended interview, visit bit.ly/AL-Kuang after September 2.

The most extreme way you could test a personal relationship, it seems, is to see what happens when mortality is at stake—or the immortality of the soul. The first time I thought about death and what happens afterward was when I saw a film in which the main character dies. I stayed awake all night fretting and freaking out. I finally ran down to my parents' room. They said, "Are you upset because the character died?" And I said, "No, I'm upset because what if heaven is boring? What if I don't like it there? What if an eternal existence would be terrible?"

The protagonists of *Katabasis*, Alice and Peter, find that hell

resembles Cambridge. But instead of dissertations, it's sins that are published and defended. What inspired your vision of the underworld and its eight courts of judgment?

I was playing around with the idea that the punishments of hell, or the ethical lessons you take from them, only make sense if they mirror the moral universe you are already acquainted with. This is a very syncretic book. It takes inspiration from all sorts of mythologies and religions across time periods and across continents. As I was thinking through what the gradation of sins would be, from the lightest to the heaviest, I was working a lot with the Buddhist traditions and Dante's *Inferno*, of course. But I'm mostly inspired by Plato's *The Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Alice is pleased to find that the first court in the underworld is a library.

What role have libraries played in your life and work? There's nowhere I feel happier than a library. I'm so grateful for

librarians. When I was growing up in suburban Dallas, I begged my parents to take me to the public library. For me, it was better than the mall, better than the movie theater. I spent many hours of my adolescence in the young adult and manga sections, dreaming and entering different worlds. When I went to college, I developed an adoration for the university library. It still feels like a miracle, all the knowledge ever produced in your field at your fingertips. And there's something about grand libraries in particular, like the Bodleian at Oxford, that do something to your thought process. You feel the weight of the tradition and the elegance of the thought and want to become the kind of thinker who's worthy of that library. They are a big part of my life. I got married in a library!

Libraries are also the last defenders of freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and curiosity and intellectual inquiry. **AL**



Photo: John Packman



“It’s definitely a bizarre time, and I guess maybe you need bizarre art for bizarre times.”

SILVIA MORENO-GARCIA, author of *Mexican Gothic*, in “A Best-Selling Horror Writer’s Biggest Fear? Being Recognized,” *The New York Times*, July 11.

“I learned to read before I began school, and reading became a very important part of my life.... At first, it was, you know, kiddie books, talking bunnies, and all of that. [But] there was no book censorship in my house. I was allowed to read any book that was in my home or any book in the public library. And so I branched out, and I read books that were too old for me, but that didn’t matter.”

Award-winning children’s author **LOIS LOWRY**, in “Ohio High Schooler Interviews *The Giver* Author Lois Lowry,” WYSO-FM (Yellow Springs, Ohio), July 24.

“[I’M] THE PERSON WHO WATCHES TO MAKE SURE YOU DON’T GET YOUR SALAD DRESSING ON THE RARE BOOKS.”

Special collections scholar **ROSE McCANDLESS**, in “This 26-Year-Old Has a Thing for 13th-Century Manuscripts—and a Prize to Prove It,” Colorado Public Radio: CPR News, July 25.

“I have seen the hurt that has been caused by people who say God doesn’t love you the way you are. I am a white, Anglo-Saxon, cisgender, Protestant Christian male. I can find myself reflected in society anywhere. But for this book [*All Boys Aren’t Blue* by George M. Johnson]—Black, queer youth—they can’t find that everywhere.”

Methodist minister **RICK BRANCH**, in “Welcome to Pensacola, Florida, America’s Book-Banning Capital,” Literary Hub, June 18.

“[ChatGPT] is a potentially unsolvable problem for education. Like all teachers, we’re struggling to figure out what to do. It makes it easy for everyone to do their homework, but students need to learn how to do hard things.”

Author and professor **JONATHAN HAIDT**, in “No Smartphones before 14; No Social Media until 16”: *The Anxious Generation* Author on How to Fight Back against Big Tech,” *The Guardian* (US), June 7.

2025 LIBRARY DESIGN SHOWCASE

The year's most
impressive new and
renovated libraries

BY Phil Morehart

Welcome to the 2025 Library Design Showcase, *American Libraries'* annual celebration of new and renovated libraries throughout North America.

Today's libraries are places where people from diverse communities can connect, learn, and grow. The institutions featured in this year's showcase embody the library's role as a true third space while honoring local histories and cultures and adhering to sustainable practices.

These constructions and remodels represent a range of budgets, geographies, and styles. From showstopping tourist attractions to creatively repurposed buildings—including a former post office and a pizza parlor—these entries meet patron needs in delightful and surprising ways. **AL**

PHIL MOREHART is a communications manager at the American Library Association.





PRACTICAL UPGRADES

◀ Oceanside (N.Y.) Library

Accessibility was at the forefront of Oceanside Library's renovation and expansion. The main entrance was relocated closer to parking and an adjacent crosswalk, and the building's outdated elevator was replaced with two hydraulic elevators. Entry plaza features such as ramps, benches, and bike racks signify that everyone is welcome. Other new amenities include a STEM workshop, demonstration kitchen, craft room, and café. **PROJECT TYPE:** Renovation and expansion **ARCHITECT:** H2M architects + engineers; MDA designgroup architects & planners **SIZE:** 48,000 square feet **COST:** \$40 million **PHOTO:** Robert Lowell Photography

COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

◀ Cincinnati and Hamilton County (Ohio) Public Library, Downtown Main Library

This renovation reimagines the Downtown Main Library as a gathering place in the heart of the business district while celebrating the local arts and music scene. A new central atrium with a spiral staircase links spaces for children, teens, and adults. The stairs' glass guardrails feature the names of 1,602 music recordings that span 75 years of Cincinnati's musical heritage. Two redesigned street-level plazas open the library to the city, providing flexible outdoor spaces for events, performances, and everyday use.

PROJECT TYPE: Renovation **ARCHITECT:** Champlin | EOP; Group 4 Architecture **SIZE:** 540,000 square feet **COST:** \$43.4 million **PHOTO:** Wes Battoclette



◀ San Diego Public Library, Pacific Highlands Ranch Library

The design of the debut Pacific Highlands Ranch Library is inspired by the area's agrarian past. Three exterior porches create one large community area connecting the library to the public promenade. Glass walls retract to provide direct access to these porches from the library, allowing for indoor and outdoor events. A courtyard installation by a local artist pays tribute to cuneiform clay tablets, native flora and fauna, and the languages of peoples who have historically inhabited this part of San Diego. **PROJECT TYPE:** New construction **ARCHITECT:** HGW Architecture **SIZE:** 18,000 square feet **COST:** \$20.2 million **PHOTO:** Auda & Auda Photography

PORTALS TO THE PAST

▶ St. Louis County (Mo.) Library, Clark Family branch

A highlight of the new Clark Family branch is the Emerson History and Genealogy Center that holds the library's extensive genealogy and local history collection. The space includes six interactive family-search screens and a memory lab where patrons can record their own family histories. There's also a dedicated room for digitizing photos and converting VHS tapes into digital files. **PROJECT TYPE:** New construction **ARCHITECT:** Lamar Johnson Collaborative **SIZE:** 77,110 square feet **COST:** \$40.7 million **PHOTO:** Kim Rodgers Photography



▶ Samuel Freudenthal Memorial Library at Trinidad (Colo.) State College

The renovated Freudenthal Library now houses a variety of environments for learning, including open study spaces, collaborative areas, closed meeting rooms, a student lounge with a fireplace and original mosaic art, an outdoor courtyard, a fire pit, a study hall for focused activity, classrooms, and a new makerspace. The lower level was revamped to house the Loudon-Henritze Archaeology Museum, which offers visitors an overview of millions of years of the area's history. **PROJECT TYPE:** Renovation **ARCHITECT:** studiotrope **SIZE:** 32,473 square feet **COST:** \$9.5 million **PHOTO:** studiotrope



ROOM WITH A VIEW

▶ Denver Public Library, Central Library

Central Library's renovation includes safety and security upgrades and a reconfiguration that accommodates modern programs and services while enhancing the library's role as a tourist destination. Notable improvements include the creation of the Park View Room, with panoramic views of Civic Center Park and the Denver skyline, and a reimagined central hall with open stairs sculpted to represent a folded bookmark. **PROJECT TYPE:** Renovation **ARCHITECT:** studiotrope **SIZE:** 540,000 square feet **COST:** \$59.4 million **PHOTO:** David Lauer Photography

SUPERIOR SUSTAINABILITY



◀ Nashville (Tenn.) Public Library, Donelson branch

An ode to atomic-age architecture, the new Donelson branch is a sleek, modern structure with clean lines and a striking breeze-block wall. This LEED Gold-certified building includes a geothermal heating and cooling system, solar panels, and a bioswale planted with native species. To foster inclusivity and accessibility, pictograms are used in wayfinding signage whenever possible, with English, Spanish, and Arabic text included when needed. **PROJECT TYPE:** New construction **ARCHITECT:** HASTINGS Architecture **SIZE:** 25,000 square feet **COST:** \$27 million **PHOTO:** McGinn Photography



◀ Chabot College Library and Learning Connection in Hayward, California

Chabot College's four-story Library and Learning Connection is a major upgrade from its previous library, with triple the number of study rooms, double the classrooms, and a dedicated space for specialized learning communities and student services. A light-filled atrium and central staircase connect all floors, encouraging movement, visibility, and shared experiences. The building's sustainability features—including energy-efficient materials and an exterior shading system that enhances comfort—have earned it LEED Gold certification. **PROJECT TYPE:** New construction **ARCHITECT:** Group 4 Architecture; HMC Architects **SIZE:** 97,000 square feet **COST:** \$79.74 million **PHOTO:** Lawrence Anderson

▼ Deschutes Public Library, Redmond (Ore.) Library

The new Redmond Library prioritizes openness, adaptability, and sustainability. The building is powered by a rooftop photovoltaic array that meets 100% of the structure's annual energy needs. Its all-electric design incorporates mass timber construction such as dowel-laminated panels, which reduce total carbon emissions while maintaining excellent acoustics and achieving the warmth of exposed wood. Large flowing spaces, mobile shelving, and configurable furniture invite multiple uses, while creative labs range from podcasting suites to study rooms. **PROJECT TYPE:** New construction **ARCHITECT:** The Miller Hull Partnership; Steele Architects **SIZE:** 40,000 square feet **COST:** \$43 million **PHOTO:** Lara Swimmer Photography



HONORING INDIGENOUS CULTURES

► Mearns Centre–McPherson Library, University of Victoria (B.C.) Libraries

The newly expanded student space in the Mearns Centre–McPherson Library emphasizes University of Victoria's commitment to Indigenous values, reconciliation, and decolonization. Key elements include artwork by a local two-spirit Indigenous artist that is integrated throughout the floor plan and a wall-length map depicting the complex historical relationships between Indigenous people and settlers to the region, created in collaboration with the university's anthropology department. **PROJECT**

TYPE: Renovation **ARCHITECT:** Jensen Chernoff Thompson Architects **SIZE:** 240,000 square feet **COST:** \$1 million Canadian (about \$758,000 US) **PHOTO:** UVic Photo Services



► Labriola National American Indian Data Center at Arizona State University in Tempe

The renovation of the Labriola Center created a centralized Indigenous knowledge zone on the second floor of Hayden Library for celebrating and engaging with American Indian and Indigenous scholarly works and creative writing. The center, led by Indigenous librarians, is a multifunctional space outfitted with formal and informal study areas, murals, a state-of-the-art performance and event venue, and a circulating collection. **PROJECT TYPE:** Renovation **ARCHITECT:** Ayers Saint Gross **SIZE:** 4,006 square feet **COST:** \$715,000

PHOTO: Chris Goulet/Arizona State University



CELEBRATING ICONS

► Fulton County (Ga.) Library System, Martin Luther King Jr. Library

Martin Luther King Jr. Library, which sits blocks from King's boyhood home and church in Atlanta, has been transformed from a once dark, unaesthetic facility into a colorful, vibrant space fitting of its namesake. Multiuse functionality was key to the new design: The children's craft area can convert into a meeting room in the evening, and the teen area transforms into a seminar space during school hours. **PROJECT TYPE:** Renovation **ARCHITECT:** McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture **SIZE:** 4,224 square feet **COST:** \$983,375 **PHOTO:** Rion Rizzo/Creative Sources Photography

RADICAL REIMAGINING

▶ Lake Travis Community Library West in Spicewood, Texas

Renovations at the Lake Travis West location highlight the area's unique country character while paying homage to the building's previous life as a pizza restaurant. Open-table seating and pendant lights maintain the pizza-joint vibe, and the former drive-through window is now a pickup spot for reserved materials. The library repurposed the outdoor dining space as a covered patio with hanging lights, fans, shades, and Wi-Fi to provide an accessible 24/7 work-space. **PROJECT TYPE:** Renovation **ARCHITECT:** Ascension Architecture **SIZE:** 5,000 square feet **COST:** \$4.6 million **PHOTO:** Regan Morton Photography

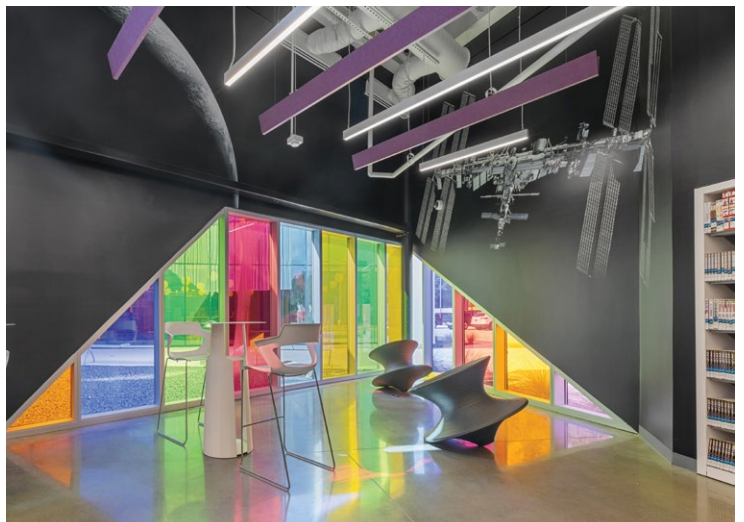
▼ McCallum High School in Austin, Texas

Inspired by wabi-sabi, a style that celebrates simplicity and imperfection, McCallum High School redesigned its library on a next-to-nothing budget. Hand-me-down furniture, lamps, and plants were gifted by families of students and staffers. Library aides and creative students painted murals during their off periods, with paint donated from Austin Resource Recovery. Soft lighting was used to make the library feel cozy rather than institutional. Costs mostly consisted of paintbrushes and light bulbs. **PROJECT TYPE:** Redesign **ARCHITECT:** Jain Orr (coordinator) and community **SIZE:** 11,000 square feet **COST:** \$200 **PHOTO:** Shuxian Liu



▶ Houston Public Library, Shannon Walker Neighborhood Library

Once a forgotten post office, the Shannon Walker Neighborhood Library—named after NASA's first Houstonian astronaut—is an art-filled public gathering center with high-tech equipment for content creators; dedicated spaces for children, adults, and teens; flexible meeting areas; a café; a podcast studio; and private study rooms. Multicolored windows flood the interior and exterior with a spectrum of hues, shifting throughout the day and night to stimulate visual and temporal awareness. **PROJECT TYPE:** New construction **ARCHITECT:** BRAVE/architecture **SIZE:** 23,260 square feet **COST:** \$16.3 million **PHOTO:** SpawGlass



2025 ALA/AIA LIBRARY BUILDING AWARDS

The following libraries are winners of the 2025 Library Building Awards, sponsored by Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures (a division of the American Library Association) and the American Institute of Architects. The awards recognize the best in library architecture and design and are open to any architect licensed in the US. Projects may be located anywhere in the world. **AL**



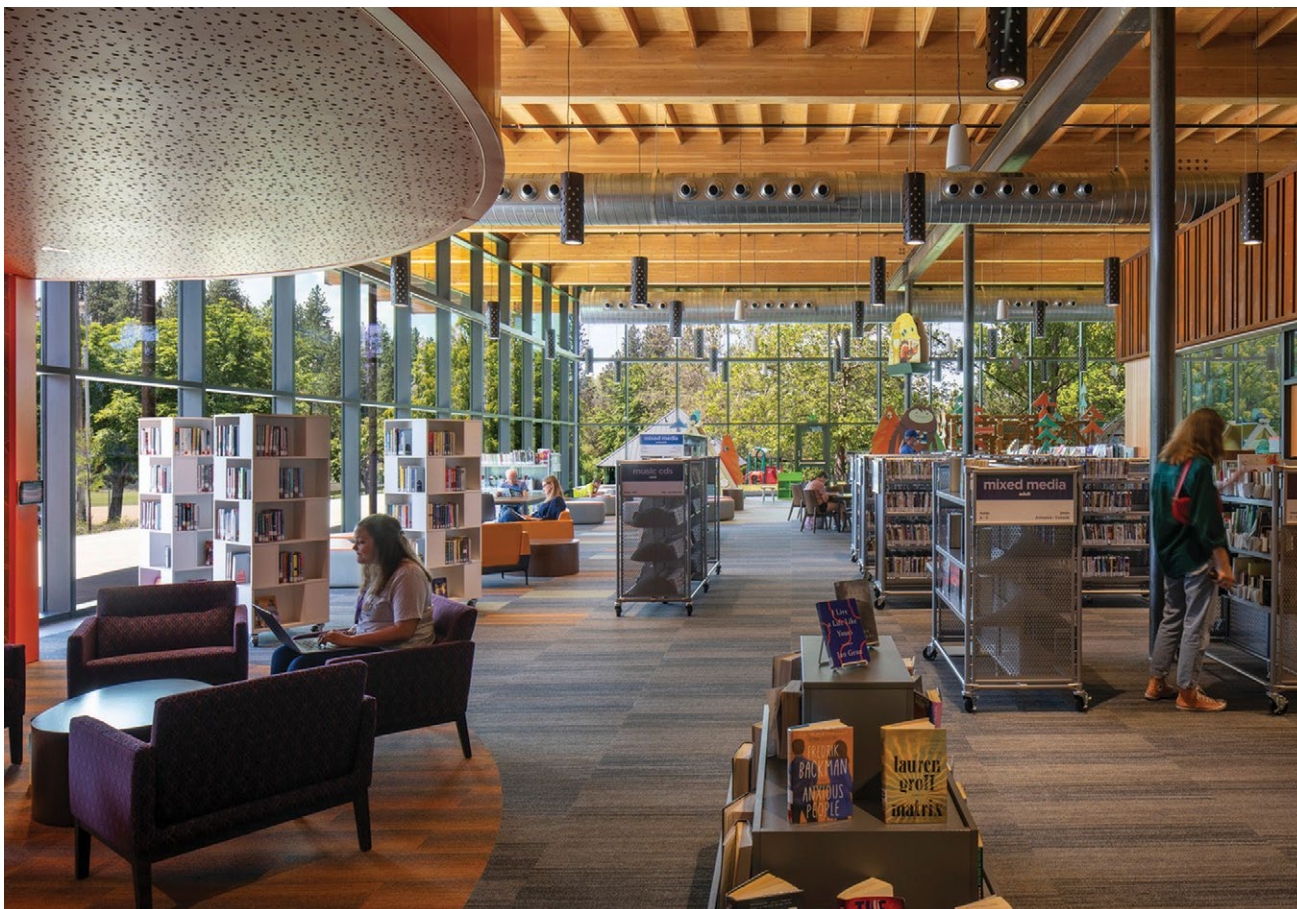
▲ Johnson County (Kans.) Library, Merriam Plaza branch

ARCHITECT: Dake Wells Architecture
PHOTO: Gayle Babcock/Architectural
Imageworks LLC

► Center for Missouri Studies, State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia

ARCHITECT: Multistudio
PHOTO: Steve Hall Photography





▼ **Columbus (Ohio)
Metropolitan Library,
Hilltop branch**

ARCHITECT: Gresham Smith

PHOTO: Lauren K Davis

▲ **Spokane (Wash.)
Public Library, Liberty
Park branch**

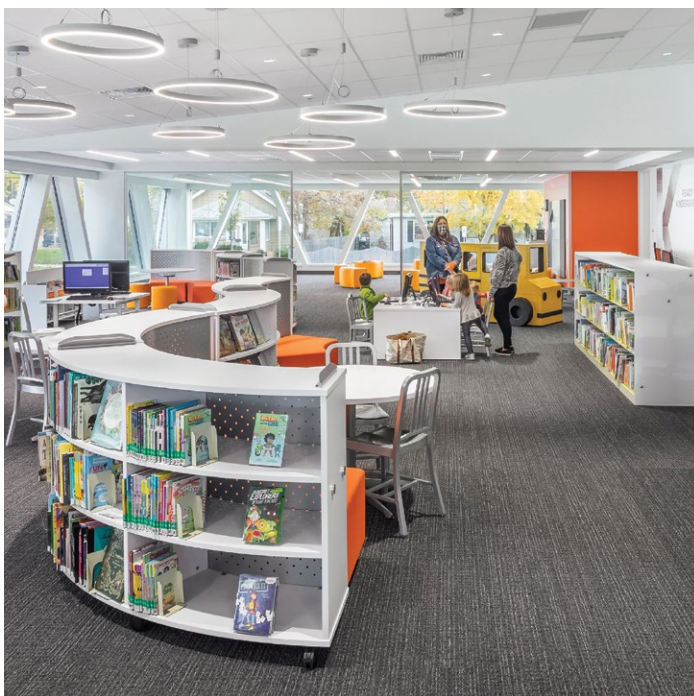
ARCHITECT: Integrus Architecture

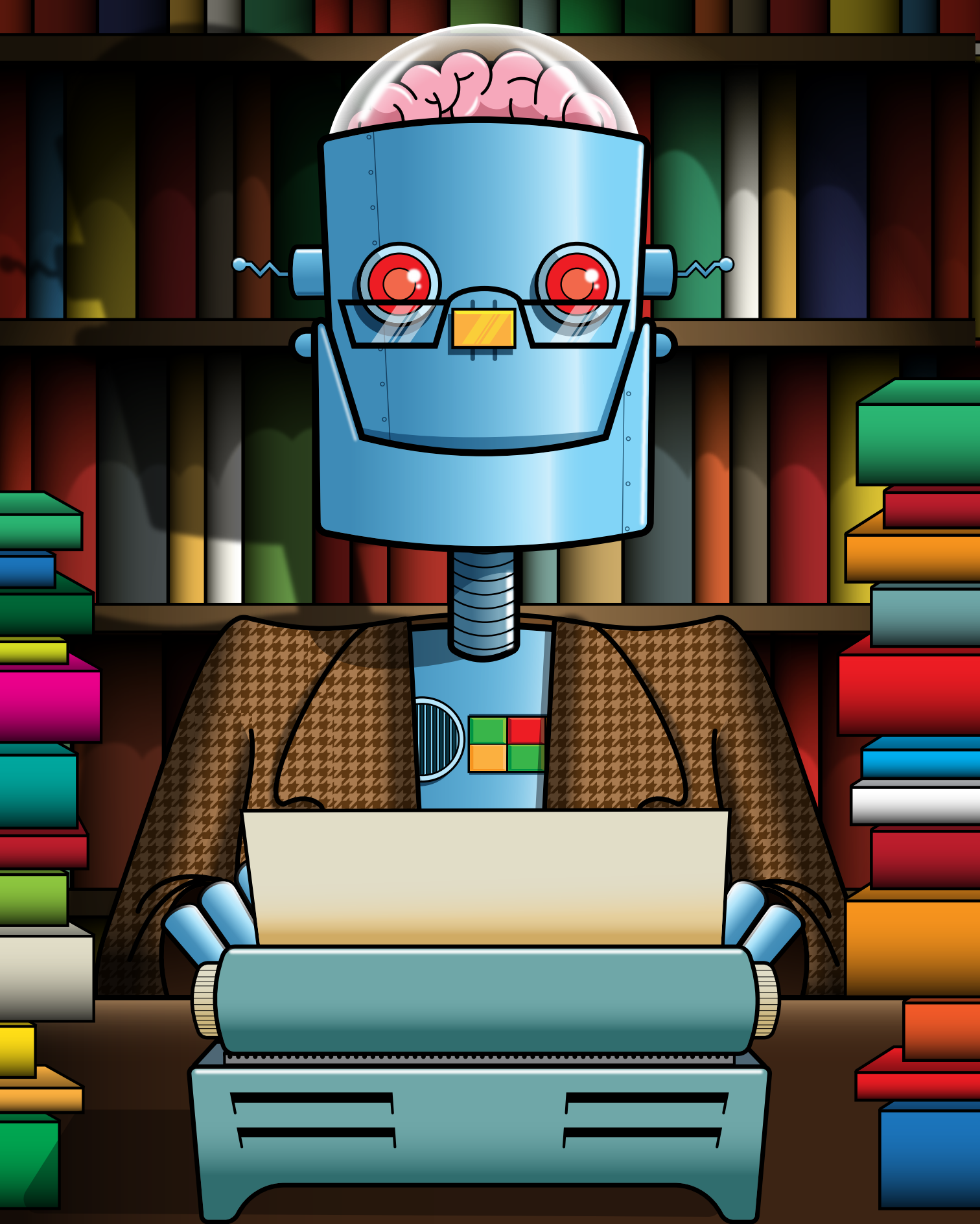
PHOTO: Lara Swimmer Photography

▼ **Contra Costa County
(Calif.) Library,
Pleasant Hill branch**

ARCHITECT: Bohlin Cywinski Jackson

PHOTO: Matthew Millman Photography





BOOKS BY BOTS

Librarians grapple with AI-generated material in collections

by Reema Saleh

Librarian Sondra Eklund spends her time stocking books for the public library system she works for in Virginia. One of her patrons recently asked the library to acquire a children's book about pets other than cats or dogs, so she went looking.

When she came across a book titled *Rabbits: Children's Animal Fact Book* from the publisher Bold Kids, it seemed promising. Eklund hadn't heard of Bold Kids before, but it offers nearly 500 books on Goodreads and Amazon, and its paperbacks aren't expensive. Though the catalog showed only the book's cover—not its interior—she put in the order, thinking, “How bad could it be?”

But when the book arrived, Eklund learned the answer: “Unbelievably bad.”

Its pages contained strangely worded sentences, some of them including made-up facts about rabbits (such as the claim that they make their own clothes). Every page of text featured the same clip art of a bunny eating a carrot. Stock photos of rabbits littered the pages, their eyes and noses disappearing into the book's bleed.

One page inexplicably appeared twice. Another told readers, “If you've ever had the pleasure of feeding a rabbit, you've probably wondered how they reproduce. The answer is simple: They live in the wild!”

Eklund now suspects the title and others from Bold Kids, which has no website or authors associated with its books, were created by artificial intelligence (AI). To add insult to injury, the

book was print-on-demand, making it nonrefundable. “My cataloger was practically purple in the face,” she says.

The experience left Eklund much more cautious when acquiring books for the library. “We're learning by experience what to look for,” she says. “We don't want to put our library's name on something that's not good.”

At the same time, her quest for quality content has been made more difficult by the surge of AI-generated books on Hoopla, Ingram, OverDrive, and other vendor platforms. While some of those books are relatively simple to sniff out, others are easier to confuse for the real deal.

Worse, some AI-generated books may contain potentially dangerous misinformation. The New York Mycological

Society, for example, has warned against purchasing AI-written guides to foraging wild mushrooms: “Please only buy books of known authors and foragers; it can literally mean life or death.”

“AI has gotten good enough for some things,” Eklund says. “But writing books? Our kids deserve better.”

AN AI MYSTERY

Eklund is far from the only librarian grappling with AI issues. Last fall, Robin Bradford, a collection development librarian at a public library in Washington, accidentally bought an AI-narrated audiobook on OverDrive. Only after a patron checked it out and complained about a file-corruption issue did Bradford realize the book's narrator was listed as “Scarlett (synthesized voice).” Looking through her library's collection, she found more than 100 audiobook titles with the same narrator, all of them thrillers from Lukeman Literary Management.

So the audiobook narrators weren't human. Were the authors themselves? With monikers such as Blake Pierce, Kate Bold, Molly Black, and Mia Gold, the authors appeared to have many titles to their names, but little to no social-media presence and only bare-bones websites with no substantive author bios—just a list of books written.

In an email to *American Libraries*, Lukeman Literary Management President Noah Lukeman responds, “Digital narrations have, for quite a while, been ubiquitous and openly accepted and carried by all major libraries and e-tailers, and embraced by major publishers” and adds, “For decades, writers from J. K. Rowling to Stephen King on down have used pseudonyms.”

Bradford also remembers that when she looked up the books' copyright records, she found that they contained mentions of “text generated by AI.” But she's not sure exactly what that means. “Was it 10 percent of the book? Was it 70 percent? One hundred percent? I have no idea,” she says.

In the Copyright Public Records System of the US Copyright Office

(USCO), a search for “Lukeman Literary Management Ltd.” yields more than 2,000 entries. Many of them contain the notation “Material Excluded: text generated by artificial intelligence.” At least one entry, for *Fatal Choice (A Sydney Best Suspense Thriller—Book One)*, contains a lengthy statement that reads, in part, “Approximately 60% to 80% of the writing is original and human-written. For the portions that are AI-generated, nearly 100% of what was AI-generated has been either revised, rearranged, or rewritten by a human writer.”

In his email to *American Libraries*, Lukeman writes: “A small portion of our titles have used a hybrid human/AI approach, written by humans yet with some AI assistance in the process to achieve higher quality.... One should not conflate digital narrations or predominantly-human-with AI-assist novels with lower quality. User ratings and reviews ultimately speak loudly for themselves ... and they should continue to be allowed to do so.”

For her part, Bradford doesn’t believe that the many patrons who enjoy these books are aware of AI’s involvement in their creation. “When you see a book and it’s written by an author, you automatically think that is a person,” she says. “I don’t think people are tuned into the idea that it’s not.”

She’s continuing to have trouble identifying many AI-generated titles by their vendor catalog entries alone. “I’m just going to look harder at the books I’m buying,” she says, “and making

**“WE DON’T WANT
TO PUT OUR
LIBRARY’S NAME
ON SOMETHING
THAT’S NOT GOOD.”**

SONDRA EKLUND, children’s librarian
at a Virginia public library

HOW TO SPOT AI-GENERATED BOOKS

Once an AI-generated book has made it to your library, it will likely give itself away with telltale signs such as jumbled, repetitive, or contradicting sentences; glaring grammatical errors or false statements; or digital art that looks too smooth around the corners.

Of course, if you can get a digital sneak-peek inside a book *before* ordering, all the better. But if not, how can you head off AI content so it never arrives on your desk? The following tips can help.

- Look into who the author is and how “real” they seem, says Robin Bradford, a collection development librarian at a public library in Washington. An author with no digital footprint is a red flag, especially if they are credited with a slew of titles each year. Also a red flag: a book with no author listed at all.
- Exercise caution regarding self-published books, small presses, or platforms such as Amazon, which filters out less AI-generated content than other vendors do.
- Think about whether the book is capitalizing on the chance that a reader will confuse it with another, more popular book, says Jane Stimpson, a library instruction and educational technology consultant for the Massachusetts Library System. Does it have a cover similar to that of an existing bestseller? Just as animated Disney movies get imitated by low-budget knockoffs, popular titles get imitated by AI-generated books.
- Check if there is mention of AI use in the Library of Congress record associated with the book, says Sarah Manning, a collection development librarian at Boise (Idaho) Public Library (BPL). If the book has been registered with the US Copyright Office, its record may mention AI. ●

sure that I’m supporting authors who are truly authors.”

AI AND COPYRIGHT

Even when the nature of an AI-generated work is clear, from a librarian’s point of view, there are potential copyright issues to consider. Does a book that may have plagiarized from other books belong in a library?

Sarah Manning, a collection development librarian at Boise (Idaho) Public Library (BPL), pondered that question recently as she fielded a patron request for a book titled *The Funny Bear’s Very Scary Journey*. While a human author wrote the book, its cover notes that it features illustrations created with Midjourney, a popular AI tool that generates images based on human prompts. Midjourney trains its model on vast copyrighted

data sets—and has faced lawsuits as a result.

That didn’t sit right with Manning. “Did [Midjourney] rip off another artist?” she asks. “It’s a gray area.” In the end, she decided to add the book to the library’s collection, particularly since a patron had requested it.

Librarians concerned about AI-related copyright issues have a lot to keep up with. Generative-AI companies such as ChatGPT and Midjourney maintain that these technologies should be considered fair use, but many authors and voice actors, along with organizations like *The New York Times*, argue instead that using their work to train AI violates copyright.

In January, USCO stated in a press release announcing the release of part two of its *Copyright and Artificial Intelligence* report that the output of

generative AI can be protected by copyright “where a human author has determined sufficient expressive elements.” Typing a prompt into ChatGPT doesn’t count. However, as the report itself states, if a human selects, arranges, or modifies AI-generated output in a “sufficiently creative way,” the result amounts to an original work. But how much human input is required? The USCO report states that “the courts will provide further guidance.”

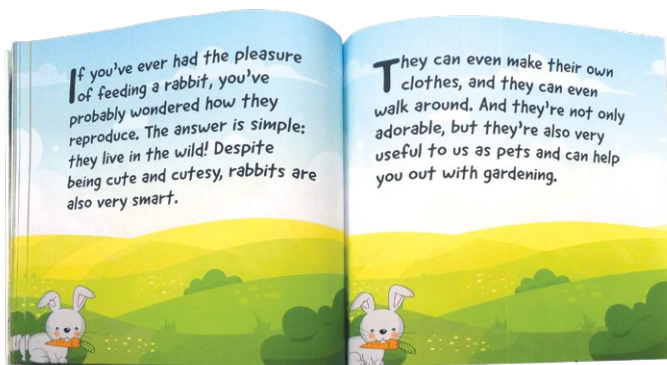
In May, USCO released a pre-publication version of part three of the report, which stated that whether AI training can be considered fair use hinges on “what works were used, from what source, for what purpose, and with what controls on the outputs.” It also stated that “making commercial use of vast troves of copyrighted works to produce expressive content that competes with them in existing markets ... goes beyond established fair use boundaries.” Subsequent to the report’s issuance, the White House dismissed USCO Register of Copyrights Shira Perlmutter, who has filed a lawsuit in response. In July, President Trump said copyright posed limitations to the development of AI.

While they wait for further developments, librarians like Manning continue to wonder whether AI-generated material belongs in a library at all. “I personally lean toward no,” she says. “It is actually coming from someone else’s writing, which is a form of plagiarism. I don’t know that everyone [who works] in libraries would feel the same way, but that’s how I see it.”

PINING FOR A POLICY

Some libraries have developed policies regarding staff and patron use of AI. These policies typically address the appropriate use of AI in the workplace and how to manage or restrict the data these tools collect.

But collection development policies regarding AI are harder to come by.



Rabbits: Children's Animal Fact Book, published by Bold Kids, is a title suspected to have been written by artificial intelligence.

During ALA’s 2025 Annual Conference and Exhibition in Philadelphia in June, a resolution to create an artificial intelligence cross-divisional working group passed. The working group will be charged with developing a unified, critically informed ALA position on AI and libraries for Council consideration.

In the meantime, patron requests for AI-created materials have pushed BPL’s collection development staff to vet purchase requests more thoroughly, particularly with independent or self-published titles. “We have had a lot of discussions about what to look out for on materials to see if we can try to determine if it’s AI. But I’m sure things have slipped through,” Manning says.

Nick Tanzi, library technology consultant and assistant director of South Huntington (N.Y.) Public Library, says that if an AI-generated book does slip into a library’s collection against policy, it’s because of a lack of disclosure from publishers and vendors. Without that disclosure, it’s hard to consistently enforce AI policies on collection development, he says.

“The worst policy is policy you can’t enforce, or that you enforce very unevenly,” he adds. “A lot of that comes down to the ability for an aggregator or distributor to say, ‘These are AI’ or not.”

While ebook catalogs like OverDrive let libraries choose the content they make available to patrons, that’s not the case with Hoopla. Instead, libraries typically opt into Hoopla’s entire catalog and pay afterward for what their patrons borrow, says Clayton Cheever, director of Morrill Memorial Library in Norwood, Massachusetts.

That means patrons sometimes check out AI-generated books in Hoopla without realizing it—a fact that frustrates him. “You look at the book, and you can tell it was made by some early-gen AI bot, because it can’t even spell *monetization* correctly,” he says.

Research and advocacy organization Library Futures is calling on Hoopla to filter out low-quality, AI-generated ebooks from its collections.

“Every single company that offers AI-generated material should have some sort of transparency standards put in place so that people know what they’re getting, just like [with] many other consumer products that have labeling on them,” says Jennie Rose Halperin, Library Futures’ executive director.

Hoopla relies on accurate metadata from its vendor partners to flag low-quality, AI-generated content. Trouble is, the industry standards necessary for this flagging don’t exist, says Jeff Jankowski, president of Hoopla Digital, who responded in writing to questions from *American Libraries*. “We are actively collaborating with our digital aggregation partners to ensure they provide metadata noting AI-generated ebooks, so we can offer transparency to our library customers,” he writes.

It would technically be possible for librarians to opt out of AI content from Hoopla’s collection by making lists of blocked books or by working with Hoopla itself. “You can talk to a rep and say, ‘Hey, we don’t want this,’” Cheever says. But, he adds, removing all possible AI material in the catalog would be incredibly time-consuming for librarians: “There is way too much content out there.” **AL**



REEMA SALEH is a freelance writer for *American Libraries*. She is a journalist and daily editor at the *Chicago Review of Books*.

2025 ALA Award Winners

Honoring excellence and
leadership in the profession

Every year, the American Library Association (ALA) recognizes the achievements of more than 200 individuals and institutions with an array of awards honoring their service to librarians and librarianship. Chosen by juries of their colleagues and peers, winners embody the best of the profession's leadership, vision, and service as well as a continued commitment to outreach and equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

Award recipients were honored at a June 29 ceremony and reception during ALA's 2025 Annual Conference and Exhibition in Philadelphia. This selection represents only some of those recognized in 2025. For a complete list of winners, visit ala.org/awards. 



SCHOLASTIC LIBRARY PUBLISHING AWARD

Clare Graham

As director of the Malvern-Hot Spring County (Ark.) Library, Graham acts as its public face, ensuring people have access to library services. "Libraries are the place people go when they don't know where to go," Graham said. "That's huge, because we offer services to people of all ages, all backgrounds, of all status."

Graham is being honored with this award for her commitment to the library's many outstanding programs, including book giveaways and a Library of Things. On learning she had received it, she said, "It is both an incredible honor and a testament to the hard work and dedication we pour into our library and its mission. Winning this award means so much to me personally, as it validates the passion I feel for empowering individuals through knowledge and resources." Read more at bit.ly/AL-Scholastic25.

This \$1,000 award honors a librarian whose unusual contribution to the stimulation and guidance of children's and young adults' reading exemplifies outstanding achievement in the profession. **DONOR:** Scholastic Library Publishing

LEMONY SNICKET PRIZE FOR

NOBLE LIBRARIANS FACED WITH ADVERSITY

Sara Turner



Turner is deputy director and children's librarian at Lewiston (Maine) Public Library (LPL), the second largest library in the state and one that serves a large number of immigrants and refugees. She has spearheaded initiatives to create safe spaces for difficult conversations, fostering dialogue that brings people together.

In the aftermath of the 2023 Lewiston mass shooting that killed 18 people and injured 13 others, Turner ensured that LPL became a hub of healing. City departments, the FBI, and community members gathered to work through unimaginable loss. Recognizing the community's need for solace, Turner also expanded the library's resources on bereavement.

As a dedicated youth services leader, Turner has also worked to provide new books to every child participating in the summer reading program. She has been a powerful advocate for improved workplace policies, ensuring that library staff receive the support they need to serve the public. Read more at bit.ly/AL-Snicket25.

This award annually recognizes a librarian who has faced adversity with integrity and dignity intact. The honoree receives \$10,000 and an object from author Daniel Handler's private collection. **DONOR:** Daniel Handler (Lemony Snicket)

ALA MEDAL OF EXCELLENCE

Janet Hyunju Clarke

Clarke, associate dean of research and learning at Stony Brook (N.Y.) University Libraries, is the principal investigator of Ready for Success, a project to more effectively integrate research skills into high school curricula by helping teachers scaffold smaller lessons throughout the year. The Ready for Success initiative transformed instruction at Brentwood (N.Y.) High School, where students learned to break down the research process into smaller, attainable skill sets. Through a train-the-trainer approach, Clarke and her team developed a comprehensive curriculum to update teacher education about information literacy principles and equip educators with the tools to strengthen student research and information literacy skills.

Those efforts culminated in the Ready for Success Summit, which gathered more than 100 teachers, librarians, and school administrators to exchange best practices in research and information literacy. To date, this project has reached more than 1,200 educators and high school students on Long Island, New York, with plans to expand to more schools. Read more at bit.ly/AL-Medal25.

This \$2,000 award annually recognizes creative leadership, particularly in the fields of library management, library training, cataloging and classification, and the tools and techniques of librarianship. **SPONSOR:** OCLC/Forest Press Inc.



JOSEPH W. LIPPINCOTT AWARD

Clara Bohrer

Bohrer's impact on the field of librarianship includes contributions such as her leadership role in Every Child Ready to Read, a joint initiative of the Public Library Association (PLA) and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) that has been adopted by more than 6,000 libraries nationwide. She served as a key architect of the curriculum and then as first chair of the PLA Family Engagement Task Force. Bohrer is also past director of West Bloomfield Township (Mich.) Public Library (WBTP). Under her guidance, WBTP earned the Institute of Museum and Library Services' National Medal for Museum and Library Service in 2010.

Bohrer has served on the boards of three ALA divisions: ALSC, PLA, and the Young Adult Library Services Association. Her leadership roles include serving as PLA president (2004–2005) as well as a PLA fiscal officer (2019–2025). During her several terms on the PLA Budget and Finance Committee, she oversaw the division's financial health and secured substantial funding for major initiatives. Read more at bit.ly/AL-Lippincott25.

This \$1,500 award recognizes distinguished service in the profession of librarianship. **DONOR:** Joseph W. Lippincott III

BETA PHI MU AWARD

Natalie Greene Taylor

Taylor, associate professor and director of University of South Florida's School of Information in Tampa, has developed an extensive record of scholarship. Currently an editor for the journal *Library Quarterly*, she has published articles in such journals as *School Library Research*, *Journal of Information Science*, *Computers & Education*, and *Journal of Documentation*, and she has coauthored four books: *Foundations of Information Literacy*; *Foundations of Information Policy*; *Digital Literacy and Digital Inclusion*; and *Libraries, Human Rights, and Social Justice*.

Taylor has edited two books, *Libraries and the Global Retreat of Democracy* and *Perspectives on Libraries as Institutions of Human Rights and Social Justice*. She has also served in leadership roles for numerous organizations, such as the Association for Library and Information Science Education. Read more at bit.ly/AL-Mu25.

This \$1,000 award honors a library school faculty member's achievement or another individual's distinguished service to education for librarianship.

DONOR: Beta Phi Mu International Library Science Honor Society



From left: Joe Miller, adult services librarian; Gina Sherock, human resources operations manager; Abdulrahman Al-Ruwaishan, information services specialist; Justin Bumbico, information technology officer; Patrick Justice, outreach services manager; Michaela Herrick, data and applications analyst; and Eric Vescelius, information services manager.

ALA/INFORMATION TODAY

LIBRARY OF THE FUTURE AWARD

Columbus (Ohio) Metropolitan Library

In 2023, Columbus (Ohio) Metropolitan Library (CML) formed an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Task Force, a cross-functional team dedicated to understanding AI's impacts and implications while also responsibly exploring its potential for librarianship and the communities served by libraries. The task force developed three primary goals: increase overall CML stakeholder awareness and knowledge of AI developments; help CML staff understand the potential influence of AI on their work and workforce; and help CML staff understand the potential impact of AI on patron behaviors, as well as on service and program expectations.

The task force, in collaboration with CML's Adult Services team, created a comprehensive training program for staff, including the four-week Summer of AI Training Series. This series covered essential topics such as prompt engineering, creating visual art using generative AI, and practical use in the library. Additionally, the team developed compact graphics outlining the history of AI, its environmental impact, and various AI services. CML's commitment to equipping its staff with AI knowledge and tools has empowered more than 800 employees to confidently serve patrons. Read more at bit.ly/AL-Future25.

This \$1,200 award honors a library, library consortium, group of librarians, or support organization for innovative planning for, applications of, or development of patron training programs about information technology in a library setting. **DONOR:** Information Today Inc.

PAUL HOWARD AWARD

FOR COURAGE

Desiree Mallette

Mallette, library paraprofessional at Mosaic Preparatory Academy in New York City, has demonstrated remarkable courage that has greatly benefited the library and the entire school community. Mallette has prioritized her role by consistently supporting her students and treating everyone with the highest level of respect and professionalism. She ensures that students have access to the books, resources, and supportive environment they require. Read more at bit.ly/AL-Howard25.

This \$1,000 award honors a librarian, library board, library group, or individual for exhibiting unusual courage benefiting library programs or services.

DONOR: Paul Howard Memorial Fund



Library Freedom Project's March for Libraries

The Library Freedom Project (LFP), a network of value-driven librarians working together to build an information democracy, serves all librarians (school, public, academic, professional, legal, and private) throughout the country. It works to expand the reach and impact of the annual March for Libraries event, which offers professional development opportunities, community engagement activities, and statewide advocacy initiatives in Tennessee. Cassandra Mae Taylor launched March for Libraries in 2024 during her tenure as chair of the Tennessee Library Association's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. Taylor is manager of Rutherford County (Tenn.) Library System's Smyrna branch.

LFP's target audience for this program includes library professionals, library supporters, community members, and students. The project's goal is to offer a full day of professional development surrounding library advocacy, with March for Libraries taking place in the morning and Library Legislative Day taking place in the afternoon. Read more at bit.ly/AL-EBSCO25.

This \$3,500 award honors a library organization for a program to further its staff development goals and objectives.

DONOR: EBSCO Information Services

Cassandra Mae Taylor

ERNEST A. DIMATTIA AWARD FOR INNOVATION AND SERVICE TO COMMUNITY AND PROFESSION

Erin Sniderman

Sniderman, outreach librarian at Hampton Falls (N.H.) Free Library (HFFL), is being honored for her leadership in expanding the outreach program at HFFL. She also took a leading role in the library's strategic planning process. As part of that plan, she established and expanded contact with town entities, established a common town calendar, and collaborated on the celebration of the National Bicentennial of Lafayette's Farewell Tour. Because of Sniderman's efforts, the library has received several grants to support its outreach and programming needs.

In addition, Sniderman—a master gardener, horticulturalist, and certified environmental consultant—is creating a library campus that includes usable outdoor spaces surrounding the library and other town buildings. Read more at bit.ly/AL-DiMattia25.

This \$5,000 award recognizes one or more public librarians who demonstrate leadership in anticipating emerging trends in services, products, and technologies that will enhance the library's position in its community.

DONOR: The DiMattia Family



Kelvin Watson

Watson, executive director of Las Vegas–Clark County (Nev.) Library District (LVCCLD), has a deep history of industry and community engagement that has spotlighted the library profession, attracted broad attention beyond the library realm, and inspired others in their career choices. Before moving to public libraries, Watson used his business degree to work in marketing, sales, product development, and business development at Ingram Library Services, the Borders Group, and The Library Corporation, as well as the USDA National Agricultural Library. Watson went on to leverage those experiences at Queens (N.Y.) Public Library, Broward County (Fla.) Library, and now LVCCLD.

Watson's impact on the community has enhanced public recognition and appreciation of public libraries. In addition to the many awards and accolades LVCCLD has garnered, Watson's civic work and community activism have been recognized with the City of Las Vegas African American Trailblazer Award, a spot among the International Career and Business Alliance Global 100 Leading Black Professionals, and the NAACP Las Vegas Chapter James Anderson Visionary Award. Read more at bit.ly/AL-Haycock25.

This \$1,000 award honors an individual for contributing significantly to the public recognition and appreciation of librarianship through professional performance, teaching, and/or writing. **DONOR:** Ken Haycock

EQUALITY AWARD

Kennesaw (Ga.) State University Libraries Recruitment and Retention Task Force

The Kennesaw (Ga.) State University (KSU) Libraries Recruitment and Retention Task Force has shown a strong commitment to making library hiring fairer and more transparent. By addressing biases and creating equitable hiring practices, the task force has helped build a more inclusive academic library workforce. Its efforts have not only improved KSU Libraries but also created a model to inspire change nationwide.

The task force's work directly tackles structural inequities in recruitment and retention, thereby promoting lasting change in the profession. It has created not only a better hiring and onboarding process but also an adaptable framework that other libraries can replicate. Its hiring guide—currently an internal LibGuide—ensures that these principles remain part of the institution's hiring culture and establishes an example for other libraries. Read more at bit.ly/AL-Equality25.

This \$1,000 award honors an individual or group for an outstanding contribution that promotes equality in the library profession.

Kristina Clement,
assistant director of
academic engagement
and instruction
at Kennesaw (Ga.)
State University



Reading the Room

Promoting the library by embedding it in student life

BY Jasmine Simmons
and Sophia Medina



JASMINE SIMMONS is a student success librarian at University of Florida's (UF) George A. Smathers Libraries in Gainesville.



SOPHIA MEDINA graduated from UF in spring 2025. She was a member of the Undergraduate Library Advisors program's 2023-2024 cohort.

Many academic librarians wonder how to get more students into campus libraries. At the University of Florida's (UF) George A. Smathers Libraries in Gainesville, we've had success by bringing the library to students.

In 2021, we created the peer-to-peer Undergraduate Library Advisors (ULA) program, where four students help to spread awareness of library resources and services among UF's nearly 40,000 undergrads. Our goal was to make sure students knew that our six vibrant campus libraries offer myriad academic resources—as well as student wellness resources and opportunities to discover, explore, and create.

In 2024, ULA member Sophia Medina devised a new student engagement project to help meet this challenge. She recalled attending a past convention with friends and seeing in the program book that the local library was hosting a reading room. They visited during a free hour between sessions, and browsing and reading turned out to be a great way to spend the time.

With this in mind, Medina created a pop-up library reading room at a comic con–style annual convention on campus called SwampCon. A play on the nickname of UF's football stadium, the Swamp, SwampCon is a free student-run event that celebrates Japanese arts, fashion, gaming, pop culture, cosplay, and performance arts.

Medina discovered that many students were not aware of the library's collection of manga, graphic novels, and related resources, such as LibGuides about comic books and science fiction. The pop-up reading room featured a collection of more than 70 items she handpicked from several campus libraries. It presented an ideal opportunity to centrally promote UF's collections to a broad student audience.

Convention attendees could browse the reading room or relax with a book. The curated mix included well-known titles as well as deep cuts that fans were happily surprised to learn were available in UF libraries.

Our library staffers were available to check out materials to students on the spot. We had fliers to help students locate these collections in our library branches later, plus informational brochures about other offerings across the campus libraries.

The reading room demonstrated the power of embedding our library resources within student-centered spaces and reinforced the importance of aligning library programs with students' interests. This experience has strengthened the libraries' efforts to create unique ways to connect with students and change students' perception of the library—from a

hub solely for academic support to a student-life center holistically dedicated to their well-being and success.

We founded ULA soon after campus operations returned to normal following the shift to online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cohort members are in their second year or higher. Selection is based on students' experience with content creation and outreach, connections to student organizations, and interest in library work. Jasmine Simmons, student success librarian, oversees the program with colleague Patricia Takacs, political science librarian.

After six weeks of training in information literacy and library services, cohorts plan, host, and participate in student engagement activities at the library; represent the library at campuswide events; and create promotional materials.

As Medina did, each ULA member devises a passion project: a new promotional or instructional resource for students, or a new student engagement event.

The SwampCon reading room serves as a model for peer-led outreach that bridges gaps and helps ensure that students are aware of and able to access library resources. It taught ULA to engage students beyond traditional settings and to position the library as not separate from student life but part of it. **AL**

The reading room demonstrated the power of embedding library resources within student-centered spaces.

The Teen Scene

A collaborative path
to library design

BY Christine Herman
and Jo Phillips



CHRISTINE HERMAN is youth services manager of Stark Library's Main Library in Canton, Ohio.



JO PHILLIPS is senior manager of Stark Library's Main Library.

In our experience, one of the many casualties of the COVID-19 pandemic has been teen engagement in public libraries. Since reopening in 2020, our workplace—Stark Library in Canton, Ohio—has seen a drop in teen program attendance. As we work on our new Main Library campus project, which is scheduled for completion in 2028, one of our goals is to make the building a destination, particularly for this age group. But since they're not currently using the space much, gathering input from them is tough.

We looked to Search Institute, a nonprofit focused on positive youth development. Its Developmental Assets Framework lists supports and strengths that can help young people succeed. On that list is involving teens in decision making, a practice that already guides our programming. Why not involve them in our space planning too?

We next turned to a trusted partner: TomTod Ideas, a local nonprofit that empowers middle school students in after-school projects called Creator Clubs. Beginning in early 2024, library leadership worked with TomTod facilitators to create a unique Creator Club focused on engaging teens in the early design process.

The group included 17 students ages 12–14 from a school near our downtown location. Each weekly Creator Club session, held at the library, focused on a different element of library services and space planning. At the beginning of the session, one of our Main Library managers or librarians presented information on an area of expertise. These presentations often included a tour or activity to deepen the participants' understanding of that library service.

The second half of the session, led by a TomTod facilitator, extended that learning through discussion. That discussion used guiding questions (such as "How can we create a draft design for a new library tech and maker studio?") as well as hands-on activities like using Lego bricks to conceptualize spaces. The students brought insight, creativity, and enthusiasm to every session.

One highlight was the week HBM Architects visited to showcase possible design elements and connect with these young people. During the session, the architects went through a slideshow to help participants visualize possibilities. Students were able to ask questions and provide feedback directly to the architects.

That feedback helped shape our vision. The students offered thoughtful recommendations on color schemes and layout, proposed creative ways to expand maker studio offerings, and shared ideas for transforming the gaming area. Aesthetically, they were drawn to themed

spaces, such as a "horror room," with dark shelving and dim lighting, dedicated to gothic authors.

The teens also suggested spaces to accommodate music composition, robotics, and computer coding, along with artmaking and textile spaces. They recommended a flexible teen area in which visitors could play board games, hang out in comfy seats while videogaming, or explore simulated worlds using virtual reality. In addition to weekly discussions, they compiled their thoughts into an idea book (bit.ly/Stark-IdeaBook).

Most important, they showed us what excited them, and that feedback is guiding our plans. As we continue the design process, we frequently go back to their thoughts. For example, we've added a recording studio and located it near the teen department and expanded maker studio. In addition to our regular computers, we will be adding designated gaming PCs to the teen area.

The furniture in that zone will

be easy to move so that students themselves can reconfigure it as needed.

This collaboration has given us important community context: what current users value, what they worry about losing, and what they hope to gain in the new building. With this input in hand,

we feel more confident that we're creating a space that is relevant, inclusive, and forward-thinking. **AL**

This collaboration has given us important community context: what current users value, what they worry about losing, and what they hope to gain.

Our Own Stories

Great reads by and about librarians



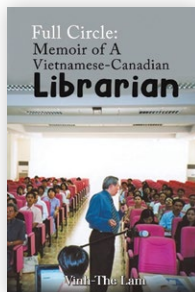
ALLISON ESCOTO is head librarian at the Center for Fiction in Brooklyn, New York.



That Librarian: The Fight against Book Banning in America

By Amanda Jones

Jones found herself the target of an online hate campaign after speaking out against censorship at her small Louisiana public library. A school librarian and former president of the Louisiana Association of School Librarians, she writes about the emotional, psychological, and physical toll of the harassment she experienced; how she decided to sue these online trolls for defamation; and the ensuing disappointment of losing that case. Jones offers a mainstream audience a close look at the threats that library workers who speak out against book banning face, as well as a useful perspective for those who may be facing similar challenges. Bloomsbury, 2024. 288 p. \$19.99. PBK. 978-1-6397-3724-6. (Also available as an ebook.)

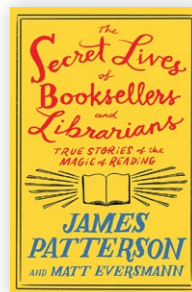


Full Circle: Memoir of a Vietnamese Canadian Librarian

By Vinh-The Lam

As a teacher in 1960s South Vietnam, Lam became the de facto librarian at his school. In 1970, a USAID development program offered him a chance to formally study librarianship in the United States. After earning his MLS, he returned home to found his country's first library science education program. But soon, South Vietnam was plunged into political and social upheaval, and Lam emigrated to Canada. After several successful years as a librarian there, he returned to Vietnam to help rebuild the libraries that had been lost over the decades. Readers will be inspired by Lam's story—one of overcoming enormous adversity and applying the precious resources of education and experience to help libraries flourish.

Austin Macauley Publishers, 2024. 215 p. \$15.95. PBK. 978-1-3984-4901-5. (Also available as an ebook.)

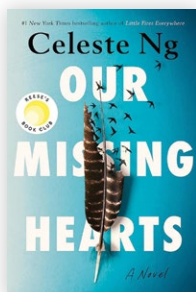


The Secret Lives of Booksellers and Librarians: True Stories of the Magic of Reading

Edited by James Patterson and Matt Eversmann

This collective biography compiles the stories of those who work with books into a heartwarming, entertaining, and enlightening volume. In alternating chapters, booksellers and librarians discuss the pandemic, censorship battles, and economic downturn, among other topics. In his introduction, Patterson writes that people in these professions are “an elite corps of front-line workers, people who are holding that line, and sometimes even turning the tide.” Recommended for an uplifting perspective from the folks doing the work. Little, Brown and Company, 2024. 352 p. \$21.99. PBK. 978-1-5387-5898-4. (Also available as an ebook.)

BY Allison Escoto



Our Missing Hearts

By Celeste Ng

Librarians are part of the resistance against an authoritarian dystopia in Ng's novel. When 12-year-old Bird receives a mysterious letter, he goes in search of his missing mother, a poet who inadvertently wrote a rallying cry for the resistance before vanishing. The US has enacted an anti-Asian policy that puts Bird, who is part Chinese, in danger on this quest. Certain themes, including censorship, racism, and the enduring power of art and words, will feel familiar to today's readers. In this story and in the real world, librarians are on the front lines of protecting information in the face of repression.

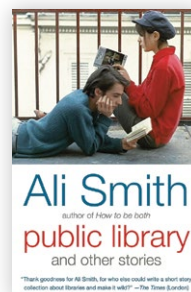
Penguin Books, 2022. 352 p. \$18. PBK. 978-0-5934-9266-6. (Also available as an ebook.)



There Is No Such Thing as a Typical Librarian


By Steven John Antonuccio

The day-to-day work of public library workers is never one-note. Antonuccio, a now-retired Colorado librarian, explores the challenges of serving diverse patrons of all ages and how these challenges can be conquered through library work—like how, in retirement, he trained a new library director in Pueblo (Colo.) City-County Library District, a community serving a robust and active teen population. Upholding the belief that welcoming young people into the library is good and vital, Antonuccio worked with staffers to develop several programs that have helped teen patrons channel their energy. Full of entertaining anecdotes, this memoir follows Antonuccio's life and career in academic and public libraries. Readers will find this expansive story a satisfying and positive glimpse into one librarian's journey. Rhyolite Press LLC, 2019. 306 p. \$19.95. PBK. 978-1-9438-2919-4.



Public Library and Other Stories

By Ali Smith

Whether imagining the granular details of the life of poet Olive Fraser or exploring the dissolution of a romantic relationship through the literary impact of author Katherine Mansfield, Smith elegantly portrays the ways in which books add value to our lives and the importance of keeping those stories freely accessible. The selections in this short-fiction collection are interspersed with personal tributes by novelists, librarians, and poets to the influence and deep importance of public libraries. Written a decade ago during a time of massive budget cuts to UK libraries, this beautifully rendered book is still relevant. Anchor, 2016. 240 p. \$17. PBK. 978-1-1019-7304-2. (Also available as an ebook.) 

PEOPLE

Announcements

ON THE MOVE

February 18 **Abby Austin** became director of Rumford (Maine) Public Library.

Emma Barrett-Catton joined University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries as health sciences librarian June 2.

Sarah Cotnoir became children's librarian at Rumford (Maine) Public Library February 11.

June 9 **Reynaldo Frias-Santana** became director of Benton Harbor (Mich.) Public Library.

Hannah Gingrich started as reference and technology librarian at Geneva (N.Y.) Public Library in March.

March 3 **Sukrit Goswami** joined San Antonio Public Library as director.

May 1 **Cynthia Horne Wise** was appointed director of library services at Elizabeth City (N.C.) State University.

Brionna Johnson joined University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries as e-resources metadata librarian June 2.

Tanessa King became cataloging librarian at Binghamton (N.Y.) University Libraries June 5.

Pat Losinski joined architecture and engineering firm Gresham Smith in Nashville as senior advisor of library services in April.

In April **Jaime Plecenik** joined Alvin Sherman Library at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, as research and instruction librarian.

Roger Schonfeld was named managing director of JSTOR Digital Stewardship Services May 29.

Seyvion Scott joined Syracuse (N.Y.) University Libraries as student engagement librarian September 4, 2024.



Kudos

April 11 **Billy Allen**, manager of Las Vegas–Clark County (Nev.) Library District's Whitney branch, received the 2025 James Partridge Outstanding African American Information Professional Award, presented by University of Maryland's College of Information in College Park and Citizens for Maryland Libraries.



Carolyn G. Hanneman, retired archivist at University of Oklahoma in Norman, was inducted into the Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame March 20. ●

Emily Vorhies joined University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries as e-resources acquisitions librarian June 9.

PROMOTIONS

In April **Rukshana Singh** became city librarian for the city of San Mateo, California.

RETIREMENTS

In May **Jannette Finch** retired as librarian IV at the College of Charleston in South Carolina.

April 4 **Kathy Gaughan** retired as circulation manager at Grosse Pointe (Mich.) Public Library.

Patty Greibrok retired as children's librarian at Albert Lea (Minn.) Public Library in May.

May 9 **Kris Johnson** retired as head of the Access, Information, and User

Services Department at Montana State University Library in Bozeman.

Amber Mathewson retired as director of Pima County (Ariz.) Public Library June 7.

In June **Alma Ramos-McDermott** retired as school librarian and classroom teacher at Avalon Elementary School in Naples, Florida.

In June **Megan Schliesman** retired as librarian and assistant director of University of Wisconsin–Madison's Cooperative Children's Book Center.

David Smith retired as library supervisor at Pelham (Ala.) Public Library in March.

Martha Smith retired as branch manager of Elkin (N.C.) Public Library March 31.

June 1 **Tracy Strobel** retired as CEO of Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library.

In June **Sue Woody** retired as director of Des Moines (Iowa) Public Library.

AT ALA

May 19 **Teresa "Teri" Anderson** became executive director for the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).

Kelsey Henke joined the Office for Accreditation as accreditation manager in March.

In March **Emily Marquez** became program officer in the Public Programs Office.

Daniel J. Montgomery will join the Association as executive director November 10 (see p. 6).

In May **Allison Payne** was promoted to associate director of operations and strategic initiatives for ACRL.

Todd Ross became membership and communications specialist for Core March 31. [AL](#)

In Memory

Virginia Boucher, 95, retired librarian and professor, died March 9. Boucher worked 24 years at University of Colorado Boulder's (CU Boulder) Norlin Library. Prior to that, she worked in reference at Boulder (Colo.) Public Library and organized the library for Cutter Laboratories in Berkeley, California. In 1969, Boucher organized a conference, How to Streamline Interlibrary Loan, which continues today as the Colorado Resource Sharing Conference. Boucher published *Inter Library Loan Practices Handbook* (ALA, 1984), later updating the handbook for the dawning digital age, and served two committee terms with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. After she retired from CU Boulder as a full professor in 1991, the American Alpine Club asked Boucher to set up its library, which she transformed from a pile of boxes to a world-class lending center of 50,000 books, maps, and online resources.

Susan Brandehoff, 78, retired ALA staff member, died May 4. Brandehoff served as managing editor and executive editor of *American Libraries* magazine. She retired as director of program development and partnerships for the Public Programs Office. She also served as managing editor of *Arts of Asia* magazine in Hong Kong.

Bonita "Bonnie" Bryant, 86, retired academic librarian, died December 16, 2024. Bryant began her library career at Sandia National Laboratory in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and later served as a bibliographer at University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls. In 1981, she moved to University at Albany Libraries in New York, where she worked in collection development as a coordinator and, later, assistant director. Within ALA, she was elected chair of the Chief Collection Development Officers of Medium-Sized Research Libraries Discussion Group in 1984. Bryant contributed to the books *The Collection Building Reader* (Neal-Schuman, 1992) and *Collection Management for the 21st Century: A Handbook for Librarians* (Bloomsbury Academic, 1997). She retired from SUNY Albany in 2000.

Miriam May Erickson, 92, retired teacher and library media specialist, died September 24, 2024. Erickson served as library media specialist for Gibraltar Area

School District in Door County, Wisconsin, from 1968 until her retirement in 1999. She was a pioneer in bringing internet access to schools and libraries in northeast Wisconsin. Erickson served as president and treasurer of the Door County Library Board; was a member of the Door County Library Foundation, the Friends of Door County Libraries, and the Nicolet Federated Library System Board; and was appointed in 1991 to the Wisconsin Council on Library and Network Development. She received the 1984 School Library Specialist of the Year Award and the 2000 Trustee of the Year Award from the Wisconsin Library Association, as well as the 1986 Wisconsin Educational Media Association's Special Service Recognition Award. In 2022, she was inducted into the Wisconsin Library Association Hall of Fame.



Kristi Johnson Starr, 54, librarian at Mustang (Okla.) High School, died April 20. Johnson Starr previously served as an adjunct faculty member for the library science master's program at University of North Texas in Denton and as librarian at O. L. Slaton Middle School and Coronado High School, both in Lubbock, Texas. She served in multiple leadership roles with the Texas Library Association and Texas Computer Education Association.

Jean H. Stevens, 83, retired librarian, died April 5. Stevens worked for Bucks County (Pa.) Free Library, where she held head librarian roles with the Levittown and Doylestown branches. She retired in 2006.

Rolf Swensen, 81, retired acting chief of Rosenthal Library at Queens (N.Y.) College and former national archivist of Papua New Guinea, died March 22. Swensen authored numerous academic journal articles and the book *And O'er Earth's Troubled, Angry Sea: The History of Christian Science in the United States* (Routledge, May).

Joyce Yoder, 74, retired librarian, died March 13. Yoder was a reference librarian at Tri-State (now Trine) University in Angola, Indiana, and Williams County (Ohio) Public Library. She later served as a librarian at Stryker (Ohio) Local Schools. ●



First things first: Legends don't need middle names. "It's Smokey Bear, not Smokey *the* Bear," says Sara Lee (above), lead librarian for special collections at the National Agricultural Library (NAL), who oversees the US Forest Service Smokey Bear Collection.

Open to the public by appointment, the collection encompasses posters, comics, original artwork, motion pictures, sound recordings, and other memorabilia. Among the many celebrities whose images visitors can spot in Smokey-related materials are Ray Charles, Rod Serling, and Jonathan Winters (dressed as a tree).

Don't have time for a deep dive into Smokey's archive? Casual visitors to NAL can browse a display with collection highlights—such as a trading card from the now-defunct Smokey and the Pros sports program, which saw star athletes like Joe Montana spreading the word about the iconic bear's mission.

“The Smokey campaign is the longest public advertising campaign that has ever existed in the United States,” Lee says proudly. “And it’s still going.” **AL**

Photo: Aaron Clamage

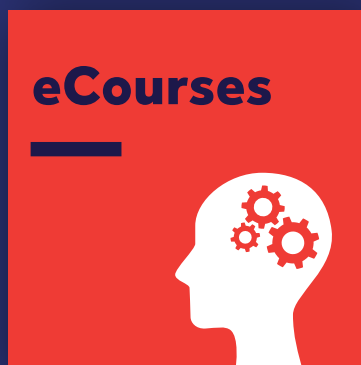
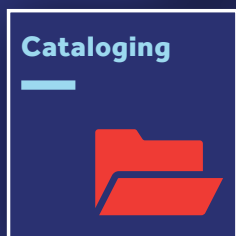
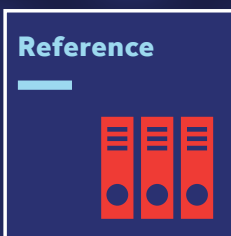
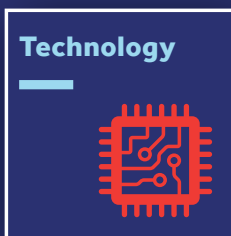
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