

american libraries

March/April 2026

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

NEWSMAKER:

Mychal Threets

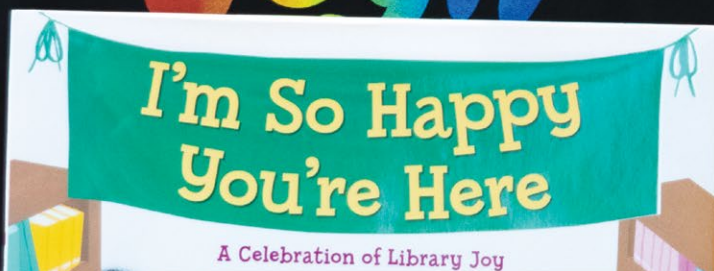
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5 Library
Wins Worth
Celebrating

p. 20

PLUS:

Airport Libraries,
ADA Compliance,
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Library Joy—and Celebration



Sanhita SinhaRoy

Like many, I have fond memories of sitting in front of the TV as a kid watching *Reading Rainbow*. So it brought great (library) joy when it was announced last year that librarian Mychal Threets would host the revived show, now on YouTube, for another generation of children. For our cover story, former *American Libraries* Associate Editor Sallyann Price spoke with Threets—who, in addition to being a TikTok sensation and author of a new children’s book, is now featured on a READ poster and is honorary chair of this year’s National Library Week in April. In the interview, Threets talks about growing up as a library kid, why the passion for libraries resonates on social media, and what gives him hope in troubling times. Take a look, it’s ... on page 14.

From rainbows, we shift to the spring primary election season, which kicks off in March in some parts of the country. In “Finding Your Heroes on the Hill” (p. 26), we excerpt a webinar from ALA’s Public Policy and Advocacy Office that offers practical advice to help turn legislators from library supporters into library champions.

In “Advocacy Unites Us” (p. 5), ALA Executive Director Dan Montgomery reminds readers that policy achievements don’t happen in a vacuum: “They are the result of sustained, intentional advocacy.”

We highlight a handful of such successes in “5 Library Wins Worth Celebrating” (p. 20). These community and court victories from the previous year should help fortify those who are fighting for libraries every day and provide examples to draw inspiration from as we enter a midterm election year.

Finally, in “Getting Started with Web Accessibility” (p. 22), Carli Spina and Rebecca Albrecht Oling offer guidance on ways to comply with revised digital accessibility standards that take effect this April. The article is excerpted from *The Digital Accessibility Handbook for Libraries* (ALA Editions, 2025).

Together, these stories remind us that libraries are both a source of joy and a force for change. Let’s continue to celebrate our wins and amplify our voices for a better, more inclusive world.

Sanhita

Let’s continue to celebrate our wins and amplify our voices for a better, more inclusive world.

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

ALA American Library Association

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



EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Sanhita SinhaRoy → *The Tale of Despereaux*
ssinharoy@ala.org | x4219

MANAGING EDITOR

Terra Dankowski → *The Joy Luck Club*
tdankowski@ala.org | x5282

SENIOR EDITOR

Greg Landgraf ← *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* → *The Chicago Manual of Style*
glandgraf@ala.org | x4218

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING SPECIALIST

Carrie Smith → *The Phantom Tollbooth*
casmith@ala.org | x4216

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

← **Lori McCue, Phoebe Mogharei, Sallyann Price** → *Little Women*

CONTRIBUTING DESIGNER

Rachel K. Dooley ← *Brave New World* → *The Westing Game*

ADVERTISING

← **Melissa Carr** melcarr@ala.org | 704-491-7789

Ryan King rking@rkmediaadv.com | 773-414-9292

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PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT

George Kendall → *The Firm 1984*
Senior Director, Publishing and Media
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MEMBERSHIP

← **Melissa Kay Walling**, Deputy Executive Director

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Ben Leubsdorf (Chair), Kim E. Becnel, Eileen K. Bosch, Kathy Carroll, Emily Drabinski, Pat Hawthorne, Sarah Maximiek, Katie Rothley, Brita Kate Zitin
Editorial policy: ALA Policy Manual, section A.8.2

INDEXED

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

SUBSCRIBE

Libraries and other institutions: \$80/year, 6 issues, US, Canada, and Mexico; international: \$90. Subscription price for individuals included in ALA membership dues. Email membership@ala.org, call 800-545-2433, or visit ala.org. Claim missing issues: ALA Member Relations and Services. Allow six weeks. Single issues: \$13.50, with a 30% discount for five or more copies. (Discount applies only to multiple copies of the same issue.) Contact Carrie Smith, 800-545-2433 x4216 or casmith@ala.org.

PUBLISHED

American Libraries (ISSN 0002-9769) is published 6 times yearly. Printed in USA. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, Illinois, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Personal members: Send address changes to American Libraries, c/o Membership Records, American Library Association, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601. ©2026 American Library Association. All rights reserved. No portion of this magazine may be reproduced or republished without written permission from the publisher.

Celebrate NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK!

APRIL 19-25, 2026

**FIND
YOUR JOY!**

This National Library Week is a celebration of all the ways libraries bring joy to our lives and communities. For some, it's losing track of time in a stack of graphic novels. For others, it's the spark of confidence from a polished résumé, the excitement of a packed author talk, or the simple relief of having free Wi-Fi when it's needed most. Whatever joy looks like to you, you'll find it at the library.



2026
National
Library
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2026 National Library
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Mychal Threets Poster

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algraphics

Good for Business

Cultivating strong networks and deepening community trust



Sam Helmick

Over the years, libraries have grown from community learning centers into dynamic civic infrastructure, serving as hubs that spark innovation, nurture talent, and strengthen local economies. They are trusted partners in entrepreneurship, workforce development, and community prosperity. And this growing role reflects a simple truth: The success of local businesses and the health of communities are deeply intertwined.

According to the American Library Association's *Libraries Build Business 2022* report (bit.ly/ALA-LBBR), libraries offer three advantages for budding businesses: reach, resources, and collaboration. They are embedded in every community, open to all, and equipped with infrastructure such as computers, meeting rooms, high-quality databases, and access to skilled staff—resources that many small businesses and entrepreneurs could not otherwise afford. As a result, the library serves as both a launching pad and a long-term support network for entrepreneurs at every stage.

No matter the physical size or budget, every library can play a role in supporting small businesses and promoting local economic vitality.

By hosting thousands of programs each year, libraries help individuals move from ideas to action, building confidence alongside real-world skills: business plan development, market research, social media training, financial literacy, and more. This work is strengthened through partnerships with chambers of commerce, small business development centers, credit unions, workforce agencies, and local incubators.

Likewise, library workers, trustees, Friends groups, and foundations actively collaborate with local businesses to strengthen the ecosystems that help communities thrive. These library-business partnerships are about transformation, not transactions, with support taking shape in practical, results-driven ways.

By welcoming local businesses into their spaces, libraries cultivate strong professional networks and deepen community trust. Over time, these relationships generate lasting goodwill.

Businesses that benefit from library partnerships frequently become loyal library advocates themselves, contributing their talents and resources to sustain and expand initiatives that serve the broader community. In this way, libraries grow from service providers into reliable partners in local economic growth.

This momentum carries forward when libraries expand their collaboration across regions to share strategies and increase collective impact. Trustees and Friends groups often serve as vital connectors, linking libraries with regional business leaders and economic development organizations.

Foundations play a crucial role in helping ensure that entrepreneurship programs reach communities that have historically had fewer opportunities, broadening participation and bolstering the overall business environment.

Sustaining these connections requires vision and accountability. It's essential that libraries track outcomes—attendance, business formation, skill development, participant satisfaction—to demonstrate responsible stewardship of public and private investment. Sharing success stories through social media, local press, and community conversations helps strengthen public understanding and attract new partners.

When libraries mobilize their support networks to collaborate with local businesses, the impact extends far beyond individual success stories. Together, they create environments where people can access resources that support both creativity and commerce, demonstrating clearly and convincingly that libraries are good for communities and good for the economy. **AL**

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

No matter the physical size or budget, every library can play a role in supporting small businesses and promoting local economic vitality.

Advocacy Unites Us

Turning professional values into public action



Dan Montgomery

These past few months as executive director have been a whirlwind learning experience—unlike anything else in my life—and I have enjoyed the heck out of it. One of the most powerful insights I've gained is a deeper understanding of our Association's advocacy work: what it truly means to advocate for libraries, for librarianship, for all library workers, and for the right to read and access information equitably and freely across our nation.

Indeed, the American Library Association (ALA) exists because of a shared desire for a professional community and coordinated advocacy. In my early interactions across the many facets of the Association, I have seen firsthand the deep drive and commitment our members bring to this work. At events like the American Association of School Librarians National Conference in October, the Core Forum in November, and our Advocacy Academy workshop for chapters in December, and through ALA Connect and social media, I have seen members working together and fighting every day to protect what they do, their institutions, and the communities they serve.

By the time you read this, I expect we will have victories to celebrate—electoral wins, legislative successes, and fundraising milestones—along with a few unexpected triumphs along the way. But none of these achievements happens in a vacuum. They are the result of sustained, intentional advocacy. Our work is inseparable from our advocacy, and it is our professional responsibility to make advocacy a regular and powerful part of our daily lives.

At the chapter advocacy workshop, one comment in particular stayed with me. A member shared that she wanted to connect with chapter leaders in a neighboring state because her own state legislators often take their cues from that state, and she wanted to be prepared.

I was grateful that we had created space for that exchange, and it underscored something essential: We must continually share knowledge, strategies, and lessons across ALA if we are to be effective advocates.

Many of you may have participated in our National Library Legislative Day fly-in this February in Washington, D.C. If you did, thank you! I am confident of its success and believe it should take place every year. Just as importantly, we must empower and encourage our state chapters and affiliates to organize similar efforts in their state capitals. Our past successes in D.C. on issues such as E-Rate and Institute of Museum and Library Services funding show that sustained advocacy in the halls of power must remain one of our guiding stars.

These efforts represent just a few of the ways we express our collective power and effect the change we want to see in our world. When those in positions of authority fail to recognize the power of our ideas, we must demonstrate the power of our unity. And we do that together, as one ALA.

Advocacy is not only something we do in moments of crisis or during legislative sessions. It is embedded in the everyday choices we make as library workers and leaders. Each conversation with a policymaker, community partner, or neighbor is an opportunity to affirm our values and demonstrate why libraries matter.

One of my heroes is the late civil rights leader Bayard Rustin, an architect of the 1963 March on Washington. He understood that lasting change is built through coalition, preparation, and collective action. That lesson is as relevant to our work today as it was then—and it is one I hope we continue to carry forward together. **AL**

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

It is our responsibility to make advocacy a regular and powerful part of our daily lives.

Tamika Barnes

Associate dean of Perimeter College
Library Services at Georgia State University
in Atlanta | tamika4libraries.com



CANDIDATE FOR ALA PRESIDENT

I am honored to stand for election as president-elect of ALA. My career has been shaped by a profound belief in the power of libraries to advance equity, expand opportunity, and strengthen our democracy. For more than two decades, I have served in leadership roles across ALA, state associations, and professional divisions, and throughout that journey, my commitment has remained consistent: to champion libraries and library workers through advocacy, inclusion, and responsible stewardship.

ALA's mission has guided my work from the beginning. Whether serving on the ALA Executive Board, chairing the Budget Analysis and Review Committee, supporting the Spectrum Scholar community, or leading state and divisional organizations, I have seen firsthand how ALA's values of equity, diversity, inclusion, intellectual freedom, and social responsibility are lived out every day by library workers across the country. These values have shaped my own leadership, which is collaborative, grounded in integrity, and centered on community impact.

Today, libraries face unprecedented challenges. School and public libraries are experiencing historic levels of censorship and political pressure. Many institutions struggle with insufficient

funding, staffing shortages, and increasing demands for digital access and community services. Academic libraries face rapid technological and pedagogical change while working to demonstrate their essential role in student success and research innovation. And yet, despite these pressures, libraries continue to stand as trusted institutions committed to access, learning, and connection.

If elected, my presidency will center on four priorities aligned with ALA's strategic directions:

Unified advocacy. We must strengthen our collective voice at the local, state, and national levels. I will champion advocacy that equips every library worker—from K–12 school librarians to academic, special, and public library staffers—with tools, training, and confidence to speak effectively about our impact. Together, we can advance policies that protect the freedom to read, expand digital equity, and secure sustainable funding.

Despite current pressures, libraries continue to stand as trusted institutions.

Inclusive leadership and professional growth. Our profession thrives when new voices are welcomed, supported, and empowered. I will expand pathways for leadership development and mentorship, particularly for those historically underrepresented in the field. Investing in people is essential to the future of our profession.

Equity, access, and intellectual freedom. These pillars must remain nonnegotiable. I will advocate for policies and partnerships that protect intellectual freedom, ensure inclusive collections and services, and expand access to information and technology for all communities.

Transparency and stewardship. ALA's strength depends on trust. I will prioritize transparency in governance, clarity in communication, and the responsible alignment of our resources with our strategic priorities.

I believe deeply in ALA's ability to shape the future of libraries and the communities we serve. With experience, dedication, and a collaborative spirit, I am ready to listen, lead, and work alongside our members to build a stronger, more inclusive, and more impactful Association.

I respectfully ask for your vote, support, and partnership in this important work. **AL**

ALA ELECTION: March 9–April 1. More information at bit.ly/ALA-elections

Becky Calzada

District library coordinator at
Leander (Tex.) Independent School
District | bit.ly/Beckyforlibraries



CANDIDATE FOR ALA PRESIDENT

Libraries changed my life. As a Hispanic, first-generation high school and college graduate, born and raised in South Texas, every book I read and every library activity I participated in helped shape my understanding of the world. My state and national library associations furthered my library leadership journey by expanding my professional networks and growth through every committee appointment, conference, and connection with new and old colleagues. My associations changed my life.

We have been navigating rigorous, unyielding times, yet through it all, library workers have stepped up and answered the call to lead and serve. We remain resilient, dedicated, and hopeful in every microinteraction that occurs daily in the many vibrant library spaces across the country. In my own work and leadership, I am grounded in upholding ALA's core values of access, equity, intellectual freedom and privacy, public good, and sustainability. These are not only aspirational ideals, they are also *essential* to the strength of our democracy, our global community, and the longevity of our profession.

As ALA president, I will focus on:

- championing ALA's core values by advocating for inclusive policies, defending the right to read,

- and supporting fully funded, professionally staffed libraries in every community;
- strengthening how we communicate our value through powerful storytelling and recognition of contributions across all library types and stakeholder groups;
- promoting collaboration among divisions and round tables to build a unified, fiscally efficient, and strategically aligned Association;
- improving internal communication systems to ensure transparency, minimize information gaps, and provide members with a clear, unified experience;
- and executing ALA's strategic plan by translating its objectives into meaningful, actionable progress.

One key priority includes effectively communicating our values to stakeholders. We must elevate the impactful

We have been navigating rigorous, unyielding times, yet library workers have stepped up to lead and serve.

stories and daily interactions happening across all library settings while also recognizing the unique contributions of Friends groups, trustees, students, retirees, international colleagues, and all who champion libraries.

When we amplify these moments, we inspire one another and build the broader public and political support essential to a strong profession and a thriving national association.

Promoting greater collaboration among divisions and round tables is also critical. Creating opportunities for leaders to share goals, successes, and challenges enables continuous improvement and can model fiscal efficiency and meaningful revenue contribution. Aligning our messaging can leverage a powerful collective voice for advocacy. Achieving this requires strong internal communication systems, transparent processes, and frequent updates to help reduce confusion and provide a seamless member experience.

Finally, I am deeply committed to advancing the goals outlined in ALA's strategic plan. This includes supporting sustainability efforts, operationalizing equity and access at all levels, and investing in ongoing leadership development across the Association.

I am proud to stand in this election and respectfully ask for your vote. **AL**

ALA ELECTION: March 9–April 1. More information at bit.ly/ALA-elections

Supreme Court Refuses to Review Texas Book Ban Decision

On December 8, the US Supreme Court declined to review a lower court ruling in *Little v. Llano County*, a case with implications for the freedom to read in public libraries across Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. A three-person Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals panel had ruled in 2024 that public library book removals did not violate the First Amendment. In October, the American Library Association (ALA), Freedom to Read Foundation, and Texas Library Association submitted an amicus brief urging the Supreme Court to reaffirm public libraries as beacons of democracy and to safeguard library professionals' responsibility to curate collections to meet their communities' informational needs.

ALA expressed disappointment about the decision in a December 9 statement. "By declining to review the Fifth

Circuit's decision, the Supreme Court has empowered state and local governments to limit what materials people can access in their libraries," said ALA President Sam Helmick. "This ruling threatens to transform government libraries into centers for indoctrination instead of protecting them as hubs of open inquiry."

ALA Executive Director Dan Montgomery added in the statement: "Despite the Supreme Court's troubling decision, ALA will continue its 150-year defense of intellectual freedom and the rights of all Americans to access information without government interference, whether that defense is at the local, state, or federal level and whether in the courts or the public square. Our democracy deserves no less." ●

Major Report Released on Public Library Building Conditions

ALA welcomed the December 18 release of a major national study on the condition of public library buildings conducted by the nonpartisan US Government Accountability Office at the request of Congress and urging of ALA.

The report provides the first comprehensive national data in decades about the state of the country's library facilities. Nationwide, there are more than 17,000 public library locations, totaling more than 200 million square feet of buildings, which Americans visit more than 800 million times each year.

The public libraries surveyed in the report revealed key issues: An estimated 38% (about 6,000) have at least one building system such as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) in poor condition; 61% have building systems or features that pose health or safety concerns; and 70% have backlogs of deferred maintenance and repair requests. An estimated 71% of libraries cited limited

funds for construction costs as a key challenge in addressing these issues.

Read highlights and the full report at bit.ly/ALA-GAO-report.

PLA Launches AI Task Force

The Public Library Association (PLA) announced on December 23 that it has established the Transformative Technology Task Force, a new group that will advise on the evolving role and impacts of emerging technology on library work. It will identify and recommend priority training topics relevant to public library staff and users and develop resources focused on practical solutions, best practices, skills building, and community engagement strategies.

A 2025 survey of PLA members and nonmembers found that artificial intelligence (AI) was one of the top five priority areas requested for professional development. The new task force will focus on AI in its first two years.

Learn more about the task force and its work at bit.ly/PLA-AI.

IFRT Immroth Award Applications Still Open

ALA's Intellectual Freedom Round Table (IFRT) is still accepting nominations for the prestigious John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award. The award, named for the founder and first chair of IFRT in 1973, honors notable contributions to intellectual freedom and demonstrations of personal courage in defense of freedom of expression. (The application window for IFRT's other annual awards—the Eli M. Oboler Memorial Award and the Gerald Hodges Intellectual Freedom Chapter Relations Award—has closed.)

Honorees receive a \$500 cash award and recognition at ALA's 2026 Annual Conference and Exhibition in Chicago. Learn more and apply at ala.org/ifrt/immroth by March 1.

ALA Applauds Reintroduction of Bicameral Right to Read Act

ALA and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) welcomed the bicameral reintroduction of the Right

Federal IMLS Grants to Libraries Restored

In a December 3 statement, ALA welcomed an announcement by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) that it had reinstated all the agency's grants, including those to libraries and library organizations across the country. The grant reinstatements come as a direct result of a November 21 federal court decision in a lawsuit brought against President Trump by 21 states, and ALA's mobilization of thousands of library supporters urging Congress to protect the agency.

"This means that libraries across the country will be able to resume vital services for learning, imagination, and economic opportunity," said ALA President Sam Helmick in the statement. "Restoration of these grants is a massive win for libraries of all kinds, in all states. Every public, school, and academic library and their patrons benefit from the research findings and program outcomes from individual library and organization grantees."

Helmick added: "We are breathing a sigh of relief, but the fight is not finished. The administration can appeal court decisions. Congress can choose to not fund IMLS in future years. ALA calls on everyone who values libraries to remind their congressmembers and elected officials at every level why America's libraries deserve more, not fewer resources." ●

to Read Act by Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) and Rep. Adelita Grijalva (D-Ariz.) on December 4.

Originally introduced in 2022, the legislation—which remains in committee—is designed to ensure all students, including low-income and minority students, children with disabilities, and English-language learners, have access to an effective school library staffed by a certified school librarian.

The Right to Read Act would also authorize \$500 million for Comprehensive Literacy State Development grants and increase the authorization for the Innovative Approaches to Literacy program.

"More than 50 years of research across over 60 studies show that students with access to full-time, state-certified librarians and robust collections consistently perform better academically," said AASL President Amanda Kordeliski in a December 5 statement. "When we

invest in school librarians, we are investing in equity, literacy, and the future of our communities."

Apply for SustainRT's Annual Conference Stipend

ALA's Sustainability Round Table (SustainRT) is accepting applications for its New Voices in Sustainability Conference Stipend. SustainRT will provide registration and a stipend of \$250 to a SustainRT member for their in-person attendance at ALA's 2026 Annual Conference and Exhibition in Chicago.

The award recognizes the importance of social equity to SustainRT and ALA and works to support new and diverse members to participate in the professional development and networking opportunities at ALA conferences and events. New and diverse voices in library sustainability, as well as first-time conference attendees, are encouraged to apply.

CALENDAR

2026

ALA's 150th Anniversary
ala150.org

MAR. 10 & 12

RUSA Virtual Forum
bit.ly/RUSA-Virtual

MAR. 16

Freedom of Information Day
ala.org/advocacy/FOI-Day

APR.

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

APR. 1-3

PLA 2026 Conference
Minneapolis
placonference.org

APR. 19-25

National Library Week
bit.ly/ALA-NLW

APR. 20

Right to Read Day
bit.ly/Right-to-Read-Day

APR. 21

National Library Workers Day
ala-apa.org/nlwd

APR. 22

National Library Outreach Day
bit.ly/ALA-NLOD

APR. 23

Take Action for Libraries Day
bit.ly/ALA-NLW

APR. 26-MAY 2

Preservation Week
preservationweek.org

APR. 30

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

JUNE

Rainbow Book Month
bit.ly/RBMonth

JUNE 25-29

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alaannual.org

SEPT.

Library Card Sign-Up Month
bit.ly/LibCardSU

OCT. 1-3

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

UPDATE

Learn more and apply by March 2 at bit.ly/ALA-SRT-Stipend. The winner and other applicants will be notified in April. The winner will be recognized at SustainRT's meeting at the conference and invited to serve on SustainRT's Awards Committee.

AASL Commends 20 Programs

Acting upon recommendations made by its state chapters, AASL formally commended 20 outstanding programs, events, and products in 10 states for their support of the school librarian profession and the learners it serves.

Honorees include book clubs, mobile book giveaway programs, book awards, and groups ranging from school foundations, to state and local education and library associations, to the Fayetteville (N.C.) Woodpeckers minor league baseball team, which operates a reading program.

View the full list at bit.ly/AASL-commendations.

PLA 2026 Keynote Speaker Selected

PLA has announced that Bryan Stevenson, founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) and author of *Just Mercy*, will deliver the opening keynote at the PLA 2026 Conference April 1–3 in Minneapolis. The opening session on April 1 is sponsored by OCLC and will stream for virtual attendees.

Stevenson, a lawyer, activist, and law professor at New York University, has dedicated his career to challenging racial injustice and reforming the criminal justice system. Under his leadership, EJI has won relief or release for more than 140 people wrongly condemned to death and successfully argued landmark cases before the US Supreme Court, including the historic decision banning mandatory life sentences without parole for children. His memoir, *Just Mercy*, chronicles his early work defending marginalized clients and has been adapted into a major motion picture.



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

Last Call for Library Design Showcase Submissions

American Libraries is accepting submissions for the 2026 Library Design Showcase, our annual feature celebrating new and newly renovated libraries of all types and sizes. The showcase will appear in the September/October issue.

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

To be eligible, projects must have been completed between April 1, 2025, and March 31, 2026.

For consideration, send a completed submission form (bit.ly/DesignShowcaseForm26) and at least five high-resolution digital images with photographer credits to americanlibraries@ala.org via Dropbox or another file-sharing service. The deadline to apply is May 1, 2026. Unfortunately, not all submissions can be featured.

View last year's showcase at bit.ly/Design-Showcase-25. For more information, email americanlibraries@ala.org. ●

Learn more and register at placonference.org.

GameRT Announces 2025 Platinum Play Awards

As a part of the 2025 International Games Month celebrations in November, ALA's Games and Gaming Round Table (GameRT) announced the winners of the 2025 Platinum Play Awards. The "Platys" are awarded to games considered standouts for library collections or programming ideas across library types, nominated by library workers and reviewed by a GameRT committee.

The Platys Hall of Fame includes categories for board or card games (this year's honorees are *Cascadia* and *Votes for Women*), tabletop role-playing games (*No Thank You, Evil!* and *Sodalitas*), and video games (no honorees this year) released in the last two to 10 years.

The Platys Classics awards recognize games over 10 years old. This year's honorees are *Clue*, *Jenga*, *Pokémon*, *Magic: The Gathering*, *Apocalypse World*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Mario Kart 8*, and *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*.

Learn more about the Platinum Play Awards at bit.ly/ALA-Platys. AL

Candidates Announced for ALA Councilor-at-Large

ALA's Nominating Committee has accepted and announced the names of the 18 nominated candidates and seven petition candidates who are running for a total of 12 at-large seats on the ALA Council to serve the 2026–2027 term. They are:

Joy Bridwell
 Librarian
 Stone Child College and
 Rocky Boy Public Library
 Box Elder, Montana

Elizabeth Burns
 Associate Professor
 Old Dominion University
 Norfolk, Virginia

John Clexton
 Director
 Gladwin County (Mich.)
 District Library

Amy Dissmeyer
 Director
 Great Falls (Iowa)
 Public Library

Marikit Fain
 Information Literacy
 Librarian
 Southeast Missouri
 State University
 Cape Girardeau

Maggie Farrell
 Dean of Libraries
 University of Nevada,
 Las Vegas

Aubrey Iglesias
 Associate Professor and
 Head of Cataloging
 New Mexico State University
 Las Cruces

Gina Kromhout
 Senior YA Librarian I
 Brooklyn (N.Y.)
 Public Library

Tina Lerno
 Digital Content Services
 Librarian II
 Los Angeles Public Library

Rodney Lippard
 Director
 University of Central
 Arkansas Torreyson
 Library
 Conway

Charles McAuley
 Social Media and Adult
 Services Librarian
 Mercer County (N.J.)
 Library System

Chulin Meng
 Director of Library
 Technology
 Lehigh University
 Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Kerrie Mierop
 Youth Services Librarian
 Calabasas (Calif.) Library

Annie Miskewitch
 Executive Director
 Schaumburg Township
 (Ill.) District Library

Matthew Noe
 Lead Collection
 and Knowledge
 Management Librarian
 Harvard Medical School
 Countway Library
 Cambridge, Massachusetts

April Oharah Hernandez
 Director
 Latah County (Idaho)
 Library District

Cassandra Osterloh
 Tribal Libraries Program
 Coordinator
 New Mexico State Library
 Santa Fe

**Lessa Kanani'opua
 Pelayo-Lozada**
 Director
 Glendale (Calif.) Library,
 Arts, and Culture
 Department

Fatima Perkins
 Director of Community
 Outreach and Advocacy
 Western Reserve Area
 Agency on Aging
 Cleveland

Brenda Pruitt-Annisette
 Educator
 DeKalb County (Ga.)
 School District

Leah Richardson
 Director of Archives and
 Special Collections
 George Washington
 University
 Washington, D.C.

Je Salvador
 Research and Instruction
 Librarian
 University of Washington
 Bothell

Amanda Sand
 Consultant
 Library Leverage LLC
 Dubuque, Iowa

William Wallace
 Assistant Branch Manager
 Wicomico (Md.)
 Public Library

Steven Yates
 Associate Dean and
 Professor
 University of Alabama
 Tuscaloosa •

2026 Election Dates

Ballot mailing for the ALA election begins March 9 and runs through April 1. Individuals must be members in good standing to vote in the 2026 ALA elections. For more information, visit bit.ly/ALA-elections. •



TRENDS



The Airport Library at Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport provides physical books, oversized chairs, and charging access.

Airport Libraries Take Off

In these spaces, travelers pick up books before they board

BY Rosie Newmark

The layover was supposed to last two hours. Instead, it stretched into four or five.

Traveling alone through Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG), a woman wandered the concourse looking to pass the time. Then she spotted a sign for the Airport Library. When she arrived, she sat down, plugged in her devices, and picked up a historical biography she said she never would have chosen under normal circumstances. Before she knew it, boarding was announced.

Later, she hand-wrote a note thanking Kenton County (Ky.) Public Library (KCPL) and airport staffers who made the experience possible, saying her unexpected delay passed quickly—and pleasantly—because of that quiet corner and that book.

“We thought, there are so many people coming through this airport who probably forgot a book, or have been delayed, or are just kind of stuck waiting for a layover,” says KCPL Executive Director Dave Schroeder. “How can we meet that need in a cost-effective way?”

In recent years, public libraries across the country have begun partnering with airports to bring books, digital materials, and dedicated reading spaces into terminals, offering travelers a free alternative to a shop or restaurant and a rare moment of calm amid the bustle of travel.

Schroeder describes the space at CVG, which opened in 2023, as a “Little Free Library on steroids.” The Airport Library occupies a warm, inviting space, formerly a women’s apparel store, with oversized chairs, high-top tables, chargers, and a children’s area with kid-sized furniture.

The idea began when library leadership approached the airport, wanting to provide e-materials for travelers. But airport officials advocated for physical books, since digital ones would require a KCPL library card, which not all travelers would have. Plus, “many people just like the convenience of having a physical book on vacation,” Schroeder says. “You can take it to the beach, and if you lose it, no big deal.”

The airport renovated the space and added furniture, while KCPL

supplied the collection. The library occupies the space rent-free.

There’s no kiosk, monitoring, or checkout system. Signs invite travelers to “take one, leave one,” but returns are not required. About one-fourth of the books eventually return to a library branch, Schroeder says.

Library staffers who stock the shelves are careful not to undercut airport bookstores, avoiding brand-new bestsellers and relying instead on donated and withdrawn titles. Boxes around the airport allow travelers to donate books back into circulation. Demand has been so high that a few nearby systems—Boone County (Ky.) Public Library, Campbell County (Ky.) Public Library, and Cincinnati and Hamilton County (Ohio) Public Library, along with KCPL—now rotate restocking duties, delivering about 800 books in a recent month.

A digital-first approach

In 2023, Houston Public Library (HPL) launched a BOOKlink kiosk outside airport security at William P. Hobby Airport. It’s a machine roughly the size of a wall of Amazon lockers, with a clear door revealing five shelves stocked with about 125 paperbacks.

HPL cardholders can scan their card and enter a PIN to check out books. The kiosk, monitored remotely by the library’s IT team and equipped with an internal RFID reader, circulates about 30–50 books per month, and items can be returned there or at any HPL branch.

Patrick Atkins, HPL assistant director, sees the airport presence as both a service and a form of outreach. He notes the sheer volume of passengers

that pass through Hobby: more than 63 million travelers in 2024, according to the Houston Airport System, which manages the city's airports.

"Just having the presence is a marketing tool to remind people that we're here," Atkins says.

Restocking happens quarterly, and the collection largely sustains itself thanks to a steady flow of travelers who tend to return books frequently. Data from the kiosk helps HPL adjust the mix based on what's trending. About 40% of checkouts are children's books, followed by adult fiction, YA, biographies, and Spanish-language picture books.

Parents, KCPL's Schroeder says, often do not think to pack books amid the excitement of flying.

"When they get there, there's all that downtime," he says. "Having that library keeps kids occupied, keeps things calmer, and honestly makes the flight experience better for everyone."

The honor system

Chattanooga (Tenn.) Metropolitan Airport offers something more low-tech by comparison. Skylib, operated by the Chattanooga Public Library Foundation (CPLF), has been serving travelers since 2016 from a former TSA office roughly the size of a hotel room.

Shelves are stocked with donated books, including fiction, nonfiction, and children's titles, and travelers browse freely before security. Instead of checkout desks or scanners, Skylib operates on an honor system: suggested donations of \$3 for hardcovers, \$2 for paperbacks, and \$1 for smaller books, collected via QR code. Books are not tracked, and patrons can donate as much or as little as they like.

"It benefits the community," says Sharon Leath, CPLF board chair.

"Having that library keeps kids occupied, keeps things calmer, and honestly makes the flight experience better for everyone."

DAVE SCHROEDER, executive director of Kenton County (Ky.) Public Library

"It helps people bond and form a love of reading."

As with the other airport libraries, there's no staff onsite. Volunteers—including members of the CPLF board and community—manage the collection, replacing titles and curating displays. Adult fiction and bestsellers move fastest, and vintage-looking books, with leather-bound or antique-style covers, are popular. Airport employees are frequent visitors as well. CPLF pays modest rent for the space, and all proceeds support library programs. Leath did not disclose how much revenue Skylib has generated but said the model has been profitable.

She also says that she's received calls from people eager to replicate this "respite for weary travelers" in their own communities. She attributes Skylib's success to the coordination between library administrators and airport leaders.

Across these airports, the goal is less about moving books and more about changing how people experience a place built for waiting. Says Leath: "It's just a benefit for everybody." **AL**

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

BY THE NUMBERS

National Parks

400

Approximate number of libraries operated by the National Park Service (NPS).



3.5 million

Number of materials housed in the NPS History Collection at the Harpers Ferry (W.Va.) Center for Media Services.

The collection includes art, documents, photos, sound recordings, uniforms, and other objects.

25

Number of parks represented in the Open Parks Network, a collaboration between Clemson (S.C.) University and NPS, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, to digitize archival materials from parks and other historical sites. The collaboration has so far digitized more than 350,000 objects and 1.5 million pages.

1923

Year that Yosemite Research Library (YRL) began acquiring its collection. One of the oldest NPS libraries, YRL—located within Yosemite National Park in California—has more than 10,000 books.

3,100

Number of preserved plants in the herbarium at Zion National Park in Utah. The herbarium, a library of pressed botanical materials endemic to the region, includes samples collected as early as the 1920s.

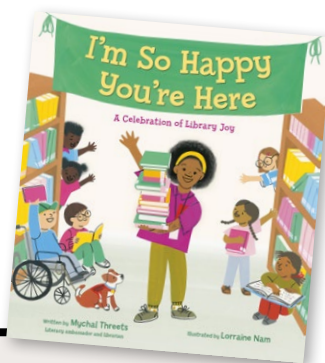


8

Number of items packed in Teton County (Wyo.) Library's wildlife kits. Each kit is available for checkout and includes a backpack, binoculars, and a field guide to Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks. ●

Mychal Threets

Children’s librarian and author on falling in love with library service and his road to *Reading Rainbow*



Generations of fans of the long-running PBS staple *Reading Rainbow* most likely tuned in on the family TV. Now a growing generation of young readers can stream the reboot on YouTube, hosted by children’s librarian Mychal Threets, who started his career in the San Francisco Bay Area and is known to his more than 1 million followers across TikTok and Instagram as Mychal the Librarian.

Threets broke through on social media with heartwarming videos that went viral in 2023. His message has balanced real talk about mental health with unwavering positivity, a message he’s now carrying over as honorary chair of National Library Week (April 19–25), with the theme “Find Your Joy.” He’s also featured on a new READ poster.

He spoke with *American Libraries* about his path from hometown library to TikTok fame and beyond, and his debut picture book, *I’m So Happy You’re Here: A Celebration of Library Joy*, with illustrations by Lorraine Nam (Random House, February).

and even in their presence in the world, just by being *for* them.

That’s where the library always has a role: It’s reminding people that they’re not alone and that we’re going to do the best we can for one another. It’s us coming together as neighbors and saying, we all have a voice; this is who we are, this is why we need help even when we’re not able to ask for it. That’s where the helpers of the world come into play and start helping people via the local library.

Photo: Random House Children’s Books

BY
Sallyann
Price

You’ve talked about being a library kid long before you ever worked at the library. How did you start to see it as a career path? It took a lot of failure. It took a lot of mistakes, a lot of careers not panning out. My dream job was to be in the military. Even as a kid, loving the military because my dad was in the Marine Corps and my grandfather was drafted into the army, I wanted to be part of it. I actually went to boot camp and was medically discharged from the US Army.

I was in my troubles, struggling mightily, and I was back at the local library trying to figure out my next steps, using their computers to research, to read things, to just be present. I didn’t wake up and say, “Today I’m going to have the courage to ask the library people, ‘How do I start becoming a library person?’” I was just at the library, and something came over me and said, “Maybe you can do this, maybe you can work here while you’re figuring things out.”

I became a shelver and a library aide and a library assistant, and that’s when I realized, yes, this is the life for me. I love hearing people’s stories. I love helping them get into their emails, apply for jobs, learn to read, figure out the books that will help them learn to read. So I went to school, I kept getting hired and promoted, and I fell more and more in love with library service.

What do you think it is about your library content and joy that’s resonated so much on social media? I think a lot of it is that people remembered how much a library meant to them. For me, I started my social media career during the height of the pandemic. So many people were lonely, addressing different things in their lives, and they realized how big a role the local library played in their happiness, in their success,



Years after it went off the air, *Reading Rainbow* has now relaunched on YouTube. Why is this the right time and format for a reboot?

It's always been the right time for *Reading Rainbow*. We're doing what the show has always sought to do, which is to encourage people to read and reach people where they're at—which is YouTube, which is the internet. [Former host] LeVar Burton will always be *Reading Rainbow*. You won't find a bigger fan than me. That's why I'm so thankful to be a part of the show, to talk about what it has always represented and what it still represents.

Now you're a children's book author. Where did the idea for the book come from?

My picture book is intended to remind people that they belong in the library, they belong in books. The project has been in the works for a long time, way before *Reading Rainbow* was announced to the world. I think the publisher reached out because of my overwhelming joy and silliness for libraries and books. They saw I had stories to share.

As someone who has a tattoo sleeve of picture book characters, it's very exciting to be part of literature.

What were you reading as you were writing? A lot of Louis Sachar and Beverly Cleary. Getting back into the literature that hooked me and made me the reader I am. Also, some deep dives into Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, all sorts of people. Jason Reynolds, Kelly Yang, Raina Telgemeier. A lot of comfort reads and remembered reads that I've always loved.

You've been open about the stress and burnout that can come with being a public librarian. How do you reconcile that with library joy?

For public librarians, there are a lot of issues around the library being such a welcoming place—for the unhoused, for the mentally ill. I think if those people are not in the public library, the library is probably doing something incorrectly or actively excluding them, and that should never be the case.

That's something that's hard for young and experienced librarians alike to realize and to focus on, that that's their role in the world, to make sure the library is for every single person. But there's a lot of struggle. Being a library person, I focus on library joy, that's the heart of my content, but I've never shied away from what happens in libraries.

I try to remind people why they got into working for libraries and that the library *is* for every single

[The library reminds] people that they're not alone and that we're going to do the best we can for one another.

person. That's why it's okay if the library is a little bit noisy, if there are "loud in the library" days. You can learn to have a library voice, and you can realize the day when you're not ready for the library, and that's okay. There will always be a time, there will always be a place where you need the library, even if you don't think you do. At some point you will, and the library will be ready for you.

What gives you hope and keeps you choosing joy in troubling times?

It's always the library kids. They're the ones who saved me. They're the ones who made me keep on going, keep on coming back, and talk about libraries day in and day out. And recognizing that they struggle with everything that adults struggle with: mental health, anxiety, depression. And they keep on going, they try again and again. They remind us that things are worth fighting for, that [former US representative and civil rights activist] John Lewis's "good trouble" is something that every single one of us is capable of.

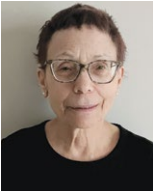
Seeing their remarkable fight—for their right to read, for the right to belong—keeps me going. As long as they're willing to fight, as long as they're willing to keep on persevering and bettering themselves, I'm going to do all I can to help them along the way. **AL**



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The Rules of Law

How librarians can help patrons with legal questions



ELYSE H. FOX has worked as a law librarian for more than 40 years and has previously practiced law. She is the author of *Legal Reference Service: A Guide for Law Librarians and Nonlaw Librarians* (2023) and *The Legal Research Dictionary: From Advance Sheets to Pocket Parts*, 4th edition (2025).

Librarians are used to being generalists, able to research all kinds of questions. But when someone seeks help filling out a form or understanding their rights, those same staffers may be wary of crossing the line from legal reference to unauthorized practice of law. Moreover, public library collections often have few legal resources for patrons.

Within these limitations, though, library workers can develop their legal reference skills and provide appropriate referrals. The American Association of Law Libraries' (AALL) 2014 report *Law Libraries and Access to Justice* offers tips for how to do this (bit.ly/AL-AALL). In the decade since this report was released, demand for services has remained high, with many low-income Americans unable to get adequate help for their civil legal problems (bit.ly/AL-LSC). Here are some takeaways from the report—and my 40 years in law librarianship—that are still relevant in bridging the justice gap.

Write, publicize, and enforce a legal reference services policy. A policy will promote consistent services and enable librarians to diplomatically set limits with patrons. Most importantly, it must clearly state

The goal of a legal reference interview is to identify resources—not to find the answer.

what librarians may and may not do. The policy should be approved and supported at the highest level of library administration, and copies should be available online and at the reference desk. Law Librarians of New England, a chapter of AALL, has suggestions for writing one (bit.ly/AL-LLNE). The excellent policy at Pikes Peak Library District in Colorado (bit.ly/AL-PPLD), for instance, notes that librarians may demonstrate, teach, locate, and refer, but they may not interpret, advise, or make specific recommendations.

Educate staff on legal reference, legal research, and what constitutes the unauthorized practice of law. Classes and training are offered by a variety of groups, including AALL and its chapters, the American Library Association (ALA), the Public Library Initiative (a partnership of Legal Services Corporation and OCLC), state library associations, and WebJunction. For example, ALA will offer the four-week online course “The Accidental Law Librarian: Legal Reference for Public Service Librarians” starting April 6 (bit.ly/AL-RUSA).

Develop a legal collection. AALL publishes recommendations on core legal collections for public libraries in state, federal, and general law, as well as state-specific toolkits. Also consider a law dictionary, an annotated statutory code, and subject treatises in areas where patrons have frequent questions, such as landlord-tenant issues, wills, and adoption. Some publishers, such as Nolo, offer affordable self-help legal materials. Many academic law libraries post LibGuides that focus on legal research within their state. If your library doesn't have

available funds, try asking your Friends group to raise money for these purchases. Your website should also point to relevant online resources.

Maintain referral lists. A referral is not a failure in service. Create a resource bank of contacts for patrons who need additional help with their questions, including public law libraries, government agencies, bar associations, legal aid providers and legal clinics, and self-help centers.

Develop a Lawyer in the Library program. In these programs, volunteer lawyers meet with patrons in person or virtually for a brief consultation. Libraries interested in hosting ongoing legal clinics (“Meeting Legal Needs,” *AL*, May 2020, p. 18) should look to their local bar associations or legal aid organizations.

Use a reference request form. A form will encourage patrons to ask coherent, organized questions. At a minimum, forms should ask for contact information, reasons for research, a time frame (for example, a court date or deadline to submit), and resources or individuals already consulted. Encourage patrons to fill these out before their interview. Keep in mind: A legal reference interview is not a standard reference interview. The goal is to identify resources for the patron to consult, not to find the answer. Statutes in all states and librarian ethics codes prohibit the unauthorized practice of law. No librarian—not even a law librarian who is licensed to practice law in the state—may provide answers or advice, or select or complete forms on behalf of the patron.

Don't reinvent the wheel. Contact libraries that have developed legal collections, programs, and training. Ask them what worked and what didn't. **AL**

ALA

eLearning



New Library Support Staff Certification Program

Those who lack formal education in Library and Information Science are put in a difficult position when they need to learn new skills: either marshal the resources and time to get a master's degree or learn on the job through a "sink or swim" approach. ALA is pleased to offer a modern, flexible solution to this problem: The new Library Support Staff Certification Program.

This program consists of six rigorous, self-paced courses that provide grounded, practical training in Library and Information Science for staff in any type of library and with any level of prior experience. Once enrolled, participants can work at their own pace over an 18-month period. Courses include extensive lectures, exclusive reading materials, practical exercises and worksheets, and rigorous assessments. You'll earn a certification through ALA-APA that will help you in your current job and help build your résumé.

Courses in the program include:

- Core Course: The Fundamentals of Library Services
- Reference and Information Services
- Collection Development
- Cataloging
- Programming and Outreach
- Library Management



VISIT
certifications.ala-apa.org/catalog

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Finding Funds

Where to look and how to ask



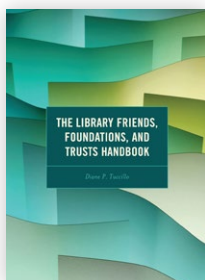
ALLISON ESCOTO is head librarian at the Center for Fiction in Brooklyn, New York.



Winning Grants, 3rd edition

BY Stephanie K. Gerding

This comprehensive, accessible guide offers practical advice focused exclusively on library fundraising, with information about grants of all types. The book distills information in an easy-to-understand format and covers such topics as the grant cycle process, planning a project for funding, and researching the most appropriate funding source. This volume also includes examples of grant proposals that were ultimately successful. The updated edition addresses the challenges grant seekers face in the post-pandemic fundraising landscape, including dwindling municipal funds, fewer programs and service hours, and evolving application requirements. ALA Neal-Schuman, 2024. 216 p. \$59.99. PBK. 979-8-89255-567-8.



The Library Friends, Foundations, and Trusts Handbook

BY Diane P. Tuccillo

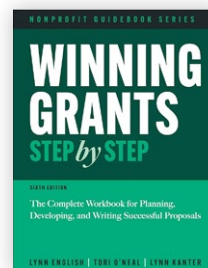
Library support groups are vital to keeping libraries healthy and funded. Tuccillo, a seasoned librarian, library advisory group leader, and member of various Friends groups, posits that Friends groups not only provide pivotal help with fundraising but can also supply volunteers and promote programming. The book gives real-world examples, programming ideas, sample recruiting documents, and an extensive bibliography for further information. Whether starting a Friends group or looking for ways to maximize the potential of an existing one, library workers across the board will find this an essential resource and a helpful part of their fundraising efforts. Rowman & Littlefield, 2024. 330 p. \$42. 978-1-5381-7926-0. (Also available as an ebook.)



Critical Data Storytelling for Libraries: Crafting Ethical Narratives for Advocacy and Impact

BY Kate McDowell

The challenge of how to take data and craft it into a compelling, inclusive story for fundraising and advocacy is an evergreen one, made more urgent by ongoing funding cuts. This book provides advice on how to extract relevant data, understand audiences, and effectively shape a narrative while staying true to the communities you serve. It's an exhaustive guide to the many challenges—such as putting data into context for the public and battling library misinformation—that can arise while communicating the relevance, importance, and financial needs of a library to stakeholders, potential donors, and the public. ALA Neal-Schuman, 2025. 192 p. \$54.99. PBK. 979-8-89255-280-6.



Winning Grants Step by Step: The Complete Workbook for Planning, Developing, and Writing Successful Proposals

BY Lynn English, Tori O'Neal, and Lynn Kanter

Written by nonprofit fundraising professionals, this workbook, in its sixth edition, remains as useful as ever. Although written for nonprofits generally, the pages contain a wealth of tips that libraries will find especially valuable. Beginners (or those in need of a refresher) will appreciate the practical format following the grant-writing process from soup to nuts, offering specific guides, questionnaires, and budgetary tables for every stage. This new edition features updated government grants, information on using artificial intelligence in applications and research, and a companion website with worksheets. Jossey-Bass, 2025. 176 p. \$44. PBK. 978-1-394-32161-2. (Also available as an ebook.) [AL](#)



5 LIBRARY WINS WORTH CELEBRATING

Community support and promising court decisions from across the country

Bad-news fatigue is real for library advocates who feel like every year is more hostile than the one before it. Since about 2021, coordinated groups of parents and elected officials, with support from well-funded networks, have increasingly pushed to outsource librarians' curatorial authority through parental consent policies and external review boards, all to exert greater control over what books are available on library shelves. It's a lot to take in.

But in 2025, there were notable examples of voters, courts, and candidates across the country affirming the profession's core values of intellectual freedom and inclusive access. Below we highlight five recent victories for libraries, library workers, and their communities.

1. California voters rein in city council overreach

Huntington Beach, California, has become a flashpoint in national conversations about partisan political encroachment in city governance. In 2023, its conservative city council passed a resolution restricting minors' access to library materials containing so-called "sexual content" (a blanket term that intellectual freedom advocates assert also includes materials relating to the human body, puberty, and LGBTQ+ issues, according to news organization CalMatters). The council also passed an ordinance establishing a community review board with unappealable power over book selection and use.

Last year, library supporters fought back. In a June special election, voters passed measures to repeal the ordinance and to restrict the city's ability to privatize libraries, each with roughly 60% of the vote. A court victory followed in September, when an Orange County

Superior Court judge sided with the American Civil Liberties Union and ruled against the city's restrictive library policies, finding that they violated the California Freedom to Read Act. (The council voted last fall to appeal the decision.)

2. Jones gets an apology in a Louisiana defamation case

Mere days after speaking out against censorship at a public library board meeting in 2022, school librarian Amanda Jones of Livingston Parish, Louisiana, found herself at the center of a social media firestorm fueled by right-wing organizations and bloggers who accused her of giving inappropriate materials to children and even instructing them about specific sex acts. She became one of the first librarians to sue for defamation in the recent wave of censorship cases. (See "How We Fight Back," *AL*, Sept./Oct. 2023, p. 28.)

Three years later, her long court journey notched a partial win. In November,

Jones announced that she had settled her suit against social media agitator Ryan Thames for \$1 and a public apology, which he shared on social media.

"This was never about money—it was about integrity," Jones wrote when she reposted the video. "I'm grateful that the false statements have been publicly corrected and that the truth is now clear. I hope this outcome serves as a reminder that words carry weight and that accountability matters."

A parallel defamation suit against conservative advocacy group Citizens for a New Louisiana and its leader is ongoing, according to the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

3. Ohio and Oregon voters turn out to protect library funding

Eighteen of 20 library funding levies on the ballot in Ohio were approved or renewed by voters in November, with the other two rejected by narrow margins.



In 2025, there were notable examples of voters, courts, and candidates across the country affirming the profession's core values of intellectual freedom and inclusive access.

This overwhelming show of support came amid increasing pressure on library funding. Months earlier, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine signed a budget that replaced a longstanding funding formula for libraries with a line-item appropriation that could make them more vulnerable to cuts, per [Cleveland.com](https://www.cleveland.com). Meanwhile, citizen groups are circulating petitions to eliminate property taxes, which can generate tens of millions of dollars in revenue for some of the state's largest library systems.

Similarly, in Washington County, Oregon, about 58% of voters in November approved Measure 34-345, a library levy increase from 22 cents to 37 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value, set to go into effect in July. Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) will now see 60% of its revenue funded by the tax, a jump of about 15%, according to [Oregon Live](https://www.oregonlive.com). The levy has been renewed every five years since 2006.

The increased funding will be distributed to the 16 libraries across WCCLS

via a new formula, following a change approved by the county's board of commissioners just a week before the vote. Libraries previously received funding based on the number of checkouts per location; now, funds will be distributed based on population density around each library. As reported by Oregon Public Broadcasting, some library leaders believe this new model corrects an imbalance in funding, while critics say the change will disproportionately benefit the county's smaller libraries, which see lower foot traffic.

4. Voters in Pennsylvania and Texas flip school board majorities

Progressive candidates in Texas picked up all three open seats on the board of Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District, closing out a contentious November election with a sound rejection of far-right encroachment across the state's third-largest school district. These wins unseated two incumbents—including the then-board president, who received about 15,000 fewer votes than his successor—and shut out three hopefuls who had advocated for book bans and altering curricula to remove references to vaccines and climate change, among other issues.

A similar flip took place in Gibsonia, Pennsylvania. In March 2025, amid bitter community debate, the board of

Pine-Richland School District voted 5–4 to pass a policy that immediately placed final authority to add or remove library books in the hands of the school board rather than the superintendent. In June, that same majority approved a budget with no property tax increases that would fund the school system, [TribLive](https://www.triblive.com) reported, despite the superintendent's repeated warnings about a seven-figure deficit going into the 2026–2027 school year.

The tide turned in November, when a group of Democratic candidates opposed to the review-board policy and concerned about the projected budget deficit—who campaigned together under the banner “Together for PR”—swept the four open seats, flipping the majority.

5. Teens lead the charge to restore titles in Georgia reading competition

Every year, the Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl brings together school and public library communities across Georgia to answer trivia questions about books nominated for Georgia's book awards for young readers. But when the project's steering committee released the 2026 high school list in early October, eight of the 20 titles that had been nominated for the Georgia Peach Book Awards were notably absent. The committee said it received “numerous reconsideration complaints” about some of the titles, all authored by female-identifying writers or writers from other marginalized backgrounds.

Within days of the omissions going public last fall, teenage students at local high schools organized to sound the alarm, circulating petitions and contacting the authors of the removed works to rally support, as reported by [Book Riot](https://www.bookriot.com). On October 15, the steering committee officially reinstated the affected titles via an open letter.

“The Georgia Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl was founded on a desire to foster a love of reading in Georgia children through a friendly and engaging competition,” the statement reads. “The passion and advocacy we have seen reminded us that the spirit of this competition lives strongest in those who read, think, and speak up.” **AL**

Getting Started with Web Accessibility

Small steps can produce
significant improvements

BY Carli Spina and
Rebecca Albrecht Oling

In April 2024, the US Department of Justice released a final rule revising Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which will now require websites of public entities to comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, Level AA digital accessibility standards.

Public entities with populations of more than 50,000 people must comply by April 24, 2026. Those with populations of fewer than 50,000 people will have until April 26, 2027.

GETTING STARTED WITH WEB ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS CAN FEEL OVERWHELMING. The ultimate goal should be a website that maximizes accessibility and considers inclusive access in all decisions. But even incremental improvements have real benefits.

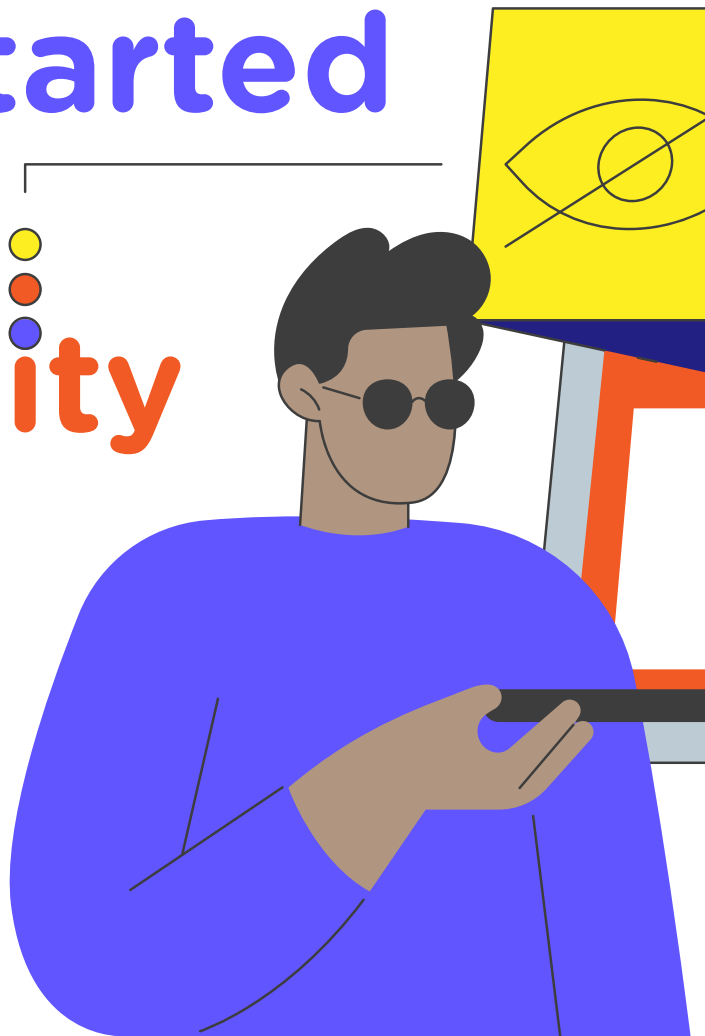
A good approach is to look at the most high-impact changes you can make early in the process to improve accessibility for users, even if the entire site is not fully accessible. The following sections outline several changes that can have a significant impact without requiring the wholesale redesign of a website.

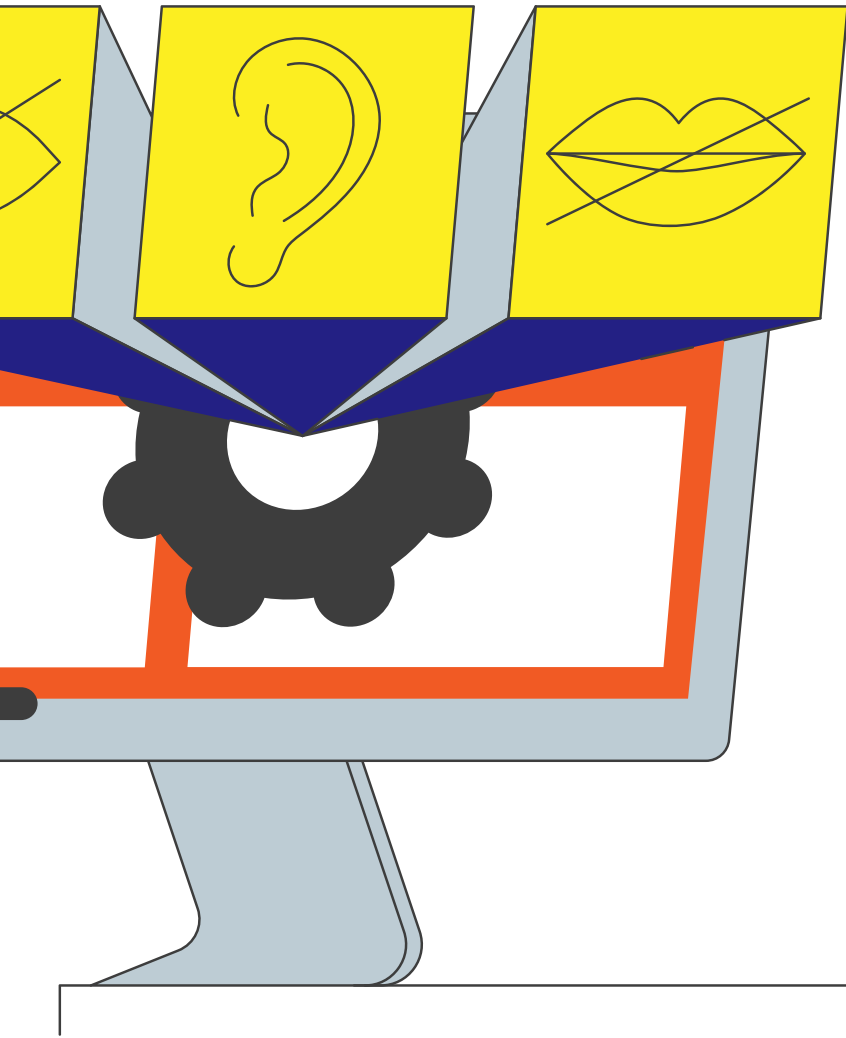
Structural elements

Structuring digital content clearly can improve accessibility, usability, and readability. While almost all HTML tags contribute to the structure of a page, heading tags are the key.

Heading tags range from level one, which represents the highest-level content, to level six, which represents the lowest level of content. In many content management systems, each of these levels is assigned a different style, such as a different font, text size, or color, which tempts web designers to use these headings aesthetically rather than to reflect the relative structure of the content. But this practice can be confusing for users of assistive technologies.

This is because many assistive technologies enable users to approximate the experience of skimming a page by skipping from heading to heading to first understand an outline of the information before selecting the section relevant to their needs. Without clear and concise headings that allow users to understand the information contained in each section of the page, screen-reader users have limited options beyond having the entire page read to them, in order, from start to finish, which can significantly slow their navigation.





Alt text

To make photos, graphics, and other static visual content and images accessible to those using screen readers or other assistive technologies, most visual items need alternative text—often abbreviated as alt text—included as part of the HTML image tag. Alt text is a concise description of an image used to convey the nature and content of that image. When a screen reader encounters alt text, it reads the text aloud, enabling the user to understand the content of the image.

Alt text must convey the information that the visual item is providing to users. It should also be as brief as possible, which causes a clear tension. One useful technique is to cut out extraneous words. For example, it isn't necessary to start alt text with "picture of" or similar text.

Another approach: Focus on the purpose for which the item is being shared. For instance, the painting *Self-Portrait with a Straw Hat* by Vincent van Gogh might be presented on your site as a depiction of the artist's appearance, to demonstrate his use of color, or to show other technical elements of his approach to painting. For each of these uses, the image could have different alt text that emphasizes those specific elements, rather than attempting to describe all aspects of the piece equally.

Alt text is critical for other visual content, such as icons and buttons, that may otherwise be invisible to assistive technologies. The social media icons included in many websites' footers, for example, often lack meaningful alt text, which can make them inaccessible to many users.

It is important to make sure that alt text does not merely repeat other content that is accessible to assistive technology, such as the caption for an image or the surrounding text. Otherwise, a screen reader might read the same text multiple times consecutively, which is both inefficient and potentially confusing for users.

In limited cases where an image is purely decorative, such as a logo that repeats the title of the page, it is permissible to leave the alt text empty. This will render the image invisible to assistive technologies, and a screen reader will simply skip over the image when reading the content of a page.

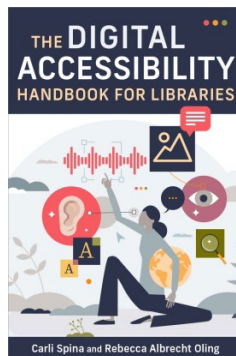
Color use and contrast

Color provides a lot of information. It can develop brand associations, convey information about the success or failure of specific

Readability

Creating easy-to-read content using plain language improves both accessibility and usability. A few useful guidelines:

- Organize content logically, using headings and lists as appropriate, and structuring information from more general to more specific.
- Use common words and avoid jargon, abbreviations, and other specialized or complicated language.
- Keep content concise.
- Use the active voice and present tense wherever possible.
- Evaluate all text for readability, including reading level, font selection, font size, color contrast with the background, and white space on the page.
- Know your audience and write with that audience in mind.



This is an excerpt from *The Digital Accessibility Handbook for Libraries* by Carli Spina and Rebecca Albrecht Oling (ALA Editions, 2025).



they want users to take. However, these links are not optimized for accessibility.

Many assistive technologies allow users to skip directly to the links on the page. Screen readers will read the text associated with each link to the user, but if all the links say “click here,” there is no way for the user to know which link to select. Also bad is when the URL itself is the link text, which will cause the screen reader to read each character in a potentially cumbersome URL.

The best practice is to use link text that clearly states where the link will take the user. For example, the link could be the entire phrase “visit our interlibrary loan page.” It is also important that each link’s text is unique (unless both links direct users to the same location and there is a compelling reason to use the link twice on the same page), so it is easy to differentiate between them.

actions, and draw attention to specific content, among many other uses. But when color is used without consideration of accessibility, it can create barriers to use for those with color-vision deficiency (often referred to as color blindness) or low vision, and for those using certain types of assistive technologies.

Avoid using color as the sole means of conveying information. For example, interactive components of websites often display error messages in red. That information should also be conveyed in another way, such as text that explains the problem. Another common example is the practice of making links a different color from the rest of the text. Using color as the sole means to indicate that a specific piece of text is a clickable link can be inaccessible to users who have difficulty perceiving differences in color, particularly when the link is not also underlined. Data visualizations and other graphics often also use color to convey information, but they should not rely solely on color. Text labels and patterns are often effective secondary approaches.

Another important aspect of color use is contrast between the colors. When two adjacent colors, such as text and its background, have insufficient contrast, it may be difficult or impossible for users to read the text. Many accessibility testing tools offer automated checks to confirm whether the contrast meets the standards set forth by WCAG.

Accessible links

How many times have you noticed a “click here” link on a website? Many web content creators use that phrase multiple times on the same page, since it is a call for the specific action

Where links open

Some designers opt to have links open in a new tab or window when clicked. For both good accessibility and good usability, links should open in the same tab for several reasons:

- For users who are blind or have low vision, new windows may make navigation more difficult, particularly when going back to the previous page.
- For users with mobility disabilities, it may be more difficult to navigate between windows and tabs.
- For users with cognitive disabilities, it may be more confusing and disorienting.

While opening content in new tabs or windows should be limited, WCAG guidance does acknowledge that it may be better to default to a new tab or window in specific, limited situations where the functionality of the content in question requires it, such as situations where linking from secure content to outside content would otherwise log a user out of the platform, or situations where failure to do so will “significantly disrupt a multistep workflow.” In all other situations, the default should be to open links in the same window and tab, while allowing users to decide for themselves if they wish to open a link in a new tab instead.

Accessibility overlays

In the last several years, automated tools, commonly referred to as overlays or widgets, have emerged. These tools claim to solve accessibility issues without the need to edit the underlying code for accessibility.

Many of these tools provide accessibility options through a pop-up on the screen showing options that users can select from. As these tools have emerged, they have frequently been used as a stopgap solution while websites undergo remediation.

Accessibility overlays are increasingly being marketed as a permanent solution to both legal compliance and actual accessibility, but they may not meet these goals. When WebAIM, a web accessibility-focused nonprofit affiliated with University of Utah in Salt Lake City, surveyed web accessibility practitioners about the effectiveness of overlays, it found that “a strong majority (67%) of respondents rate these tools as not at all or not very effective. Respondents with disabilities were even less favorable, with 72% rating them not at all or not very effective.”

It is possible that a day will come when this technology has advanced to the point that it can solve accessibility concerns without human intervention. But for now, accessibility overlays are best used as a temporary piece of a larger web accessibility strategy.

Prioritizing workflows

Whether starting a new project or evaluating an existing website, accessibility should be built into all aspects of the workflow. This can be a difficult proposition, but there are ways to incorporate accessibility considerations step by step. These strategies can maximize your initial impact and help get the process started:

- Revisions that address feedback about specific barriers users have reported are a good place to start.
- Testing your content with a combination of automated accessibility testing tools and actual assistive technologies will identify major barriers.
- While user data may not provide a perfect picture of what your users need, it is a good way to make some initial decisions about priority. Start with your most popular content and move on from there.
- Focus on information that is more likely to be used by users of assistive technologies, such as pages with accessibility information. Feedback forms should also be a priority so you can collect information about accessibility problems.
- Providing training on accessibility best practices for everyone who creates or edits new digital content will prevent new problems from emerging.

User testing

Ideally, efforts to learn from users should go beyond passively collecting feedback. One great way to gather this information is by conducting user experience tests. Even at libraries that have user experience testing programs, individuals with disabilities are frequently underrepresented in the testing populations.

When recruiting participants for these tests, it is important to intentionally build a testing community that is representative

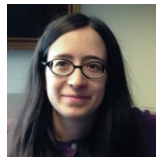
A good approach is to look at the most high-impact changes you can make early in the process to improve accessibility for users, even if the entire site is not fully accessible.

of your wider community. To most effectively reach individuals with disabilities, some libraries have found it is useful to partner with other groups, such as disability services offices or student groups for academic libraries, to conduct outreach. For public libraries, outreach might instead focus on local groups run by and for individuals with disabilities.

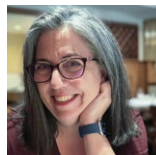
The testing process should be designed to be both accessible and inclusive. Supporting remote user experience testing can be an effective step. By allowing users to participate from their own workspace, it is possible to learn how they naturally use the site. Include interview questions that collect information about the exact technologies being used. This should include assistive technologies and also information on the type of device being used, the operating system it runs on, and the keyboard and other peripherals being used.

It is also important to design accessible test procedures, which can involve many different aspects. More generally, building flexibility into both the testing environment and the test protocol is key to successfully running inclusive user-testing programs, as many researchers have noted. These steps will help to ensure that your user experience testing gathers authentic and meaningful data from a representative group of your users. **AL**

A version of this story first appeared on americanlibrariesmagazine.org on December 17, 2025.



CARLI SPINA is associate professor and head of research and instructional services at Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City.



REBECCA ALBRECHT OLING is director of digital accessibility at Purchase College, State University of New York.



Finding Your Heroes on the Hill

Advocacy experts share how to turn library supporters into champions through deliberate engagement

You don't need to stream C-SPAN or binge *West Wing* reruns to know that the annual US federal budget process isn't always linear or logical. Progress is incremental, margins are razor-thin, and, as the library community has felt acutely over the last year, victories are rarely final.



“Elected officials have a limited amount of political capital they can dole out in any given year, and you want to do everything you can to direct some of that to libraries.”

—BRAD FITCH,

author and former CEO of the Congressional Management Foundation in Washington, D.C.

time—Ben Ray Luján (D-N.Mex.), who’s now a senator—had already been named Reforma Legislator of the Year, so he’d done a lot of work to get to that point. He consistently signs “Dear Appropriator” letters, he supports broadband efforts within tribal libraries, and he’s continued to fund our rural libraries with actual big bucks to get some work done. I’ve also had an opportunity to work with our other senator, Martin Heinrich (D-N.Mex.), who has helped direct federal funds to telehealth services through our state’s libraries.

When libraries are able to bridge the gap between what libraries do and what we can actually move forward as far as agenda items for members of Congress, that’s what turns them from supporters of libraries into library champions.

Braukus Hempstead: Brad, you worked for many years as a congressional staffer. Could you share a time when an advocate’s relationship-building efforts truly affected a congressperson’s actions?

Fitch: One of the important things about telling your story is humanizing the experience in a way that only you can, as a local librarian, to localize and put a face to issues that are sometimes invisible at the federal level.

One example from my research: I was interviewing members of the House of Representatives, and one of the best questions I asked, that I got really good data from, was, “Tell me about an incident or an issue that you had difficulty coming to a conclusion on, and what was the catalyst that made you come to a decision?”

One congressman told me about struggling with a vote on federal funding for stem cell research when he met a constituent during a fly-in. He was 17 years old and had juvenile diabetes and talked about his hope that this research might someday lead to a cure.

To help equip and energize advocates in an environment of heightened stakes, the American Library Association’s (ALA) Public Policy and Advocacy Office launched a webinar series as part of its Show Up for Our Libraries campaign. The sixth installment, “Turning Congressmembers into Library Champions,” brought together voices from the library side and the congressional side last fall to demystify the engagement process and provide practical tips for getting your representatives’ attention.

This excerpt features moderator **Susan Braukus Hempstead**, assistant director of strategic relations and communications at Sno-Isle Libraries in Washington State and chair of ALA’s Committee on Legislation, in conversation with **Kate Alderete**, director of Albuquerque–Bernalillo County (N.Mex.) Library System, and author **Brad Fitch**, former CEO of the Congressional Management Foundation in Washington, D.C.

Braukus Hempstead: Kate, tell us about your experience as a library director working to move a member of Congress from a supporter to a true library champion.

Alderete: I’m one of the lucky ones, because when I started diving into advocacy work, one of my congressmen at the

And the congressman looked at me and said, “That meeting just stuck with me.” He told me how he did further research and ended up cosponsoring legislation to provide federal funding for stem cell research—and he was a pro-life Republican.

That’s the power of storytelling. The neuroscience, the psychology of persuasion, tells us that storytelling is way more effective than rational spreadsheets. Start collecting stories—about yourself, a colleague, a patron—because having that story ready when you interact with the lawmaker or their staff is absolutely essential.

Braukus Hempstead: How would you define a member of Congress being a supporter versus being a champion on issues?

Alderete: I want to say outright that politicians don’t get to label themselves champions; we get to do that. We see all the time that politicians consider themselves library champions, and they will throw that word around, but there’s nothing in their record to actually support that. When we see that happen—and we’ll all deal with this at some point—it’s our responsibility to hold politicians’ feet to the fire.

When you continue to see your members of Congress moving library issues forward—whether local, state, or national—and when libraries are being funded, that’s a mark of someone who’s moved from being a supporter to a champion.

Fitch: One metric I would use is: Have they visited the library? And did that visit get some kind of media, social media, or other coverage? If you bring in a politician, and they’re reading with kids and get a picture taken, it’s really hard for them to say no when you go back to them and tell them those programs could go away.

One of the messages I always give to my trainees is: If officials say yes to something, don’t take yes for an answer. Always elevate it. If they agree to a library visit, ask them to sign appropriations letters. Mention your state appropriations chairs by name.



Susan Braukus Hempstead



Kate Alderete



Brad Fitch

Many groups I work with are too hesitant to keep pushing, but it’s really okay. Do you think the National Rifle Association hesitates? You think the National Association of Realtors hesitates? No way. And that’s who you’re competing with for attention. Elected officials have a limited amount of political capital they can dole out in any given year, and you want to do everything you can to direct some of that to libraries.

Braukus Hempstead: Brad, what are some pitfalls that advocates may face when they first seek to build a relationship, either with staff or a member of Congress?

Fitch: Try to build a relationship with the state staff. They’re the ones who are going to be your champions. Every one of you should have a relationship with the House district director for your member of Congress. You have agency as a librarian representing your community. They will meet with you.

One of the mistakes I see is not involving your network. If you’ve got board members or high-profile patrons you know are library supporters, involve them in the process. It doesn’t have to be a big ask; it might just be a letter to the editor or coming to the library when the member of Congress is there. When you can bring in people from different walks of life and show representatives how they’re connected to the library, the congressperson will connect the dots. If a politician can say yes once and make two people happy, they love that math.

Lastly, always have a specific ask and be bold with laying out the stakes. Tell them, “If we don’t get this funding, this program may go away, or we may have to cut hours.” It doesn’t have to be definitive, but if that representative thinks they’re going to be partially responsible for it, and that it might get out, that’s a big deal.

Braukus Hempstead: Brad, what are your tips for doing homework on your congressperson and their staff to build that relationship?

Fitch: Start with seeing what news stories are coming out. Look at their websites and the press releases they’re putting out. And

look up their social media feeds. That will give you a really good view of what they're prioritizing and what their voice is like.

Often, members of Congress have a "recess voice" that's very different than their "D.C. voice," so don't just look at their feed when they're in Washington, where everybody's tweet is the same: "We're great and here's why." It's boring.

If you're meeting with a staffer, they're all on LinkedIn and it's okay to look them up. Who knows, maybe you went to the same college, or your kids' college, any connection. But stay away from their personal accounts on other platforms.

Braukus Hempstead: *Kate, what is the most rewarding thing you've found about this work and building this relationship?*

Alderete: It's extremely rewarding when you see relationships leading to funding moving forward. But another really valuable relationship that builds up is your relationship with other advocates. What I can say and who I can say it to is kind of limited, as far as members of Congress and even state people and city people. But I can text my friends from other libraries that I've worked with to push issues forward.

Braukus Hempstead: *Brad, what can advocates do to make sure the relationship is rewarding, not only for them but also for the members of Congress and staff with whom they're engaging?*

Fitch: Everybody comes to Congress asking for something. Very few people come to Congress offering something. Offer something. When you're with that staff member, say, "What can I do to help you understand the impact of libraries? Would it be helpful if I brought in some of our patrons or board members?" Guide their decision-making process by inviting them to give you a suggestion.

For the members, appreciate that they're under a lot of pressure. Leading with empathy really makes a difference and will separate you from the other groups that just come in with their talking points asking for something.

Braukus Hempstead: *This question is difficult but important. How can we engage with our members of Congress, even if we seem to hold opposing views or values on issues that are important to libraries and their communities?*

Alderete: It's a rookie mistake—and I've made this mistake—to think that because we hold opposing viewpoints, we have different values.

When I was starting out in advocacy, I was sitting at an ALA fly-in event, and someone asked me, "How do you think your meetings are going to go?" And I said something like, "Oh, they're going to go fine, all of my representatives and senators are Democrats." Immediately someone said to me, "Well, what difference does that actually make?" I thought about that moment a few years later when I was in a room with a Republican representative, and we talked about all the good work libraries do within our states.

“It’s a rookie mistake—and I’ve made this mistake—to think that because we hold opposing viewpoints, we have different values.”

—KATE ALDERETE, director of Albuquerque-Bernalillo County (N.Mex.) Library System

The mistake is not realizing that there is common ground between what libraries do and the goals that most members of Congress are trying to move forward. Think about things like telehealth, broadband, quality of life for seniors, early education for children. These are bipartisan quality-of-life issues for all.

It's important to look at what those "opposing viewpoint" members of Congress find valuable and important, and the work they're trying to move forward, and then we need to say to ourselves as library people, "How can my library support that?" Or, "How is my library already supporting that?"

That's my tip for getting over that hump, because it can be hard. We are in very divisive times right now. But again, we're all people. When you're sitting in an office, remember that you're there as a constituent, you're from the same state. Very likely you've got lots in common. Look to see what that is.

Fitch: First of all, don't assume that their public persona is their private persona. They have outdoor voices and indoor voices. And they're looking for a reason to say yes to you.

Not to diminish the importance of the Institute of Museum and Library Services and some of the things you're working on, but from a budgetary, government standpoint, we're not talking about big dollars, not up there with things like defense and Social Security. On some levels that's an advantage; you're such a force multiplier. These grants that fund staff at the state level, at the local level, are translated into programs that have community-wide impact.

Your best argument with people you think will oppose you is: "You're not going to get a better bang for your buck than by investing in libraries, and I dare you to prove me wrong." **AL**

Access ALA's free advocacy resources at ala.org/showup, sign up for advocacy alerts at ala.org/takeaction, and use the hashtag #ForOurLibraries to spread the word on social media.

PEOPLE

Announcements

ON THE MOVE

Nancy Bell became director of Ripon (Wis.) Public Library July 1.

October 20 **Ginny Boyer** started as university librarian and director of library services at High Point (N.C.) University.

January 6 **Elizabeth Call** was named head of Penn State University Libraries' Eberly Family Special Collections Library in University Park.

Pei-Ying Chen became assistant professor and digital scholarship and sciences research specialist librarian at University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries in August.



Bella Desai became vice president of public programs and exhibitions for the Research Libraries at New York Public Library November 5.

November 3 **Eileen Dewitya** was named Frank Borden Hanes Curator of Rare Books at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Wilson Library.

Tracie D. Hall was named executive director of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Library Alliance in January.



In September **Helene Idels** became youth services librarian at San Diego Public Library's Rancho Bernardo branch.

Stephanie Katz was named director of Tingley Memorial Library in Bradenton Beach, Florida, in September.

November 17 **Anamika Lal** joined University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's "On the Books: AI-Assisted Collections" initiative as data specialist.



Kudos

Mark Emmons, professor and dean of the College of University Libraries and Learning Sciences at University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, was named the 2025 New Mexico Academic Librarian of the Year by the New Mexico Consortium of Academic Libraries in October.



October 28 **Kimberley Hrivnak**, COO for the Allegheny County Library Association in Pittsburgh, received the Pennsylvania Library Association's highest honor, its Distinguished Service Award. ●

Christopher Leggins became executive director of Danville (Ill.) Public Library November 3.



Timothy McGeary became University of Rochester (N.Y.) librarian and the Andrew H. and Janet Dayton Neilly Dean of Libraries March 1.



In August **James Moore** became associate university librarian for open scholarship at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec.



In November **Merrilee Proffitt** became director of the US division of Democracy's Library, the Internet Archive's open collection of government research and publications.

Jennifer Schatz Bartlett joined University of Tennessee, Knoxville Libraries as associate dean for engagement, learning, and public services in October.

In December **Dina Sherman** became family engagement manager at Thomas Memorial Library in Cape Elizabeth, Maine.

In June **Christa Welty-Salgado** became graduate and e-resources management librarian at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana.



PROMOTIONS

Dylan Baker became Idaho state librarian and agency director of the Idaho Commission for Libraries December 22.

November 17 **Julie Golia** was promoted to Linda May Uris Director of the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Library at New York Public Library.

December 15 **Hannah Terrell** was promoted to director of libraries at Austin (Tex.) Public Library.

Annika Troyer became librarian at Winthrop (Wash.) Public Library in June.

RETIREMENTS

In January **Surinder Bhogal** retired as chief librarian at Surrey (B.C.) Libraries.

Pamela Hickson-Stevenson retired as executive director of Akron-Summit County (Ohio) Public Library in December.

January 1 **Chris Long** retired as professor and faculty director of the Resource Description Services Team at University of Colorado Boulder Libraries.

In December **Steve Norman** retired as director of Belfast (Maine) Free Library after 24 years in the role.

Illinois Heartland Library System Associate Director **Ellen Popit** retired November 29.

In Memory

Robin E. Brown, 64, died October 8. Brown worked as professor and head of public services for the A. Philip Randolph Library at Borough of Manhattan Community College until her retirement in 2024. She was active in several Library Association of City University of New York–wide groups, serving as chair of the Reference Round Table and chair of the Disability Services Round Table. Within ALA, she served as chair of the Association of College and Research Libraries' Community and Junior College Libraries Section. Her scholarly work, including the article "Claiming Our Space: A Quantitative and Qualitative Picture of Disabled Librarians" (2019) and the book *Seeking to Understand: A Journey into Disability Studies and Libraries* (Library Juice Press, 2021), both cowritten with Scott Sheidlower, established her as a vital advocate for marginalized library workers.

Susan Brynteson, 89, died May 26. Prior to her retirement, Brynteson served as vice provost (2008–2015) and May Morris University Librarian (2001–2015) at University of Delaware (UD) in Newark. She started at UD as director of libraries in 1980. Under her leadership, UD was invited to join the Association of Research Libraries (1983) and became an early adopter of open source software. In 2016, Brynteson was awarded the University of Delaware Medal of Distinction. Additionally, UD created the Library Director Fund for Innovation and Creativity in her honor.



Carol Gibbens, 81, died October 15. Gibbens worked as a reference librarian at University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), from 1968 to 2003. During her tenure at UCSB, she was instrumental in creating a for-credit course on library research strategies and resources. She served on the advisory committees for both the UCSB online cataloging systems and University of California's systemwide online catalog.



Bill Hubbard, 84, died September 15. During his career, Hubbard served as library director at Eureka (Ill.) College; Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri; Gettysburg (Pa.) College; and Warren Wilson College in Swannanoa, North Carolina, where, upon retirement, he was named library director emeritus. He started his library career in the science library of Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Elizabeth Huntoon, 79, died November 30. Huntoon was director of children's services for Chicago Public Library until her retirement in 2000. In the 1980s, she served in an advisory role for the PBS television program *Reading Rainbow*. Huntoon was the recipient of ALA's Grolier Award (now Scholastic Library Publishing Award) in 1999.

Fred McCrae Peterson, 88, died September 26. Peterson served as university librarian at Illinois State University's Milner Library in Normal from 1982 until his retirement in 1996. He started his career at Iowa State University in Ames, where he worked as assistant director for libraries and later associate director for libraries. He then served as assistant professor, associate dean of the library school, and director of libraries at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. (1973–1982). Peterson was the 1985–1986 chair of the ALA Nominating Committee and president of the Illinois Library Association (ILA) in 1989. He was awarded ILA's Librarian of the Year in 1994. Working with 1981–1982 ALA President Elizabeth Stone, he helped launch poster sessions at Annual Conference. He also contributed to Heartsill Young's edition of *The ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science* (1983).

Dorothy Vogel, 90, died November 10. Vogel worked as a reference librarian at Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library until her 1990 retirement. She and her husband, Herbert, were nationally known for the more than 4,000 artworks that they collected in their modest one-bedroom apartment. The Vogels donated their collection to the National Gallery of Art and museums across the country. ●

AT ALA

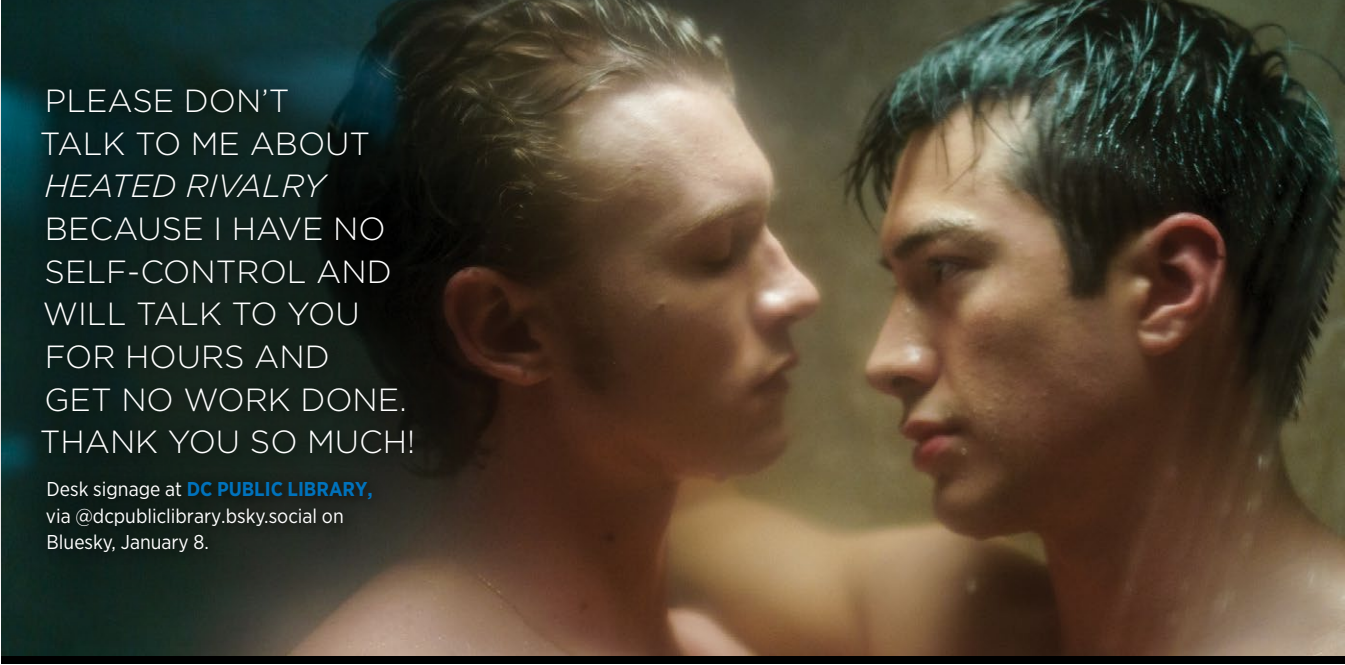
January 16 **Mia Blixt-Shehan**, continuing education assistant for Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures, left ALA.

Peggy Galus, sales and customer service manager at ALA Editions/ALA Neal-Schuman, retired January 2.

January 7 **Kristin Lahurd**, deputy director of content strategy for Conference

Services, left ALA.

Donna Mangrum, membership and accounting coordinator, died in December. She had worked for the Accounting and Membership teams since 2022. [AL](#)



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TALK TO ME ABOUT
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BECAUSE I HAVE NO
SELF-CONTROL AND
WILL TALK TO YOU
FOR HOURS AND
GET NO WORK DONE.
THANK YOU SO MUCH!

Desk signage at [DC PUBLIC LIBRARY](#),
via [@dcpubliclibrary.bsky.social](#) on
Bluesky, January 8.

“People have been asking me, in a concerned tone, ‘How is the book tour? Is it exhausting?’ And I say, ‘No, I have so much fun.’ I got to go to these amazing bookstores and chat with readers.”

Novelist and 2026 Carnegie Medal winner [MEGHA MAJUMDAR](#), in “Why Megha Majumdar Has ‘So Much Fun’ on Book Tours,” CBC/Radio-Canada: *Bookends with Mattea Roach*, January 14.

“This was not part of some ‘long-planned facilities consolidation’ as [NASA Administrator Jared] Isaacman claims. The Goddard Master Plan, written in 2022, does not call for the library’s closure. Building 21, which houses the library, was scheduled for renovation, not elimination.”

[MATT BIGGS](#), president of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), in “IFPTE Responds to NASA Administrator Isaacman’s Misleading and Misguided Explanation for Closing NASA’s Largest Research Library,” IFPTE News, January 7.

“I feel calm in libraries. I think it’s because everyone else is so calm, and everyone’s working or researching or something. It’s almost like a movie set, and I have to pretend I’m working too. Everyone should have a library card. It’s like a bicycle for your brain.”

Actor [JASON SCHWARTZMAN](#), in “Jason Schwartzman Finds Peace at the Library,” *The New York Times*, November 29, 2025.

“I don’t have anything against men writing about being men. I wish more men had committed to doing it and given other men a road map or a starting point for conversations about masculinity and what it means to be a good man in today’s world.... I do, however, have an issue with the idea that women have dominated the literary landscape and that somehow masculinity is back after being cast out and ignored. It is simply not true.”

Writer and radio presenter [SALMA EL-WARDANY](#), “‘I’m Terrified Women’s Stories Are Quietly Disappearing’: Author Salma El-Wardany on Why Reading Books by Women Is More Important than Ever,” *Stylist* (UK), November 28, 2025.



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