

american libraries

November/December 2025

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

STATE OF PLAY

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Game and Toy Archive

p. 32

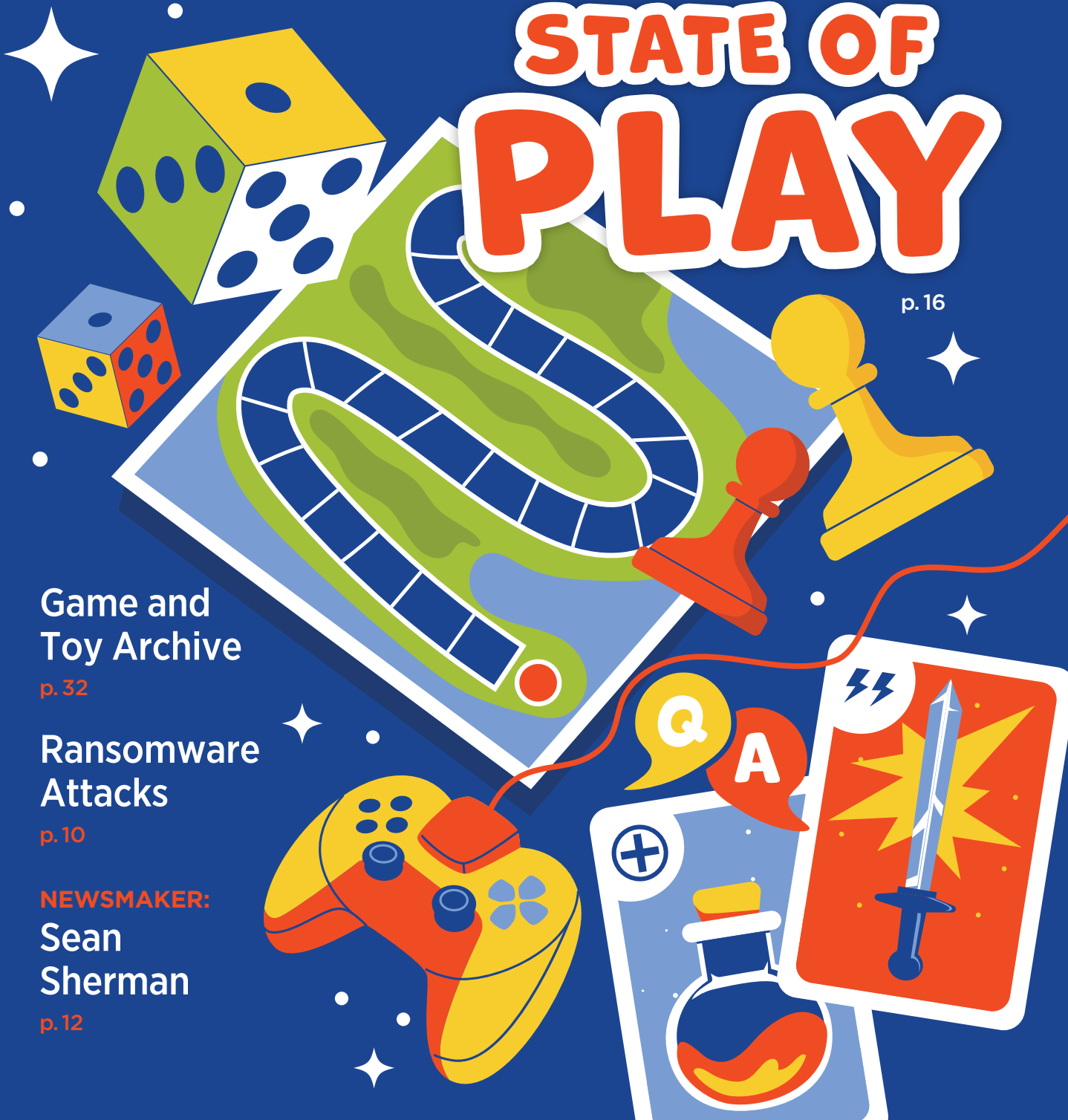
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THE COMIC BOOK

GREAT IMMIGRANTS

GREAT AMERICANS

Every year, Carnegie Corporation of New York celebrates the exemplary contributions of immigrants to American life through its Great Immigrants, Great Americans public awareness initiative. To mark the 20th anniversary of this tribute, the philanthropic foundation has commissioned a comic book series featuring the stories of naturalized U.S. citizens.



Among them is librarian **Homa Naficy**, born in France to Iranian parents. In 2000, the same year she became an American citizen, she founded The American Place at Hartford Public Library, now a nationally recognized hub for new immigrants seeking resources for learning English, help with applying for U.S. citizenship, and community. “The immigrant journey is not an easy one,” Naficy says. “But for many of them the library can offer a glimmer of hope and a community connected to their needs as they embrace our shared civic values while never losing their identities.”

The series includes more than a dozen stories, featuring comedian **Mo Amer**, DC publisher and artist **Jim Lee**, musician **David Byrne**, and pediatrician **Mona Hanna**.

Explore the full collection — and download the free comic book — at carnegie.org/immigrantstories.

Carnegie
CORPORATION
OF NEW YORK



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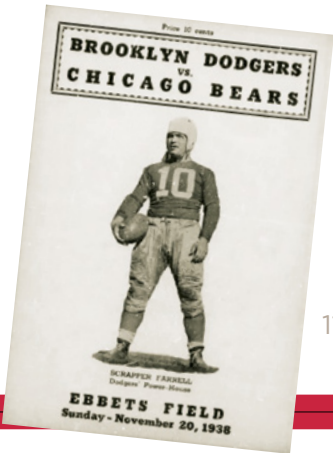
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from the
EDITOR

We've Got Game



Sanhita SinhaRoy

Who's up for some friendly competition? In our games package (cover story, p. 16), our team celebrates International Games Month, which takes place every November, with stories that encompass various states of play.

In "Jam Forever" (p. 17), Editorial and Advertising Specialist Carrie Smith explores game jams, events—in this case, in libraries—where people create games in a limited amount of time. In "Adaptive Arcade" (p. 18), Senior Editor Greg Landgraf reports on how Deerfield (Ill.) Public Library is making videogames accessible for all. We also take a closer look at the recipients of the Games and Gaming Round Table's Platinum Play Awards (the "Platys"), which spotlight classics deemed excellent for library use. Turn to page 20 to see if any of your favorites made the list.

Fun and games aside, this issue also looks at some serious topics. In "Road to Recovery" (p. 10), Cass Balzer reports on three public libraries that were victims of ransomware attacks in the past couple of years. Such attacks are becoming all too common, she writes, and for each library, "recovery was long, complicated, and costly, but their experiences offer lessons in how libraries can respond and rebuild."

Also in the issue: ALA's new executive director, Dan Montgomery, introduces himself in his inaugural column (p. 5), and ALA President Sam Helmick writes about the power of advocacy at the chapter level (p. 4). Both remind us that collective action is essential in the ongoing fight for the future of libraries, library workers, and professional values.

Finally, in our Newsmaker interview (p. 12), Managing Editor Terra Dankowski talks with award-winning chef Sean Sherman about his new cookbook, *Turtle Island: Foods and Traditions of the Indigenous Peoples of North America*. Sherman discusses how food can create cultural understanding and help people "maybe, hopefully, develop some empathy where there might not have been."

Whether through food or games, we hope the end of the year brings you closeness and connection.

Sanhita

Collective
action is
essential in the
ongoing fight
for the future of
libraries, library
workers, and
professional
values.

The Pulse of Our Profession

Chapter advocacy is vital to the library's lifeline



Sam Helmick

During my time as a chapter leader in Iowa, I witnessed firsthand how swiftly state and regional chapters can mobilize. When a bill that threatened codified funding for public libraries was proposed in the state legislature last year, more than 700 library board members responded statewide. The bill failed to advance.

Likewise, our state association has challenged other bills designed to curtail access, intellectual freedom, and professional integrity. Each time, Iowa Library Association has mobilized quickly to alert members to these proposals, provide action plans, and connect with community partners. These nimble responses are possible because chapters know the local context, the lawmakers, and the stakes.

In libraries, as in life, we learn to listen closely for the signals that tell us about our health and direction. In our profession, those signals often come from our chapters, like state library associations. They are our heartbeat, our first indicators of new trends, the tightening pressure on legislative challenges, and the steady rhythm of community needs. Library workers and members of the public rely on chapters to interpret these signals and respond effectively.

The American Library Association is committed to advocating year-round, at every level of government, on behalf of libraries, library workers, and the communities we serve. This work requires a top-down, bottom-up, and every-which-way approach. At the national level, ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office (PPAO) represents libraries in the halls of Congress and beyond. The PPAO team follows and informs national legislation on copyright, net neutrality, E-Rate, funding, and more. Working alongside member-driven groups, such as the Committee on Library Advocacy (COLA) and the Committee on Legislation, PPAO develops ALA's annual legislative agenda and provides support to chapters.

The Chapter Relations Office (CRO), housed within PPAO, plays a key role in strengthening the connection between local and national advocacy. There are 57 recognized ALA chapters, representing library workers in each state, the District of Columbia, Guam, the US Virgin Islands, and four regions. CRO provides advocacy resources, leadership training, and bill-tracking tools tailored to each chapter's needs. As Lisa Varga, associate executive director of PPAO, has said, chapters are vital to the existence and ecosystem of ALA. Each has its own personality and priorities, and having strong state leaders who can connect with local decision makers keeps ALA strategically afloat.

Advocacy takes many forms, and not everyone needs to be at the podium. COLA recently updated its Advocacy Action Plan Workbook (bit.ly/ALA-AdvocacyPlan), a free resource designed to help advocates at every level create concrete action plans. It offers step-by-step guidance for turning concern into impact.

Our work must also involve more than library workers. To succeed, we must galvanize the public. Every conversation with a neighbor, friend, or community leader is an opportunity to connect them with advocacy resources. Encourage your networks to sign up for ALA action alerts (bit.ly/ALA-ActNow), contact legislators, and share stories about why libraries matter.

Our shared advocacy—local and national, nimble and strategic—ensures that libraries remain essential to learning, literacy, and a democratic society. As you sip your morning coffee, consider one action you can take to support your chapter's advocacy efforts.

Libraries are the heart of every community they serve. Together we can ensure those hearts beat in unison and that our circulation remains strong. **AL**

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

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society.

Ready to Go

Joining the fight to defend libraries, workers, and the right to read



Dan Montgomery

When the interview committee asked why I was interested in the executive director position at the American Library Association (ALA), I replied, doing my best impression of famed mountaineer George Mallory: “Because it’s the ALA!” I was responding, of course, to my belief in libraries and in the right to read, both of which have been under serious attack. And library workers and advocates who defend reading, books, and unfettered access to knowledge are critical to protecting American democracy. So, to be part of the organization most squarely in the forefront of that cause seemed to me an unmissable opportunity, and a great honor.

Neither of my parents went to college, but I am fortunate that they read constantly and took me and my siblings to the library every week. No vacation began without a trip to the bookstore or library to stock up—everything from comic books to Robert Louis Stevenson (I still have my hardcover *Treasure Island* from those days).

So, perhaps predictably, I became an English teacher. I started my career at Chicago’s city colleges, teaching English as a second language to people newly arrived in the United States. It was a deeply moving and uplifting experience that propelled me into a career teaching English full-time at Niles North High School in Skokie, Illinois.

I was lucky to land a job in a district that had maintained a tremendous level of resources for students in an exceedingly diverse community. It also featured a strong teachers’ union that worked hard to defend the educational program. I quickly learned that my professional life as a teacher—and the conditions in which I would teach and my students would learn—was absolutely dependent on the success of my union.

I’ve spent the past 15 years as president of the 103,000-member Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT), the statewide union affiliated with

the American Federation of Teachers. In that capacity, I have had to manage the daily operations of a large staff in the service of a diverse membership in every corner of the state and in many different jobs—including school librarians in both public and private institutions and academic librarians at colleges and universities. Whether we were fighting in the state legislature for more school funding or working in partnership with parents to push back against threats to public education, I felt a powerful unity between my work as a teacher and my responsibility as an advocate for the profession.

I always saw it as my job to uplift the work of our members who toil every day in trying conditions with scant resources, often subject to unwarranted political attacks while just trying to do their jobs. (Sound familiar?) I am proud of the work we did at IFT, and I have the same excitement for helping ALA to be ever more effective in its mission to advocate for our libraries and all the folks who work in them. Ultimately, the communities we serve are the beneficiaries of our work, and that’s why it is so critical.

Some years ago, at a conference in San Antonio, I walked over to the main library. Carved in stone on a lintel above the entrance was a quote attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson: “Books are the homes of the American people.” I took a picture of it, and that was my social media profile photo for a long time. I still think about that notion a lot.

You, the members of the Association, protect more than just books and information and the places citizens access them. You are protecting the very bedrock of our democracy. All Americans need you to succeed. It’s a great honor to work with you in that cause. **AL**

DAN MONTGOMERY is executive director of the American Library Association. Reach him at dmontgomery@ala.org.

I always saw it as my job to uplift the work of our members who toil every day in trying conditions with scant resources.

ALA Leads Coalition in Support of IMLS

On September 11, the US Court of Appeals for the First Circuit provided a brief victory for advocates of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) by denying the defendants' request for a stay in *Rhode Island v. Trump*, keeping in place an injunction that keeps IMLS operational while litigation continues.

The injunction is the latest development in a saga that began in March, when President Donald Trump issued an executive order calling for the elimination of several government agencies, including IMLS. The American Library Association (ALA) led a coalition of library, museum, and cultural organizations and the nation's largest union representing cultural workers in filing a friend-of-the-court brief in *Rhode Island v. Trump*.

The case parallels an April 7 challenge to the dismantling of IMLS, filed by Democracy Forward on behalf of ALA and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). It emphasizes that the administration's refusal

to spend congressionally appropriated funds undermines vital public services and threatens communities nationwide.

IMLS provides coordination, research, and funding for the nation's libraries, museums, and other cultural institutions. The September brief details how the executive order has already curtailed critical grantmaking, halted data collection, and cut off the technical expertise needed to serve the public.

"IMLS is indispensable for libraries, museums, and cultural workers, as well as the millions of people we serve every day," said ALA President Sam Helmick in a September 3 statement. "We hope the court will strike down the attempt to dismantle IMLS, which the law directs to provide crucial funding, research, and resources that advance our shared missions: stewarding our history, strengthening access to lifelong learning, seeding opportunity, and sparking innovation for all Americans."

Read the full brief and view the list of signing organizations at bit.ly/ALA-IMLS-brief. Learn more about the Show Up for Our Libraries campaign at ala.org/showup. ●

Introducing the ALA Learning Library

On July 23, ALA launched the ALA Learning Library, a member-exclusive collection of free professional development resources on the eLearning site.

The Learning Library helps ALA members easily access a large and growing collection of eLearning events including courses, webinars, and on-demand training on key topics like intellectual freedom, advocacy, and workplace wellness.

Browse these resources at elearning.ala.org.

Nominations Open for I Love My Librarian Award

Library users nationwide are invited to nominate their favorite librarians for the 2026 I Love My Librarian Awards, recognizing the contributions of librarians in their communities.

Up to 10 librarians will be honored at ALA's 2026 Annual Conference and

Exhibition in Chicago. They will receive free conference registration, a travel stipend, and \$5,000 in recognition of their achievements. The awards are sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, with support from New York Public Library.

View eligibility criteria at bit.ly/ALA-ILML26 and complete the online nomination by December 15.

FCC Rescinds Wi-Fi Hotspot Funding

On September 30, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted to reverse its 2024 decision to authorize E-Rate funding for library and school hotspot lending programs and school bus Wi-Fi.

"ALA is both disappointed by the FCC's takebacks and discouraged by the lack of due process, which left no opportunity for staff, patrons, and library advocates to give input on the draft order,"

said ALA President Sam Helmick in a September 30 statement. "For years, we have engaged in the rulemaking process with good faith, partnering with the FCC to fulfill their mandate to make reliable, high-quality broadband available nationwide."

In 2025, the first year of the program, 1,762 libraries serving a total of more than 40 million patrons applied for hotspots. ALA has vowed to continue to advocate for policies that expand broadband access and support libraries and other community anchor institutions.

2024 Public Library Staff Survey Results

The Public Library Association (PLA) released the 2024 Public Library Staff Survey report in August. The survey gathered nationally representative information from 1,478 public libraries about staff roles and representation, hiring and retention practices, and goals and

ALA Launches New Strategic Plan

ALA unveiled a new multiyear strategic plan in July, aimed at strengthening libraries, growing the library workforce, driving innovation, and expanding community impact.

“As the library profession evolves, we are excited to launch a strategic vision that reflects both the challenges and the enormous opportunities ahead,” said ALA President Sam Helmick in a July 18 statement. “This plan puts members and stakeholders at the center of everything we do—focusing on workforce development, advocacy, technology, and community connection.”

The plan outlines key priorities including developing the library workforce pipeline, driving innovation and technology adoption, expanding advocacy efforts, and growing community programs to support members and society at large.

The new plan is the result of a data-driven process conducted over several months in partnership with a strategic planning consultant. It was shaped by the insights of a Strategic Planning Task Force, a diverse group of member volunteers representing different sectors, roles, and perspectives from across the Association.

Read the full plan at ala.org/Strategic-Plan-2025. ●

activities aimed at creating a welcoming environment for staff and community members.

The survey finds that salaries for library directors and early-career librarians are not keeping pace with inflation; urban libraries are losing staff positions at a higher rate than suburban and rural libraries; and most libraries support staff advancement within the field but few libraries offer time and funding for professional development. Additionally, though libraries have more formal, written goals related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility than they did in 2021, engagement with those activities is down.

A special section of the survey focuses on library accessibility. It finds that most libraries surveyed have main entrances, interior hallways, and bathrooms that are accessible for individuals with

disabilities, but only about half have public computers with accessible technologies and software and only about one-third have braille signage or other assistance for low-vision individuals.

Read the full report at bit.ly/PLA-survey-24.

Final Round of LTC Grant Applications Open

Applications are open for the fourth and likely final round of funding of the Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC): Accessible Small and Rural Communities grant, designed to support increased accessibility of facilities, services, and programs to better serve people with disabilities.

Libraries selected for round four will receive either \$10,000 or \$20,000 to support costs related to a community engagement project; virtual training to

CALENDAR

NOV.

International Games Month

bit.ly/ALA-igm

NOV. 12–14

Core Forum | Denver
coreforum.org

2026

ALA's 150th Anniversary
ala150.org

MAR. 16

Freedom of Information Day
bit.ly/FOI-Day

APR.

School Library Month
ala.org/aasl/slm

APR. 1–3

PLA 2026 Conference
Minneapolis
placonference.org

APR. 19–25

National Library Week
bit.ly/ALA-NLW

APR. 26–MAY 2

Preservation Week
preservationweek.org

APR. 30

Día: Children's Day/Book Day
dia.ala.org

JUNE

Rainbow Book Month
bit.ly/RBMonth

JUNE 25–29

ALA's 2026 Annual Conference and Exhibition | Chicago
alaannual.org

SEPT.

Library Card Sign-Up Month
bit.ly/LibCardSU

OCT.

TeenTober
ala.org/yalsa/teentober

OCT. 1–3

ALSC National Institute
Buffalo, New York
bit.ly/ALSC-Inst

assist project directors in developing their community engagement, facilitation, and disability service skills; a suite of online resources developed to support local programs; and technical and project support from ALA's Public Programs Office throughout the grant term.

Up to 300 libraries will be awarded in this final application period. Libraries that have been awarded in previous rounds of funding are eligible to apply, but applicants not previously awarded will be prioritized. Learn more, view previous grantees, and apply online at ala.org/LTCAccess by December 11.

IBPA Becomes an ALA Affiliate

At ALA's 2025 Annual Conference and Exhibition in Philadelphia, ALA Council voted to make the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA) an affiliate of the Association. ALA's Executive Board vetted the application to ensure

IBPA's mission and bylaws align with those of ALA.

IBPA is the largest association of publishers in the United States, with 3,500 members including traditional and hybrid independent publishers, university and nonprofit presses, and author-publishers.

ALA affiliate organizations work together to support common causes, expand outreach to underserved populations, diversify ALA membership, and provide benefits. Learn more about the affiliate program at ala.org/aboutala/affiliates.

Civic Collaboration with League of Women Voters

ALA and the League of Women Voters (LWV) have published *A Guide to Civic Collaboration*, a joint resource to inspire and support year-round civic programming in libraries.

A companion piece to the *Election Collaboration Toolkit* (bit.ly/ALA-ElectionCollab), the resource celebrates the joint efforts by local Leagues and libraries to ensure that their communities have information, tools, and access necessary to participate fully in civic life.

The new resource is available to all library and League supporters at bit.ly/ALA-CivicCollab.

ALA Scholarship Applications Open

In 2026, ALA will award more than \$300,000 in scholarship funds to students who are studying library science or school library media programs at the master's level at ALA-accredited institutions. Individual awards range from \$2,500 to \$8,000 per student per year.

The program includes awards for students who are specifically interested in children's librarianship, public librarianship, youth librarianship, federal librarianship, new media librarianship, and library automation. There are also scholarships available for people of color, people with disabilities, and people who are already employed in libraries but do not have a master's degree.

Applications for 2027 are open until March 1. Learn more at ala.org/scholarships.

GameRT Awards 2025 Game On! Grants

ALA's Games and Gaming Round Table (GameRT) announced the two recipients of its 2025 Game On! Grant: Johnsbury (Ill.) Public Library and Cook Library at University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

GameRT awards Game On! Grants annually: \$2,000 for a single recipient or \$1,000 for two recipients. The round table introduced the grant program in 2020 to help libraries develop gaming programs or collections for their community.

The grant expanded this year with support from Cards Against Humanity,

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	Mailed in-county paid subscriptions	0	0
	Paid distribution outside the mails	1,304	1,226
	Paid distribution by other classes of mail through the USPS	0	0
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	Percent paid	97.69%	95.06%

which is providing an additional \$1,000 in funding annually through 2029.

Learn more about the grants at bit.ly/ALA-GameOn25.

ALA Unveils All Nations LibGuide

The All Nations LibGuide, a presidential initiative of 2024–2025 ALA President Cindy Hohl, highlights the impact of Indigenous librarianship and the importance of serving the library and information needs of Indigenous and Native peoples.

The LibGuide collects resources that are primarily Indigenous-centric and includes scholarly works from allies and non-Native librarians in tribal and mainstream libraries. One of the included resources is the *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Toolkit and Resource Guide*. Access the guide at libguides.ala.org/allnations. AL

New Initiative to Strengthen Libraries as Literacy Centers

ALA, in collaboration with World Education, a division of JSI, announced eight libraries that will participate in the Libraries as Literacy Centers: Strengthening Libraries' Capacity to Meet Local Literacy Needs initiative.

The selected libraries, with funding from the Mellon Foundation, will serve as living laboratories for advancing community-based literacy models. The two-year process involves training, knowledge-sharing, and piloting scalable strategies for Library as Literacy Center, an ALA model that promotes direct program delivery, partner-supported instruction, and coordinated local ecosystem building. It will culminate in the creation of public-facing case studies documenting strategies, lessons learned, and pathways for future growth.





For the broader literacy field, this project will offer new models of sustainability and replicability. For the library community, it reinforces the role of libraries as information providers and catalysts for lifelong learning, equity, and community resilience.

Learn more about the program and see the list of selected libraries at bit.ly/ALA-literacy-centers. ●

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TRENDS



After a May 2024 cyberattack, Seattle Public Library's Central Library asked patrons to keep their physical books, CDs, and DVDs until their computer systems were running again.

Road to Recovery

Preparing for a ransomware attack and building a support network can improve library response

BY Cass Balzer

One morning in October 2023, an accountant at Orion Township (Mich.) Public Library (OTPL) saw something alarming in her accounting software: file names written in Cyrillic.

Within an hour, library leaders had been alerted to the suspicious activity, and the IT director had disconnected the servers, halting a ransomware attack mid-strike. "We caught them in the act," says OTPL Director Chase McMunn.

Worldwide, more than 15 million cyberattacks have been reported every year since 2020. At public institutions like libraries, these attacks often shut down core systems, compromise personal information of patrons and staff, and leave communities without access to certain services, all while demanding substantial resources to repair the damage.

Toronto Public Library (TPL) also faced a devastating breach in October 2023. Seattle Public Library (SPL) joined the list in May 2024. For

each, recovery was long, complicated, and costly, but their experiences offer lessons in how libraries can respond and rebuild.

The early hours

OTPL staffers caught the ransomware attack in progress and cut it short. Because the malware hadn't finished purging files before the servers were disconnected, recoverable copies in deleted folders allowed the library to restore systems within days.

When the immediate danger was clear, OTPL's cyber insurance plan became a lifeline. "Once I reached out to our insurance [provided by the Michigan Municipal League], things moved really quickly," McMunn says. The library was soon connected with legal experts in cybersecurity, who then initiated an investigation.

In Seattle, IT staffers first detected signs of an intrusion early on May 25, 2024. By 9 a.m., administrators had activated an incident command structure modeled on the Federal Emergency Management

Agency's National Incident Management System. They immediately engaged several outside consultants: Cybersecurity firms Critical Insight (a company SPL was already working with) and Alvaka helped identify and expel the attackers, two law firms—Mullen Coughlin and later Orrick—handled compliance and communication, and Charles River Associates managed data forensics.

"You need the expertise, and you most certainly need the manpower and the tools that they bring to the table," SPL Executive Director and Chief Librarian Tom Fay says about contracting outside assistance.

TPL's October 2023 attack also triggered a preexisting emergency plan. "It's a three-tiered structure," says Vickery Bowles, who recently retired as city librarian and led the system during the attack. Those tiers included the decision-making leadership team, the group that led the service recovery plan, and a team that managed frontline operations and internal communications. The city put TPL in touch with legal counsel, who clarified the library's legal obligations related to privacy and identity theft, helped to engage a technical consultant, and established legal privilege to ensure that private details shared with consultants remain protected from later disclosure.

Bouncing back

If the first hours were about urgency, the months that followed demanded endurance. Restoring services required enormous effort, often physical as well as digital.

At TPL, all 100 library branches remained open throughout the attack, even as digital systems went offline. Staff continued providing services, including manually checking out materials, which created a backlog of work that employees later needed to digitize. Once services had been fully restored in February 2024, staffers processed new library card registrations first, then worked through 1.4 million returns and renewals. While working to restore services, IT staff painstakingly quarantined and checked each library computer for malware.

SPL staff faced a similar set of challenges. More than 1,000 computers systemwide were reimaged, and tens of thousands of books piled up at the maintenance and operations center waiting for processing. Communication also required improvisation: Staffers received updates via printed memos, and an emergency phone line provided daily status reports.

Lessons learned

In the aftermath of their respective attacks, OTPL, SPL, and TPL point to a set of shared lessons. For example, demanding a ransom is common in ransomware attacks against public institutions, but legal experts often advise against paying. “Even if you paid the ransom, there’s no guarantee they’re going to destroy the data and not come back for more later,” Bowles says.

Structured response models were also vital for managing chaos. TPL had prepared for potential attacks by running tabletop exercises, which let staffers practice their roles in a simulated crisis. Cyber insurance gave OTPL a critical safety net, and transparent, fact-based communication preserved

“Even if you paid the ransom, there’s no guarantee they’re going to destroy the data and not come back for more later.”

VICKERY BOWLES, retired city librarian at Toronto Public Library

patron trust when systems, like the library’s website and county historical resources, were down.

All three libraries strengthened technical defenses after the attacks, including stronger firewalls, multifactor authentication, phishing simulations, and more robust intrusion detection. For TPL, the crisis even accelerated long-term digital priorities, Bowles says.

In addition, peer support can be an important recovery tool. Within days of attack at SPL, library leadership was on the phone with colleagues in Toronto and Boston, at the British Library, and in Singapore—all at institutions that had experienced ransomware incidents in recent years. Those conversations, Fay says, were both practical and reassuring, offering advice on recovery and a reminder that they weren’t alone.

“If a library system goes through it,” he says, “we’re always here to be on call if you have questions.”

A version of this article first appeared on americanlibraries.org on September 15, 2025. **AL**

CASS BALZER is a writer in Chicago.

BY THE NUMBERS



Sports

5 million

Approximate number of images depicting Indy 500 races and history preserved by the Indianapolis Motor Speedway (IMS) archive. IMS partnered with Indiana University Indianapolis Library to digitize its collection, which dates back to the IMS Company’s founding in 1909.

30,000

Number of objects—in addition to 40 million pages of documents—held at the Pro Football Hall of Fame’s Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center in Canton, Ohio. The archive has more than 100 scrapbooks,

game programs, and game summaries dating back to the early 20th century, as well as biographical files for current and former players and teams.

1966

Year that the Ernie Harwell Sports Collection—celebrating notable Black players in baseball, including those who played in the Negro Leagues—was

initially donated by sportscaster Ernie Harwell to Detroit Public Library. The by-appointment Harwell Display Room includes portions of the collection, seats from Tiger Stadium, and a mock broadcast booth.

140,000

Number of baseball cards housed at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum’s library and research center in Cooperstown, New York. ●



Sean Sherman

Award-winning chef's second cookbook highlights the diversity of Indigenous food



Sean Sherman, a member of the Oglala Lakota Sioux tribe and founder of the restaurant Owamni in Minneapolis, was not widely known in 2017, when he released his first cookbook, *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen*, with Beth Dooley. But since then, he has become perhaps the most recognizable Indigenous chef in the country, racking up James Beard Foundation and Julia Child awards for his food and advocacy and being named to *Time* magazine's 2023 Time100 list of most influential people.

His new cookbook, *Turtle Island: Foods and Traditions of the Indigenous Peoples of North America* (November, Clarkson Potter), written with Kate Nelson and Kristin Donnelly, takes a region-by-region approach to Native ingredients, history, and cooking. Sherman spoke with *American Libraries* about this extensive collection, his early influences, and his love for libraries.

BY Terra Dankowski

***Turtle Island* highlights the range of Indigenous foodways across North America. How did you get started with this ambitious project?**

I'd been thinking about next-step cookbooks for a while and doing something that could showcase the immense diversity of Indigenous cultures across North America and take away

MORE ONLINE

For the extended interview and a recipe, visit bit.ly/AL-Sherman after November 3.

these colonial borders and just look at the land space. We're not trying to go backwards and show how people were cooking in 1491. We're looking at a modern viewpoint of where we are today.

How do we take this knowledge of plants, of agriculture, of proteins and tell a story? It's such a big, ambitious project, yes, but it also barely scratches the surface. We had to trim way back. I think we turned in over 220,000 words for just the draft.

This book presents a lot of decolonized history and really asserts that Indigenous history is American history. What are you

hoping readers take away from these passages? We're seeing a lot of aggression because of the political theater that's happening in our country. There's just a lot of demonization of not only DEI [diversity, equity, and inclusion] but people of color in history. They're trying to whitewash an already very whitewashed history. So it's really important to be very straightforward with historical facts.

I hope that people can have this opportunity to be lured in by this beautiful food and actually learn something and maybe, hopefully, develop some empathy where there might not have been. I'm also hoping that it opens people's eyes to their regions, because the US food system has been so homogenized. Typically, you stop at any restaurant along an interstate, and it's the same menu everywhere you go. We could have a much deeper understanding of region if we included indigeneity in the whole storyline.

Were there any writings that affected how you approach food?

[Italian cooking writer] Marcella Hazan was one of my main influences. I read a lot of [Auguste] Escoffier and all those things too, but those didn't appeal to me as much. A lot of that was built for kings and queens, whereas the country-style cooking was what people were eating out there in different regions. Italy showcases that so beautifully, so I really connected with that regional and seasonal and simplistic aspect.

What role have libraries played in your life?

I grew up not having access to a library on the reservation. When we moved to the small town of Spearfish [in South Dakota], and my mom was going back to college, I would spend my time with her at the library. That was an amazing world of so much knowledge. Understanding the power of the internet for the first time, right? I felt like I had access to everything. **AL**

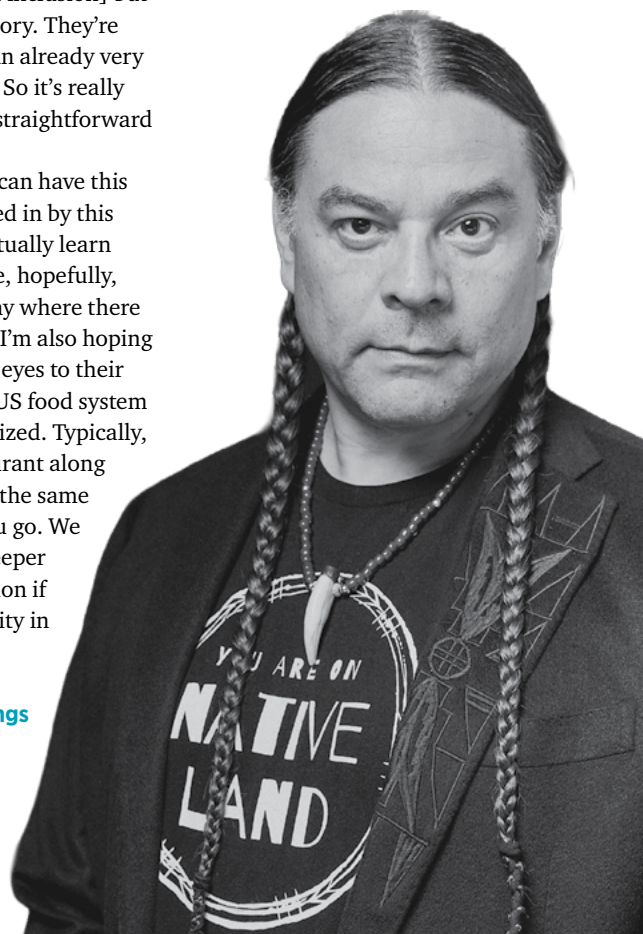


Photo: David Alvarado



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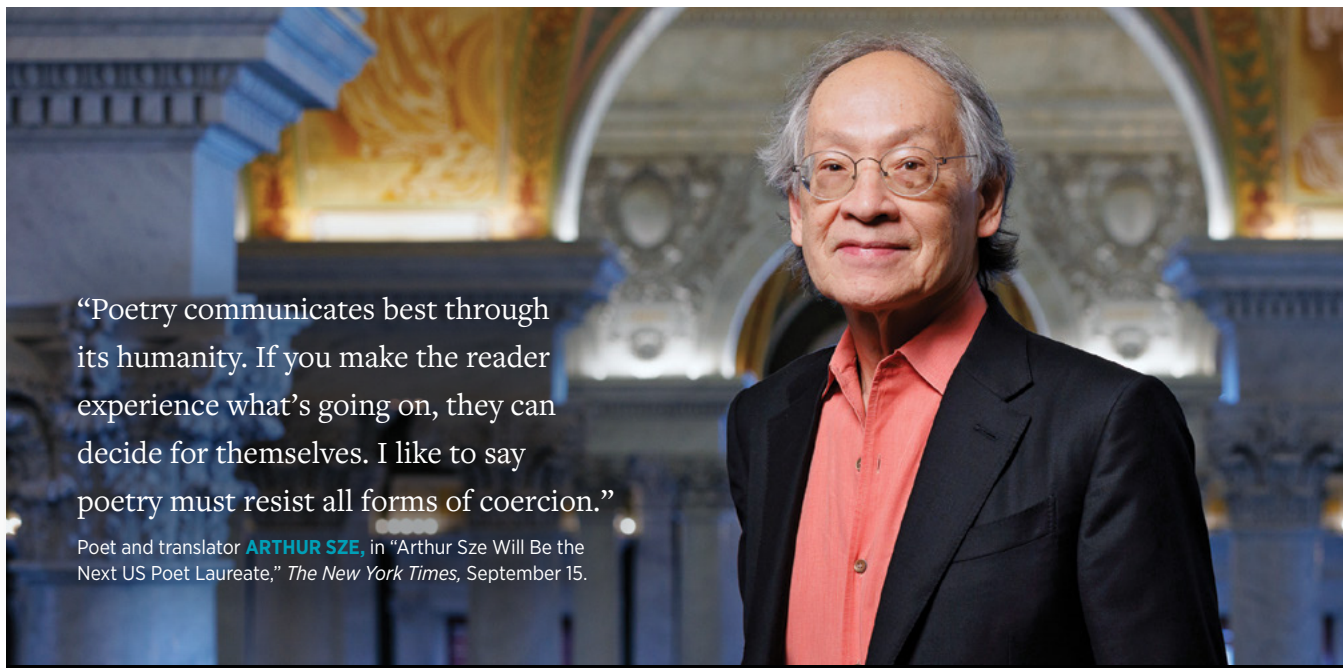
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"PLA Conferences are the best opportunity for connection, learning, support, and inspiration. I earnestly wish it were every year. It's that good." - 2025 Public Library Field Survey Participant



“Poetry communicates best through its humanity. If you make the reader experience what’s going on, they can decide for themselves. I like to say poetry must resist all forms of coercion.”

Poet and translator **ARTHUR SZE**, in “Arthur Sze Will Be the Next US Poet Laureate,” *The New York Times*, September 15.

“A cluster of teens reading quietly is called a mystery. A pile of books gathering dust is called a hold shelf. A handful of change is called a budget.”

Writer **SALLY MILLER**, “Collective Nouns for Librarians,” *McSweeney’s Internet Tendency*, August 19.

“The reality is that suggesting books is just a small part of what I do. I’ve helped people set up hearing aids, cancel an \$80-a-month Hulu subscription that their husband with dementia had accidentally signed up for, and apply to work at Taco Bell.”

KATIE WALSH, Boston-area public librarian, “I’m a Librarian, Therapist, Personal Assistant, and First Responder. Moments like This Make It All Worth It,” *Slate*, September 14.

“GREAT COUNTRIES DON’T HIDE FROM THEIR HISTORY. THEY LEARN FROM IT, AND WHEN NECESSARY, THEY CONFRONT IT.”

ALAN SPEARS, National Parks Conservation Association historian, in “Books about Slavery Could Be Removed from National Park Service Museums, Gift Shops,” *NPR: Morning Edition*, September 16.

“Shout-out to the librarian Merrill at West Regional Library, who was many of our first dungeon masters as kids, running brutal old-school 1st-edition *Dungeons & Dragons* games for local teens in the quiet Florida evenings.”

Hugo Award-winning game creator **BRIAN BUCKLEW**, @unormal.bsky.social on Bluesky, September 15.

“A decade ago, when the government of Singapore announced its decision to pulp every copy of our picture book, *And Tango Makes Three*, in the nation’s libraries, we felt profoundly lucky. Not for the pulping—that was alarming—but for the fact that the First Amendment guaranteed that this could never happen in America. We’re not feeling quite so lucky anymore.”

Children’s book authors **JUSTIN RICHARDSON** and **PETER PARNELL**, “The Dangerous Legal Strategy Coming for Our Books,” *The Atlantic*, August 20.



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STATE OF PLAY

Roll into International Games Month

Games—whether of the board, video, or trivia variety—help people connect, escape, and learn. Information professionals see the transformative power of games firsthand in their libraries through programs and events, instruction, patron recommendations, and outreach.

In honor of International Games Month, held every November, these pages center games and gaming as community-building, teaching, and self-improvement tools. Learn how libraries are developing tabletop role-playing games (p. 17) and using new adaptive technologies to make videogames more accessible for all (p. 18). Check out the 2025 Platinum Play, or “Platy,” Hall of Fame inductees (p. 20)—games honored by the American Library Association’s (ALA) Games and Gaming Round Table. And read our interview with archivist Adriana Harmeyer (p. 22), the winningest library professional to compete on the game show *Jeopardy!*

For more *American Libraries* coverage on games and gaming, visit bit.ly/AL-games. 



JAM FOREVER

Creating tabletop role-playing games in the library

BY Carrie Smith

What do you need for a game jam? “Two tables. Done,” says Danielle Costello, student success librarian at University of Georgia Libraries in Athens.

While game jams—accelerated game creation events—started as a way to develop videogames, they’re also useful for creating tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs). The best-known TTRPGs, like *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Pathfinder*, and *Call of Cthulhu*, include rule books that can run to hundreds of pages and have steep price tags, but there are a host of smaller, independently developed games with simple and shareable systems. At the Games and Gaming Round Table (GameRT) President’s Session, “Creating

Role-Playing Games in the Library,” at ALA’s 2023 Annual Conference and Exhibition in Chicago, panelists shared ways for libraries to host game jams to help students and patrons of all ages create games.

TTRPGs have grown in popularity in recent years as they’ve become more visible through streaming and social media. That’s not the only reason for strong interest, though: Collaborative storytelling gives players agency and control in the world, “which is something a lot of our patrons really need right now,” Costello said.

Why create games instead of just playing them? Game jams open up the process of game development and make it more accessible, Costello said, adding that “the act of creation itself is a wonderful process for your patrons to get into.” Game jams are cheap (or even free) to host, and can promote literacy, community building, and partnerships.

Continued on page 19 ▶



Patrons play the videogame *Rocket League* at an open-house-style Adaptive Arcade event at Deerfield (Ill.) Public Library.

ADAPTIVE ARCADE

Library program makes
videogames accessible to all

by Greg Landgraf

Growing up, Steve Spohn’s primary way to connect with others was through videogames. Diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy as an infant, Spohn spent significant time in the hospital as a child.

“The only way to reach out to the world was through this very cool gaming setup that the hospital would bring into the room,” he recalled. An in-game friend “became my solace in a place where every day they were hurting me and I was scared.”

Spohn, director of the Mount Sinai Back to Life Center in New York City and former chief operating officer of AbleGamers, and Vicki Karlovsky, inclusion coordinator at Deerfield (Ill.) Public Library (DPL), discussed how libraries can bring that experience to a wider audience in “Adaptive Arcade at the Library: Videogames Are for Everyone.” The session was part of ALA’s 2025 Annual Conference and Exhibition in Philadelphia.

DPL partnered with AbleGamers to host an open-house-style Adaptive Arcade event, featuring a PlayStation 5, a Nintendo Switch, and a gaming PC for use with games such as *Rocket League* and the Mario Kart series.

“Libraries are community hubs,” Karlovsky said. She added that NPR has reported an estimated 46 million gamers with disabilities in the US. “They’re living in the communities we serve, whether we’re aware of them or not.

“There are many ways to customize [controllers] for adaptive gaming,” Karlovsky noted, including homemade options and commercial ones—such as PlayStation Access and Logitech adaptive controllers, each of which costs \$80 to \$100. The library also 3D-printed several assistive devices for its open house.

DPL hosted the event in its large meeting room, which offered space for all three gaming stations as well as a 3D-printing demonstration and displays. Space accessibility is an important, potentially overlooked concern, Karlovsky observed. She also recommended offering a sensory break area, saying, “This is a raucous program, so it can be a bit overstimulating for anybody.”

Both speakers emphasized that hosting an event like this doesn’t require a lot of experience.

“With the exception of the AbleGamers reps, none of us were experts,” Karlovsky said. “We were just enthusiastic and eager to learn.”

“It’s good to have great organizations to reach out to for help, but the truth is that it’s not necessary,” Spohn added. Experts in online gaming accessibility that he recommends include Radderss, Liana Ruppert, and DeafGamersTV.

Karlovsky acknowledged that reaching people with disabilities, particularly

Deerfield (Ill.)
Public Library
3D-printed assistive
devices for
controllers.



those who are not library users and may have had bad experiences with inaccessible libraries in the past, can be a challenge. But the successes are worth it. She shared an anecdote from another program where DPL brought accessible videogames to a local organization she often worked with.

"IT'S NOT ABOUT THE GAME, IT'S ABOUT THE CONNECTION."

STEVE SPOHN, director of the Mount Sinai Back to Life Center in New York City

"There was one person who had never been a gamer, but he tried *Rocket League*. As soon as he pressed the button and the car lurched forward, his whole face lit up," Karlovsky recalled. "I'd never seen him this animated before."

As Spohn emphasized: "It's not about the game, it's about the connection."

A version of this article first appeared on americanlibraries.org on June 29, 2025. •

◀ Continued from page 17

You don't have to be a game designer to run a game jam at your library, said Rebecca Strang, outreach and engagement librarian at North Central College's Oesterle Library in Naperville, Illinois. You can partner with local game developers, game shops, and even your library's makerspace. And game jams are not just for adults, Strang added: "I've run game jams for 3rd-graders."

Many existing TTRPGs have system reference documents that help developers create modules or extensions for those games. You can also host a free-form creative process or use open-ended structure suggestions.

"Business card game jams"—at which people develop a game with rules short enough to fit on a standard business card—"are some of my favorites," Strang said.

"As an academic tool, games are this beautiful conflagration of many different ideas from books, from movies, from other games," said Russell Brandon, customer service specialist at the Pasco branch of Mid-Columbia Libraries in Washington. It's important for creators to credit their sources and influences, not just for legal and copyright reasons. "[Sharing these influences can] allow for people who play your games to experience the same sort of mindset that you were in when you're thinking about designing, and that can really create a much more genuine experience," he said.

Remixing and reimagining the TTRPG experience is not just limited to fantasy; exploring history, pop culture, and modern ideas is very exciting, Costello said. "You're playing against the gatekeeping of the concept of what is a game and what isn't," she said. Many people have the impression that TTRPGs as a medium are only for fantasy and war games, and "that can be really hard to get past."

Creativity and learning can continue after the end of the jam. The games patrons and students create can be tied into many library functions, such as publishing, archiving, and cataloging, Brandon said. You can create a game that can go into circulation at your library. And, he noted, you can hold more game jams: "Always be jamming. Jam forever."

A version of this article first appeared on americanlibraries.org on June 25, 2023. •



2025 PLATY HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

ALA's Games and Gaming Round Table (GameRT) announced in April its second cohort of classic titles—games that are more than 10 years old—to be included in the Classics Hall of Fame for its Platinum Play Award (the “Platy”). GameRT’s Awards Committee chose these titles based on their historical and ongoing excellence for library use, whether in collections or programs. Board games, card games, videogames, tabletop games, and games in other formats are eligible. For more information on the Platys, as well as a link to the nomination form, visit bit.ly/AL-Platys.

The 2025 inductees are:

CAR WARS

Now in its sixth edition, the tabletop combat simulation game *Car Wars* has a simple premise:

Each player has a heavily armed and customized vehicle, and the last one standing is the winner. The game has a rich history of add-ons and support; a library can create a very impressive setup and acquire expansion sets to increase options available to the players. The

newest edition also prioritizes learnability and quick starts, making the game well suited for library programs.



TICKET TO RIDE

With rules simple enough to fit on a train ticket, this elegant and highly engaging board game is easy to learn—but full of strategic choices. Play-

ers collect train cards to claim routes across the map, aiming to complete longer paths for more points while blocking rivals from key connections.

The game builds tension as players manage limited trains, with the final round triggered when a player’s supply runs low. Over the years, numerous editions have been released, each featuring a unique map and new challenges.

Photos: ©Valery Veernyy/Adobe Stock (Ticket to Ride); ©Girts Ragelis/Adobe Stock (Madden NFL); ©WireStock/Adobe Stock (Uno)

ZORK

One of the first widely popular games for the 1980s PC market, *Zork* set the mold for text-based computer adventure games. The player (or group of players working together) assumes the role of an explorer in an underground empire, collecting treasure and fighting monsters by solving puzzles and overcoming obstacles. Smart, funny writing and a magical sense of immersion have kept *Zork* a fan favorite for decades.

You don't need a 1980s-era IBM machine to play *Zork* today, as text-game enthusiasts have migrated it to the internet for current fans to enjoy. Searching "play *Zork* online" will identify several free sites that host interactive fiction. Or, for the truly nostalgic, eBay offers many copies of *Zork* on floppy disks and other legacy formats.



MADDEN NFL

Launched in 1988 for the Apple II (and now purchasable via digital download), Electronic Arts' Madden NFL videogame franchise is one of the most popular and enduring ever released. Players take control of NFL teams in realistic simulated football games, calling plays, managing rosters, and competing in full seasons or single matches.

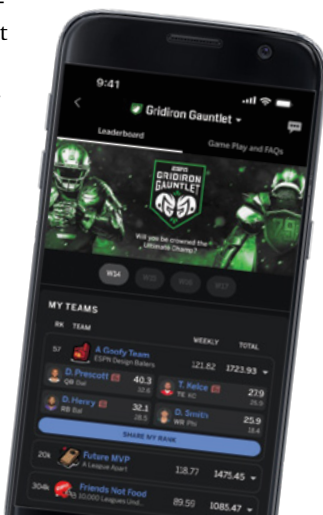
Online multiplayer mode allows fans to challenge friends or players around the world. Madden games get yearly updates to reflect changes in team lineups and new gameplay features.



ESPN FANTASY SPORTS

On *ESPN Fantasy Sports*' online platform (espn.com/fantasy), players act as the manager of a virtual sports team. They create their roster by drafting players, making trades, and signing free agents, all based on real-world athletes. Teams are placed

in leagues that play a regular season, with each team's weekly score based on how their chosen players perform in actual games. At the end of the season, the highest-ranked teams advance to the playoffs, a single-elimination tournament that decides the league champion. This appealing game combines strategy, competition, and real-world sports knowledge, letting players test their decision-making skills while enjoying friendly rivalries.



UNO

In this fast-paced card game, players try to discard all their cards first by matching colors or numbers. Special action cards—like Skip,

Reverse, Draw Two, and Wild—add surprise and strategy. If a player can't make a match, they must draw a card, lending even

more tension to the race to discard. *Uno*'s simple rules make it easy to learn, while its mix of luck and tactics keeps it exciting. *Uno* has inspired more than 35 variants and countless themed editions. ●



Jeopardy! host Ken Jennings (left) with contestant Adriana Harmeyer

ADRIANA HARMEYER

Archivist and *Jeopardy!* super champion
on what it takes to beat the buzzer

by Anne Ford

With total earnings of \$441,600, Adriana Harmeyer, clinical associate professor and archivist for university history at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, is the winningest library professional ever to have appeared on the legendary game show *Jeopardy!*

Harmeyer—who holds the 12th-longest consecutive winning streak of any player on the show—spoke with *American Libraries* about her longtime love of the game, her least favorite category, and how she blazed her path to the 2025 *Jeopardy!* Masters tournament.

As an adolescent, you auditioned for the *Jeopardy!* Teen Tournament and weren't selected. And now you're one of fewer than 20 *Jeopardy!* "super champions," meaning players who have won 10 or more games. Yeah, I'm okay with how it worked out.

How did you first get on the show? Even as a kid, I always liked learning, and I always liked trivia. I had the *Jeopardy!* CD-ROM game, and I played it so often that over the years, I learned all of it.

Then one day I randomly decided to take the Anytime Test [to get on the show], which is available on the *Jeopardy!* website. I had no expectations, because thousands of people take this test every year. I got a high enough score that I was invited to an audition in June 2023, and then it was March 2024 when I got the call.

How did that initial game go? I definitely struggled at first to get in on the buzzer. My friends and family were very anxious watching it because I just wasn't getting to answer in the first 10 clues, even though I was trying. Over the course of that game, I kind of made my peace with the fact that this just might not work out for me. Then there was a wordplay category that really helped me, and a cookbook category. Of course, any kind of book category is going to be good for me. I started thinking, "Okay, I'm doing all right." Only near the end did it even seem like a possibility that I could win. My first day, I won three games.

Then I had to come back in a month to tape again. That's when I played 13 games in about 50 hours. The 13th one is when I lost. I was really tired; I know I wasn't as sharp as I might have been two days earlier. I just had to accept that I'd been in this marathon and now it had come to an end. But I also knew that I could be proud of what I'd done, and I became a *Jeopardy!* super champion. I can't complain about a thing, you know?

And then you got to go back for the Tournament of Champions, which aired

in January and February of this year. Yes, if you win five or more episodes, you're guaranteed a slot. I had several months to prepare. I watched the show every day to see who the competition was going to be. I started doing a lot more reading, a lot broader reading, doing some flashcards. I found little niche areas I could stand to learn more about, like all the constitutional amendments, or classical composers. I learned a lot about sports. That is not one of my strengths, but I'm better at it now than I was.

How did your approach during the Tournament of Champions differ from that of your initial foray on the show? In my original run, I didn't really have a solid strategy around the gameplay at first. I just wanted to go in and play the game and have fun. As it intensified, I knew I had to be ready for other players who were going to be strategizing. There was a

lot more attention to looking for the Daily Doubles and taking advantage of those. With the Daily Doubles, you're trying to maximize your own winnings, but also, by getting it, you're keeping it away from the other players. So even if it's not your forte, at least you can guarantee nobody else is getting that shot.

There are a lot of strategies [regarding wagering] depending on who's in the lead, how far behind second place is, how far behind third place is, how confident you are in the category. My goal was always to try to have scores that didn't require too much math.

I met my goal of making it to the finals, and I appreciated that. I assumed that going to the Masters tournament wasn't going to be an option for me [after coming in as co-runner-up in the Tournament of Champions final], but the producers decided to expand the field so that all three finalists from the Tournament of

Champions would be there. That was a very pleasant surprise.

How does it feel to be the winningest library professional on Jeopardy!? I am delighted and honored to have that title. There's a reason we see so many librarians and archivists on the show. I think we all just have a love of knowledge and learning, and it's really exciting to have an outlet and a platform for that. I wasn't necessarily thinking going in that I might be a face of our profession, but I'm honored to have done that, and hopefully done it well.

I really enjoy being there, and I enjoy playing the game, but it's also nice to not have it in the back of my mind. I can watch movies and read books because I want to, and not have a voice in my mind saying, "Oh, that might be something they ask about on Jeopardy!"

A version of this article first appeared on americanlibraries.org on May 12, 2025. •

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Find out more!



Professional Development Is a Wellness Program

Employees' overall well-being leads to a thriving workforce

by Donald W. Crankshaw

Traditional professional development plans in libraries may satisfy organizational or certification needs but do not necessarily satisfy employees' needs, wants, and interests. What if we put employees' needs and wants center stage by looking at professional development through the lens of an employee well-being program? A well-being program is an investment in the whole person, not just the part that is an employee, and therefore the concept of professional development can easily be built into a well-being program.

WELLNESS AND WELL-BEING

The terms *wellness* and *well-being* are often used interchangeably. However, well-being includes social, spiritual, and other dimensions that go beyond standard definitions of wellness.

Wellness programs promote healthy lifestyles and disease mitigation or prevention. They concentrate on physical and mental health through programs that promote exercise, improved eating habits, smoking cessation, and regular health checkups.

Wellness programs are intended to produce fewer health care claims, lower health care plan premiums, reduced absenteeism, and increased productivity; better health for the employee is treated as secondary at best, though many employers might balk at that assessment.

On the other hand, robust well-being programs—those that go beyond traditional wellness programs—also provide cost savings and increase productivity, and they help ensure a sense of inclusion and belonging for employees, which in turn improves employee retention. The primary focus should be employees' overall well-being for the employees' sake, which will lead to a vibrant, thriving workforce.

Bill Hettler, physician and former director of the University Health Service at University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, cofounded the Institute for Lifestyle Improvement (now the National Wellness Institute). In 1980, Hettler wrote in the journal *Family and Community Health* about a model of wellness he developed that includes six dimensions: intellectual, emotional, physical, social, occupational, and spiritual. Many organizations have added environmental and financial dimensions, bringing the total to eight.

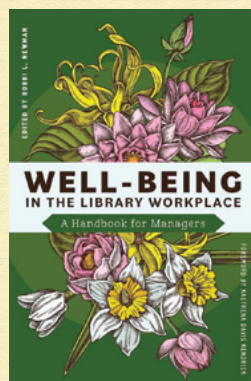
To ensure a complete and effective employee well-being program, strive to include these eight dimensions:

Physical. Physical activity and healthy habits. The core of traditional wellness programs, this aspect involves encouraging exercise and other physical actions to prevent illness, injury, and chronic health problems. Traditional programs use this wellness component to engender cost savings and reduce absenteeism.

Emotional. A sense of coping with life and having good relationships with others. Traditional programs would call this component mental health and limit it to employee assistance programs that treat mental health issues. That is certainly part of emotional wellness, but a well-being program is so much more; it also fosters a sense of well-being both within and outside the organization.

Social. A sense of belonging and connection. With regard to employment, social wellness is not just about being part of an organization. It is the feeling that once you are there, you belong within the organization. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs often stop short of inclusion and don't do enough to encourage belonging. As consultant and speaker Vernā Myers said about DEI during a 2015 TED talk, "Diversity is being asked to the party, but inclusion is being asked to dance."

Environmental. The practice of working in surroundings that are encouraging, stimulating, and pleasant. This includes the ergonomics of workstations, for example, but it also involves making sure that the workplace is friendly and accommodating.



This is an excerpt from *Well-Being in the Library Workplace: A Handbook for Managers*, edited by Bobbi L. Newman (ALA Editions, 2025).

Spiritual. Spiritual wellness is not about religious activities, though this may be part of it for an individual employee. Spirituality is about having a purpose and encouraging ethical behavior. Organizational ethics statements and other policies that promote an open and honest relationship with employees and patrons are important here, but most important is how the behaviors those create affect employees.

Financial. The ability to achieve and control one's individual finances in the present and the future. This includes equitable wages and benefits as well as financial education about organizational opportunities (pensions, retirement savings) and personal financial education.

Intellectual. The ability of employees to recognize and expand their creativity, capabilities, talents, knowledge, and skills. Individuals succeed when they are able to use their innate and learned skills and talents—and nurture others' ability to do the same.

Occupational. Employees' satisfaction in the work they do. Satisfaction is not defined by the organization's standards but by employees' ability to find fulfillment in their own work.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS PART OF WELL-BEING

When professional development is part of an overall well-being program, it provides intellectual wellness and occupational wellness, and it can influence the other aspects of wellness. An established professional development program within a well-being program will help retain employees because of their satisfaction with the position and the employer, and it will help recruit new, valuable employees.

To obtain and retain a high-performing and professional staff, libraries must invest in staff development, even if that means the individual may not stay with the organization over the long term. Hire that newly degreed MLIS graduate for a position in which they can get the experience they will need to move on to the next position—even if it is not in your library. This is a win-win-win situation: You get to try out the new employee; the employee gets the experience needed; and if they stay, that's great, but if they leave for another library, the profession wins by getting an experienced librarian. In other words, prepare your employees to move on to their next best

thing, whether your organization can provide that opportunity or not.

If you decide that professional development should be part of your wellness or well-being plan, be prepared for push-back. It's hard for staff members and leadership to accept change, as we all know, and many will see this as a radical move that does not benefit the library.

Reactions may be split between traditionalist librarians and more forward-thinking ones who understand both the importance of the individual and the importance of furthering the profession and the library community at large.

Of course, there is always the problem of funding. Professional development is seldom well funded and is often one

of the first budget line items to be cut. Positioning it as part of well-being may receive better support because it avoids the misconception that professional development funding is used to select individuals to attend a conference as a privilege or reward.

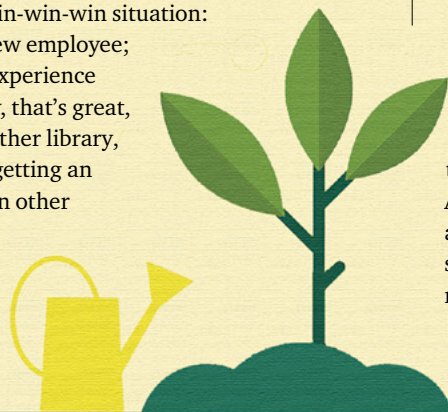
Working with the funding you have at hand or are

anticipating also allows you to be creative when approving employee development requests for something the employee is interested in or passionate about. I have approved payment for a short course or seminar, with the employee paying for supplies. I have approved a weekend-long retreat for which the employee is responsible for expenses but is allowed to count the retreat as work time. Always make sure that you comply with state and federal wage and hour laws.

WHERE TO START?

First, a professional development plan is not about goal setting, nor is it a succession plan—although it is adjacent to both. Goal-setting plans are specific job-related goals that are quantifiable and have a short- or long-term timeline. A succession plan is designed to train the employee to assume a predetermined future position's requirements and responsibilities. Nor is a professional development plan a tuition reimbursement plan, though that certainly may be part of it.

Satisfaction is not defined by the organization's standards but by employees' ability to find fulfillment in their own work.



To be successful and offer the employee autonomy, a professional development plan should be determined by the employee's interests, ambitions, and occupational desires. It should be structured collaboratively with the employee and manager, with a review for funding approval.

We have developed a learning road map with paths, or learning stops, that the employee envisions with input from their supervisor or an identified coach. The road map is a plan for how the employee can reach their dream or achieve their learning goals. It is a series of learning goals to be achieved on the employee's pathway to success. While a road map needs to relate to the work of the organization, it may not pertain to a specific position and may be measurable in either qualitative or quantitative ways.

To develop a learning road map, the employee should think about the following:

- What do I want to learn? Why is it important to me?
- What is the first learning stop or step? What do I want to do first?
- Who are the people who want to help me? What community do I need to reach out to? What resources are available?
- How will I know when I am finished? How will I know when I have learned what I want to know? What does success look like?

Example of a learning road map: "I want to become the person to whom people go with questions about adult literacy."

Not an example of a learning road map: "Within six months, I will increase the number of books I read by 50%."

Here are a few examples of learning road maps we have approved:

A library branch's customer service representative (a full-time circulation clerk) wanted to take belly-dancing lessons. She explained she would use that skill to conduct weekly exercise classes for patrons at the library. She documented what she wanted to achieve, how and when she would take the class, the cost, and how the request supported the library's goal of contributing to a healthy community. Her request for funding was approved—it was not expensive—and she completed the training on her own time. She went on to conduct weekly belly-dance exercise sessions at her branch.

A readers' advisory staff member at our central library requested tuition assistance for a certification in therapeutic poetry composition. She documented what she wanted to achieve, the time frame, and the cost, and related it to our programs for teens and at-risk youth. We approved some tuition assistance and some work time for the training. She achieved the certification and began to work with our teens. She ultimately moved on to another organization, but her work with the library benefited many patrons.

A children's assistant asked to attend an out-of-state workshop on the drawing and painting of insects. She is an artist and has done many art programs. She documented what she wanted to achieve, the time commitment and cost, and how it related to her position as well as to the library's newly redesigned children's garden. We approved the workshop cost and time, and she assumed the travel and accommodation costs.

Professional development plans should be individualized and encourage both learning (intellectual wellness) and skills development (occupational wellness), but they will likely impact other aspects of wellness as well. The onus should be on the employee to determine what they want to achieve and how to achieve it, the budget needed, how a manager can assist, and how the plan relates to departmental or overall library goals.

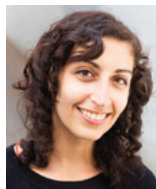
Restructuring your professional development program as part of a well-being program will change employees' sense of belonging in the organization and encourage professional and personal growth. It will improve work satisfaction, retention levels, and productivity; encourage new programming; reduce wasted development funding; attract new employees; and, yes, improve employees' wellness and well-being. [AL](#)



DONALD W. CRANKSHAW, retired, has more than 30 years of human resources, organizational development, and diversity, equity, and inclusion experience, with the last 13 years at Evansville (Ind.) Vanderburgh Public Library. He continues his work as a consultant and recruiter for libraries and organizations that support libraries, and he cofacilitates community leadership programs.

Ready for a Refresh

Innovative programming ideas to better engage patrons



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



Advancing a Culture of Creativity in Libraries: Programming and Engagement

By Megan Lotts

As Lotts puts it, library workers must engage their communities and plan innovative spaces and services for the future “all the while assuming that the future will almost certainly come with a 10%–20% budget cut.” This volume helps employees develop and maintain their creativity despite fiscal circumstances, with chapters that praise the importance of play, invite collaboration, and offer case studies looking at Lego, zines, button-making, and more. Each example details the program’s inspiration and cost, how staffers came up with funding for the event, and specific program details and outcomes. ALA Editions, 2021. 128 p. \$54.99. PBK. 978-0-8389-4947-4.



The Big Sourcebook of Free and Low-Cost Library Programming: 300+ Resources, Ideas, and Tools

By Ellyssa Kroski

Often, library programming needs to be interesting enough to draw people in but also fit into tiny budgets. This text serves as a directory to all sorts of resources that can aid in cost-conscious planning. Chapters provide resources for different age ranges and program types (for example, STEM or passive programs). They also highlight grant opportunities, marketing resources (such as design software), program assessment tools, and professional development opportunities. Ideas are presented in succinct paragraphs that take the sleuthing out of searching. ALA Editions, 2024. 144 p. \$19.99. Ebook. 978-0-8389-3969-7.



Inspiring Teens, Tweens, and Families to Make a Difference in the World: Programming to Advance the Sustainable Development Goals

By Amanda Moss Struckmeyer

This collection provides ideas for programs to help communities promote sustainability. Specifically, each chapter focuses on one of the 17 United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals—for example, Good Health and Well-Being, Quality Education, and Climate Action. Each program idea comes with a name and multiple activity suggestions. Book recommendations are also given where appropriate. It’s the kind of guide that librarians can grab if they want easy inspiration for meaningful programming that will engage families and older kids. ALA Editions, 2025. 144 p. \$44.99. PBK. 979-8-89255-322-3.

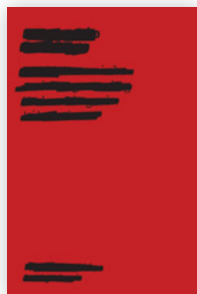
BY Rachel Rosenberg



The Library as Playground: How Games and Play Are Reshaping Public Culture

By Dale Leorke and Danielle Wyatt

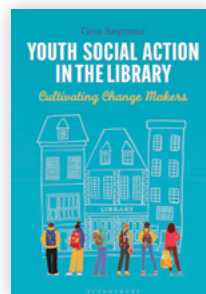
The public library's evolution from silent sanctuary to activity hub has involved the addition of gaming areas, chess sets, recording booths, makerspaces, teen zones, and even augmented building architecture at times. *The Library as Playground* demonstrates how embracing adaptation has kept libraries from becoming obsolete. It isn't a practical guide but an ethnographic study, explaining the history of games and play in broader culture and the library space. The book analyzes the benefits of this shift while exploring the myriad reasons why libraries have embraced it. Photographs demonstrate how libraries use design elements to encourage play. Rowman & Littlefield, 2022. 168 p. \$40. PBK. 978-1-5381-6433-4. (Also available as an ebook.)



Censorship Is a Drag: LGBTQ Materials and Programming under Siege in Libraries


Edited by Jason D. Phillips and Jordan Ruud

It's frustrating that we need a book about challenges to LGBTQ+ materials and programming in 2025. But *Censorship Is a Drag* serves as both an essential documentation of the current climate and a toolkit for librarians looking for practical advice in dealing with it. If you are planning LGBTQ+ programming for adults or children, there is likely to be pushback. The text goes into detail about how modern-day queer censorship is successfully implemented through stochastic terrorism and amplified by social media algorithms. The articles compiled provide much-needed guidance. Library Juice Press, 2025. 396 p. \$65. PBK. 978-1-63400-151-9.



Youth Social Action in the Library: Cultivating Change Makers

By Gina Seymour

This handbook supports teacher-librarians and public librarians as they create programs, activities, and collaborative projects to inform and inspire young people interested in social action. Seymour explains why librarians should model empathy, critical thinking skills, and civic engagement. She gives examples of doing this in small ways—for instance, using reusable water bottles—and in bigger ways, like collection development choices and book displays. She provides tips on respectfully disagreeing with people, such as factoring tone and body language into the equation. There is also a wealth of supplemental resources, including how-to guides, self-care information for youth, and lesson plans. Bloomsbury Libraries Unlimited, 2025. 248 p. \$49.95. PBK. 978-1-4408-7037-8. (Also available as an ebook.) 

PEOPLE

Announcements

ON THE MOVE

In June **Mary Aagard** became head of collections and resource description at University of Utah's J. Willard Marriott Library in Salt Lake City.

Nicolle Davies joined Denver Public Library as city librarian and executive director in August.



July 21 **Stephanie Fletcher** became head of collection management at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's John M. Flaxman Library.

Amy Hathaway joined Binghamton (N.Y.) University Libraries as director for access services effective August 28.

Alexia Hudson-Ward started as university librarian and dean of the library at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., August 30.



Nancy S. Kirkpatrick joined Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, as dean of libraries in August.



In August **Mairelys Lemus-Rojas** became head of digital scholarship at University of Central Florida Libraries in Orlando.

July 14 **Thi Lettner** joined University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries as music and performing arts librarian.

Leo S. Lo was appointed university librarian and dean of libraries at University of Virginia in Charlottesville effective September 15.



In August **Brian Mathews** became dean and university librarian at Elon (N.C.) University's Carol Grotnes Belk Library.

Kudos

Kate Horan, director of McAllen (Tex.) Public Library, received the 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Texas Library Association in April. On June 5, US Rep. Monica De La Cruz (R-Texas) formally recognized Horan's career and award on the House floor.

In June, **Terri Summerfield**, director of Clearwater County (Idaho) Free Library District, was awarded the Idaho State Historical Society's Esto Perpetua Award for preserving Idaho history. ●

Robert H. McDonald joined University of Texas at Austin Libraries as senior vice provost and director August 16.

July 14 **David Richards** became dean of Missouri State University Libraries in Springfield.

Kevin Seeber started as senior assistant dean for research, learning, and access services at Binghamton (N.Y.) University Libraries September 11.

PROMOTIONS

June 3 **Eric Castro** was promoted to city librarian at Carpinteria (Calif.) Community Library.

Anthony Cortez was promoted to executive director of Rockford (Ill.) Public Library August 6.

August 1 **Machelle Hill** was promoted to director of Coweta Public Library System in Newnan, Georgia.

Moe Hosseini-Ara was promoted to city librarian at Toronto Public Library effective September 1.

July 1 **Jonas Lamb** was promoted to access services and open education librarian and professor of library science at University of Alaska Southeast in Juneau.

RETIREMENTS

Brian Auger retired as director of Somerset County Library System of New Jersey July 31.

July 31 **Jimmy Bass** retired as director of Coweta Public Library System in Newnan, Georgia.

Jodi Fick retired as director of Siouxland Libraries in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, June 20.

In August **Harriette Hemmasi** retired as dean of the library at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Ebba Hierta retired as director of Chilmarmark (Mass.) Free Public Library July 1.

Ann Marie Jinkins retired as Rochelle (Ill.) Township High School librarian in May.


July 25 **Kim Kroll** retired as director of library services from Lena Armstrong Public Library in Belton, Texas.

Joseph Logue retired as library director of Newport (R.I.) Public Library July 16.

June 21 **Jean Lythgoe** retired as librarian assistant at Rockford (Ill.) Public Library, after 60 years with the library.

Jody Thomas retired as city librarian of Carpinteria (Calif.) Community Library June 2.

September 14 **John Unsworth** retired as university librarian and dean of libraries at University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

Peter Zhou, assistant university librarian and director of the C. V. Starr East Asian Library at University of California, Berkeley, retired in June. 

In Memory

Pamela M. Bluh, 83, who served academic libraries for nearly 50 years, died June 18. From 1980 to 2014, Bluh worked at University of Maryland Thurgood Marshall Law Library in Baltimore, starting as assistant director for technical services and retiring as associate director for technical service and administration. Prior to that, she served as a serials cataloger and serials librarian at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore (1965–1980). Bluh was an active member of the American Library Association's (ALA) Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS), earning the division's presidential citation in 2004 and 2010. She also received Ulrich's Serials Librarianship Award in 2004 and the Ross Atkinson Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012, both from ALCTS.



Teresa Cartularo, 95, retired librarian, died March 7. Cartularo started her career at Free Library of Philadelphia (FLP), graduating from FLP's training class in 1947 and working for the system for 10 years. She later established the library at St. Gabriel's Parish School in Norwood, Pennsylvania; served as a librarian at Our Lady of Angels College (now Neumann University) in Aston, Pennsylvania; worked as a research librarian with accounting firm Arthur Andersen in the mid-1980s; and served as reference librarian for Widener University in Chester, Pennsylvania, until her 2014 retirement.

Stephen M. Hayes, 74, longtime government documents librarian, died July 14. Hayes spent his library career at University of Notre Dame in Indiana (1974–2020). He started as a reference librarian for Hesburgh Library, began heading the Documents Center in 1976, and was appointed business service librarian at Mendoza College of Business in 1994. Hayes opened and directed the primarily electronic Thomas Mahaffey Business Information Center branch of Hesburgh in 1995 and retired as the university's Entrepreneurial Spirit Endowed Business Librarian in 2020. He served as 1987–1988 chair of ALA's Government Documents Round Table (GODORT) and received GODORT's James Bennett Childs Award in 2023.

Ronald F. Miller, 91, a leader in cooperative library systems, died September 8, 2024. Miller served as president and CEO of the Washington Library Network in Lacey, Washington, from 1990 until his retirement in 1995. Prior to that, he was

director of the New England Library Information Network in Massachusetts (1971–1977) and executive director of the Cooperative Library Agency for Systems and Services in San Jose, California (1977–1990). In 1976, Miller became a founding member of the Network Advisory Committee to the Library of Congress.

Patricia Oyler, 81, international librarian and scholar, died June 10. Oyler was a professor of library sciences and information at Simmons College in Boston, with expertise in cataloging, classification, and preservation. She served as a Fulbright Scholar in Brazil and worked with the Royal Library of Sweden and the US Information Agency in the US and India. Oyler served as 2010–2011 chair of ALA's International Relations Round Table (IRRT). In 2009, she received IRRT's Humphry/OCLC/Forest Press Award for International Librarianship for her dedication to providing master's-level training for librarians from Vietnam.

Denise A. Saia, 72, died June 21. Saia served as director of Franklin Township (N.J.) Public Library until her 2015 retirement. Prior to that, she worked as a librarian at Atlantic County (N.J.) Library System's Mays Landing and Hammononton branches and as a reference librarian at Stockton University Library in Galloway, New Jersey. Saia was a member of the New Jersey Library Association and was honored with its Amy Job Partnership Award.

Lois Schultz, 89, died May 23. Schultz served as youth services consultant at North Suburban Library System and Metropolitan Library System in Illinois for 13 years, advising school and public libraries. Prior to that, she taught children's literature at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb for 13 years.

John Spears, 51, director of Buffalo and Erie County (N.Y.) Public Library, died July 20. Spears was appointed director in 2022. Prior to that, he was chief librarian and CEO of Pikes Peak Library District in Colorado Springs, Colorado; executive director of Salt Lake City Public Library; executive director of Naperville (Ill.) Public Library; and executive director of Joliet (Ill.) Public Library. He also held management positions at other libraries across Illinois and Missouri. Spears served as 2016–2017 president of ALA's Library Leadership and Management Association. In 2024, he received the Mary Bobinski Innovative Public Library Director Award from the New York Library Association. ●



Playing Along

Soon after David Sleasman became librarian at the Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play in Rochester, New York, he got a phone call about checkers.

The caller wanted to donate his father's collection—not of boards or game pieces, but of the *literature* of checkers. “I’m thinking, ‘How much can this be?’” Sleasman remembers.

The answer? Twenty-seven storage tubs.

It’s all in a day’s work for Sleasman, who (along with two catalogers and two archivists) wrangles 260,000 library holdings, 3,000 linear feet of physical archives, and nine terabytes

of digital archives, all pertaining to the history of play. The library and archives are housed at the Strong National Museum of Play, where kids and adults romp through exhibits of toys through the ages, play pinball on vintage machines, and navigate a ropes course.

Things in the library and archives themselves, though, are a little more sedate. “We’re separated from the public, except to hear their screams on the ropes,” Sleasman says.

The library and archives attract enthusiasts and scholars alike, who come to peruse items like sketches by the creators of the Berenstain Bears, the diaries of Parker Brothers founder

George S. Parker, and more than 46,000 toy-manufacturer catalogs from the past 125 years. “It’s a little hair-raising to read the call numbers,” Sleasman says of the toy catalogs. “You have to be very centered as a human when you shelve that material.”

If he gets his way, though, it may one day be even harder to concentrate in his workplace. “I keep advocating for moving arcade games into the library,” he says. “If there’s one library in the world that should not be quiet, it’s ours.” **AL**

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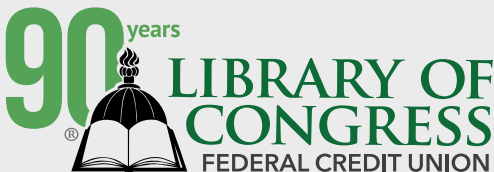


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