

american libraries

Fall 2026

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

2026

LIBRARY DESIGN SHOWCASE

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NEWSMAKER:
Min Jin Lee p. 12

PLUS: Upskilling,
Cellphone Bans, Mall Library

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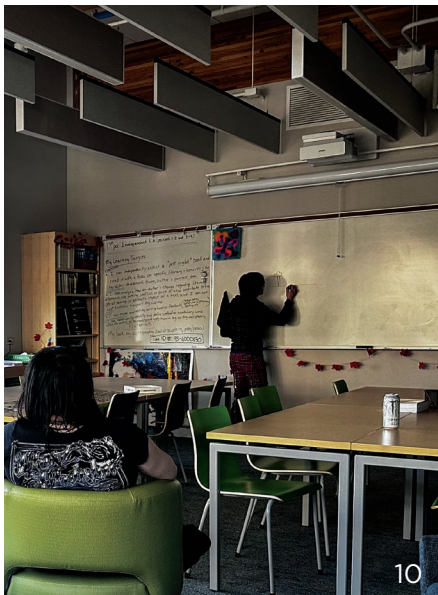
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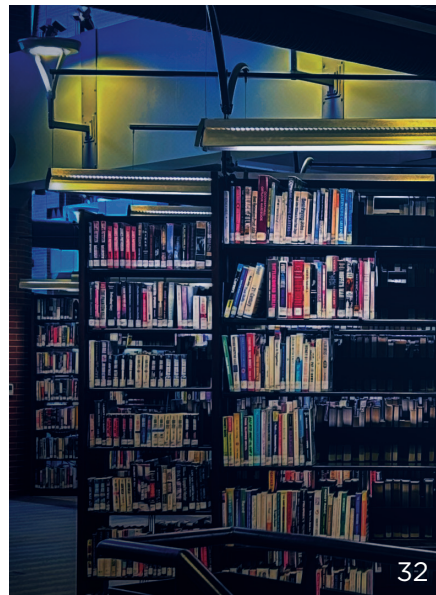
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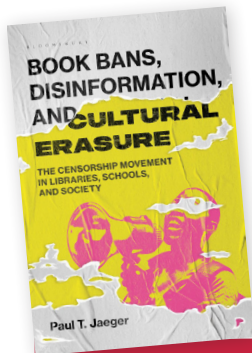
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Address: 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300
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Career Ads: JobLIST.ala.org

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Acceptance of advertising does not constitute endorsement. ALA reserves the right to refuse advertising.

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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, 4 issues, US, Canada, and Mexico; international: \$90. Subscribe at bit.ly/AL-Subscribe. 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: \$20, with a 20% discount for five or more copies. (Discount applies only to multiple copies of the same issue.) Contact ALA Member Relations and Services, 800-545-2433 or membership@ala.org.

PUBLISHED

American Libraries (ISSN 0002-9769) is published 4 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.

from the
EDITOR

Flexible by Design



Sanhita SinhaRoy

The 15 libraries featured in this year's Library Design Showcase (cover story, p. 16) share a common thread: an openness to change. As Sallyann Price notes, these libraries "are finding ways to acknowledge historical and environmental realities, embrace natural elements and cultural identities, evolve traditions, and build in flexibility to account for the unexpected."

This spirit of adaptability led Escondido (Calif.) Public Library (EPL)—the city's lone library—to find an unlikely temporary home in a shopping mall while building renovations took place. "The mall was not just available space; it was a location where public access, economic development, and community visibility could overlap," writes EPL Director Rino Landa in our Perspectives column this issue ("Mall Wonder," p. 14).

School librarians have lately been adjusting to an unexpected—and welcome—change, too, as statewide cellphone bans have driven more students to spend time in the library. This surge in the school library's popularity, Reema Saleh writes, has led to a stronger culture of reading and engagement ("Hold the Phone," p. 10).

The public library had a profound effect on bestselling author Min Jin Lee when she was a kid. It was a place where she felt free to grow and learn. As she explains to *American Libraries* Managing Editor Terra Dankowski (Newsmaker, p. 12), "Libraries are spaces in which I feel like I'm okay."

Finally, with this issue, *American Libraries* transitions to a quarterly publication, a shift many association magazines have made as inflationary and geopolitical pressures have increased production expenses like paper, ink, and postage. But rest assured, our team's mission remains unchanged: to inform and inspire readers for a stronger, more sustainable profession.

And as always, check out americanlibraries.org for more stories, including interviews with challenged authors and other Banned Books Week coverage in early October.

Sanhita

The 15 libraries
in our Library
Design
Showcase
share a
common
thread: an
openness
to change.

A Sense of Purpose

Building resilient communities with civic action



Maria McCauley

When it comes to building resilient and equitable communities, libraries are natural leaders. We provide places where neighbors meet, learn, and support one another; where sustainability education becomes action; and where residents can find year-round climate refuge. When communities are resilient, they are better able to overcome barriers.

The Obama Presidential Center (OPC) branch of Chicago Public Library (CPL) is an example of a library that strengthens the social infrastructure that underpins resilience. CPL Commissioner Chris Brown describes the branch as a civic platform for residents, artists, educators, and organizations to cocreate the life of the library and its surrounding public spaces. Though just 5,000 square feet, OPC was designed to spark connection, invite conversation, and inspire activities that encourage socialization and enjoyment. The branch partners with such nonprofits as the Art Institute of Chicago, the literary arts group StoryStudio Chicago, and the artist-led alt_Chicago. OPC is a striking example of how libraries do not just serve resilient communities, they help create them.

On the Gulf Coast, sustainability is a daily requirement. Lindsay Cronk, dean of Tulane University Libraries in New Orleans, has shared that the library's partnership with Keep Louisiana Beautiful, a state program, helps connect students, faculty, and staff with opportunities for conservation, beautification, recycling, and environmental action. Sustainability is a literacy issue, Cronk says. Just as we teach individuals to evaluate sources and navigate an information ecosystem, we can help communities understand environmental challenges and identify meaningful ways to respond.

Kelsey LaPort, a school librarian at Sunrise Drive Elementary School in Sayville, New York,

has been committed to hands-on climate education. In addition to exploring research projects with her students, LaPort and STEAM teacher Jennifer Horton introduced a TerraCycle program in which students recycle hard-to-recycle items like applesauce pouches and juice boxes. Check out *Guiding Youth from Eco-Anxiety to Empowerment: Climate Action Programming for School and Public Libraries* (ALA Editions, August), LaPort's new book coauthored with Noel Reich.

As Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, cofounder of the nonprofit Sustainable Libraries Initiative, says, "Libraries are a natural catalyst for community resilience [because of] our ability to draw people who normally may not come together to learn together, problem solve together, and be a part of something larger than themselves." As she says, it provides folks a sense of purpose.

So how do we advance long-term resiliency? The first step is to engage in cross-sector and intergovernmental partnerships, social safety networks, and community-wide sustainability planning.

As we advance resiliency efforts locally, we also support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, a blueprint for addressing global challenges like poverty and climate change by 2030.

To learn more about sustainability as a core value and scalable measures you can take, see the National Climate Action Strategy for Libraries Implementation Guide (bit.ly/LibClimAct), and join the Sustainability Round Table. Also read ALA Past President Sam Helmick's "Sustainability at Our Core" column from last year (bit.ly/AL-SustainCore) and check out the Sustainable Libraries Initiative.

We encourage you to be part of these conversations throughout the year, wherever you are, and to take a stand for climate justice. **AL**

MARIA MCCAULEY is director of libraries at Cambridge (Mass.) Public Library.

Libraries
can help
communities
understand
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and identify
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ways to
respond.

Thank You, School Librarians

A fully funded and staffed school library is essential to learning and growth



Dan Montgomery

School librarians work hard to turn their classroom—the library—into the well-loved hub and heart of the school.

With a fresh school year underway, it's the perfect time to lift up professionals who not only boost student learning and achievement but also help to make their schools welcoming, magical places of endless opportunity. I'm talking, of course, about school librarians and library support staff.

School librarians work hard to turn their classroom—the library—into the well-loved hub and heart of the school. It's a tall order, but they are up to the task.

Certified school librarians are trained to provide equitable access, personalized learning opportunities, technology access, updated digital and print materials, and creative programming to motivate students and help them become lifelong readers and civically involved. Oh, yes—all while dealing with kids and everything wonderful and challenging that they offer.

When the librarian has a support person working alongside them, even better. Every student should have access to a certified school librarian, library support staff, and adequate funding for materials and resources.

Unfortunately, though, we have a school library crisis in our country. Too many schools have underfunded and understaffed libraries, even though research shows a positive correlation between high-quality school library programs, with a certified school librarian at the helm, and higher student achievement and stronger literacy outcomes. In 2019, the most recent year for which ALA has data, the US had roughly 90,400 K–12 public and private schools. Of those, 91% had school libraries, but only 61% had full-time librarians (bit.ly/SOAL-2019). That's why this is an important part of ALA's advocacy, and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) is one of our biggest and most active divisions.

I often think about my first school library experience. My elementary school in suburban Detroit

was a modern structure with round classrooms and a library in the center. It was, literally and figuratively, a connecting node that brought the school together. My classmates and I took daily trips to the library. Mrs. Marshall, our beloved librarian, made my favorite books come alive and helped instill in me a love of reading and libraries.

My own kids were also blessed with a terrific school librarian who lit up the place. I recently had the chance to reunite with that librarian, Elisa Gall, at our Annual Conference and Exhibition in Chicago. She not only remembered my kids, who are now grown, but also asked about them by name. That's a school librarian for you!

Elisa was just one of the many school librarian members at Annual in June. This group represented a large portion of the 9,000 ALA members in attendance, and I thank them for their commitment to their profession and their involvement in the Association.

Last fall, I attended the AASL conference in St. Louis. It was so great to be in a room of teacher-librarians. I told my story of being that high school English teacher who insisted on taking my classes to the school library for orientations at the start of each year. The AASL members cheered. They understand that when students have a library of their own—and use it—it greatly enhances their learning and growth, and they develop important habits as members of a functional democracy. When high school seniors were working on their research papers, we made the library our classroom.

That's really what it comes down to. It's not just about staffing libraries, it's about creating spaces and opportunities for young people to become informed, engaged citizens. And that, in the end, is what matters most. **ALA**

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

Library Advocates Mobilize to Secure IMLS Funding, Protect E-Rate

On June 5, the US House Appropriations subcommittee that oversees funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) approved level funding for the federal agency. The Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, which released its fiscal year 2027 (FY2027) bill on June 4, included \$291.8 million for IMLS. It was approved by the full House Appropriations Committee on June 9.

“ALA is encouraged by the House Appropriations subcommittee’s FY2027 proposal to continue funding for IMLS, especially in light of President Trump’s proposal of \$6 million to shut down the agency,” said then-ALA President Sam Helmick in a June 5 statement. “We hope that the House markup will serve as a baseline for Senate appropriators to provide the robust funding needed to run programs that benefit individual constituents and local economies.”

Separately, ALA announced on June 25 that it has partnered with the Schools, Health, and Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition on a national advocacy campaign to rally support for the E-Rate program. This comes after the Federal Communications

Commission (FCC) voted to advance a proposal questioning whether the program, which has provided affordable broadband to schools and libraries for nearly 30 years, should be terminated or limited to rural areas.

“A fast, reliable internet connection is as necessary for library workers and patrons, educators and students as it is for FCC regulators, but it’s not cheap to maintain,” Helmick said in a June 25 statement. “Withholding broadband access from learning institutions that rely on it to serve their communities and fulfill their missions is not the answer to the alarming increase in screen time for kids or adults.”

“Instead of asking whether E-Rate should be terminated, the FCC should be asking how to make it stronger,” said SHLB Executive Director Joey Wender in the statement. “Today’s vote represents an attack on school and library funding that none of these institutions can afford to lose, particularly in the most disadvantaged rural and urban communities.”

Learn more about the campaign and access resources at saveourerate.com. Learn more about the annual congressional appropriations process at ala.org/fundlibraries. ●

Nominees Sought for ALA Leadership Positions

The Nominating Committee for ALA Elections is seeking nominees for the positions of ALA president-elect, Executive Board member, and councilor-at-large for the 2027 spring ballot.

For more information about eligibility and the nomination process, visit ala.org/election. The deadline to submit nominations and forms is September 14.

Members who are unable to complete the form during the nomination period or who were not selected by the Nominating Committee may run for office by petition starting October 1.

ALA Council Adopts AI Guidance

On June 28, at ALA’s 2026 Annual Conference in Chicago, Council adopted

Guidance on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Libraries, a new resource designed to help libraries develop and revise policies for the ethical, human-centered use of artificial intelligence.

Developed by ALA’s 30-member Artificial Intelligence Policy Working Group, the guidance reflects the perspectives and expertise of members from across the Association. Formed by Council at the 2025 Annual Conference in Philadelphia, the working group considered the practical, philosophical, ethical, and operational implications of AI for libraries and library workers.

“Artificial intelligence is shaping the information landscape, and the guidance from ALA reflects both innovation and the values at the heart of librarianship,” said ALA President Maria McCauley in

a July 16 statement. “This document gives libraries a practical starting point for approaching AI responsibly, ethically, and with people at the center.”

Three Artists Create Pieces for Banned Books Week

This year’s theme for Banned Books Week (October 4–10) is “Let Books Be. Protect the Freedom to Read” and will be celebrated with new works from three artists.

In an April 30 announcement, ALA and the Banned Books Week Coalition (BBWC) described the current struggle against book bans as too immense to capture in a single image and instead chose themed artwork from three award-winning illustrators: Mikey Burton, Hyesu Lee, and Loveis Wise.

New Fundraising Campaign Honors ALA's Sesquicentennial

As part of ALA's ongoing sesquicentennial celebrations, the Association has launched a comprehensive fundraising campaign, "For Our Libraries. For 150 Years More."

"In this sesquicentennial year, we recommit to the principles that have guided us for 150 years: courage, collaboration, access, and an unyielding faith in the power of stories to change lives," said then-ALA President Sam Helmick in a June 3 statement. "'For Our Libraries, For 150 Years More' is an investment in library workers, equitable access to information, intellectual freedom, and life-long literacy in every community."

The \$60 million campaign goal makes this the most ambitious philanthropic initiative in ALA's history. ALA is directing campaign gifts to programs and services supporting several key action areas: advancing the library profession, advocacy for libraries, equitable access to information, intellectual freedom, and literacy of all kinds.

The campaign will extend through December 2027. Visit ala150.org to learn more. ●

CALENDAR

2026

ALA's 150th Anniversary
ala150.org

SEPT.

Library Card Sign-Up Month
bit.ly/LibCardSU

SEPT. 16-19

Association for Rural and Small Libraries Conference
Montgomery, Alabama
arsl.org/2026-conference

OCT. 1-3

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

OCT. 4-10

Banned Books Week
bannedbooksweek.org

OCT. 18-24

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

OCT. 19-25

Open Access Week
openaccessweek.org

NOV.

International Games Month
bit.ly/ALA-igm

NOV. 18-20

Core Forum | Louisville, Kentucky
coreforum.org

APR. 2027

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

APR. 7-10, 2027

ACRL 2027 | Portland, Oregon
ala.org/acrl

APR. 11-17, 2027

National Library Week
ala.org/nlw

JUNE 24-28, 2027

ALA's Annual Conference and Exhibition | New Orleans
bit.ly/Annual-future

OCT. 14-16, 2027

AASL National Conference
Portland, Oregon
ala.org/aasl/conferences

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

In compliance with the United States Postal Service requirements, the following statement is published as it was submitted to the postmaster on PS Form 3526.

Publication title
American Libraries

Publication number
0002-9769

Filing date
August 6, 2026

Issue frequency
4 issues annually

Mailing address
225 N. Michigan Ave.
Suite 1300
Chicago, IL 60601

Editor/Publisher
Sanhita SinhaRoy

Managing Editor
Terra Dankowski

Owner
American Library Association

Extent and nature of circulation

Total number of copies (net press run)

Paid circulation

Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions

Mailed in-county paid subscriptions

Paid distribution outside the mails

Paid distribution by other classes of mail through the USPS

Total paid distribution

Free or nominal rate distribution

Outside-county copies

In-county copies

Copies mailed at other classes through the USPS

Distribution outside the mail

Total free or nominal rate distribution

Total distribution

Copies not distributed

Total

Percent paid

Electronic copy circulation

Paid electronic copies

Total paid print copies

Total print distribution

Percent paid

Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months

No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date

40,437

40,676

38,155

38,465

1,374

1,325

1,183

1,127

0

0

39,529

39,790

10

12

7

11

0

0

420

350

437

373

39,966

40,163

471

513

40,437

40,676

98.91%

99.07%

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0

39,529

39,790

39,966

40,163

98.91%

99.07%

ALA Workers Vote Yes on Union

In May, ALA employees voted overwhelmingly to approve the formation of ALA Workers United (ALAWU), a new union representing Association staff as part of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 31 in Illinois.

The final vote count, tallied on May 27, was 77–4, with 81 out of 87 votes counted (six votes were challenged). The National Labor Relations Board certified the election on June 4. ALAWU has assembled a bargaining committee that will negotiate its first contract with ALA senior leadership. Organizers say the decision to unionize was in response to workforce reductions and other concerns, and priorities include salary equity, parental leave, retirement benefits, and greater organizational transparency.

ALA Executive Director Dan Montgomery said in a May 27 statement that ALA respects the outcome of the election and offered congratulations to employees on their successful efforts to organize.

“I believe our shared focus will remain on advancing ALA’s mission, serving our members, and fostering a workplace culture grounded in collaboration, mutual respect, and people-centered values,” he said. “Together, we will continue working to ensure the Association is well-positioned to live up to our mission: to support libraries, library workers, and the communities they serve for years to come.” ●

“The theme celebrates the joy of reading and, at the same time, motivates us to stand up for the right to read,” said BBWC Chair Barbara Stripling in the announcement. “We must let books be a window into ourselves and others, a door to new ideas and possibilities, and a path to full participation in our society.”

Banned Books Week posters, bookmarks, stickers, and other items are available in the ALA Store at ala.org/letbooksbe. Apparel, totes, and drinkware featuring the illustrations, including Spanish-language versions, are available in the Library Gift Shop at librarygiftshop.org/let-books-be. Learn more at bannedbooksweek.org.

New Guidance for Evaluating Vendors

ALA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee announced the July 7 release of “Content Controls and Access Guidelines for



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Vendors,” a guiding document designed to help library staff make principled decisions when selecting third-party providers for digital content, such as ebook platforms, apps, and other tools.

The document outlines key considerations for evaluating vendor practices, including: how content is curated, filtered, or restricted; access considerations for minors to ensure age-appropriate experiences without compromising rights; labels and ratings used by vendors to categorize content; and patron privacy protections and expectations for responsible data handling.

“These guidelines reinforce libraries’ commitment to equitable access and the protection of reader rights in an increasingly digital landscape,” the committee stated.

The full document is available at bit.ly/Content-Controls.

New Report on Public Libraries

The Public Library Association (PLA) and PressReader on July 2 released *News Access and Media Literacy in Public Libraries*, a report examining how public libraries are supporting patrons as they navigate an increasingly complex information environment.

The report was based on survey responses from more than 900 public library professionals across North America. Survey responses indicated that public libraries are on the front lines of media literacy, helping patrons evaluate sources, navigate digital content, and access trustworthy information every day. More than 65% of respondents said patrons struggle to use digital resources, while staff training emerged as the top investment needed to help libraries meet growing demand for digital literacy support.

The report is available to download at bit.ly/PLA-News-Access.

ALA Gears Up for US Elections

ALA is once again joining with Nonprofit VOTE as a premier partner for National Voter Registration Day on September 15.

In collaboration with election agencies, local nonprofits, and other civic leaders, libraries help their communities get #ReaderVoterReady and prepared to make their voices heard in local, state, and national elections. ALA encourages libraries across the country to participate in National Voter Registration Day and other civic holidays, including National Voter Education Week (October 5–9) and Vote Early Day (October 26).

Library workers and partners can find sample graphics, social media posts, and other promotional resources at nationalvoterregistrationday.org and bit.ly/Reader-Voter-Ready. 

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TRENDS



Students at Portland (Ore.) Public Schools' (PPS) Alliance High School play *Pictionary* in the library during a free period. Library usage at PPS has increased since the district implemented a cellphone ban in 2025.

Hold the Phone

Libraries step up when schools ban cellphones

BY Reema Saleh

Since fall 2024, each school day at Grant High School in Portland, Oregon, has started the same way: Roughly 2,100 students line up to place their phones in gray and green Yondr pouches—the kind live performers use to prevent audience members from recording—as they enter the building. From the morning bell to dismissal, phones are sealed and can be unlocked only with special magnets near the school's exits as students leave for the day.

The high school's effort to limit phone use on campus has received support from its educators, who say classroom engagement is on the rise, and mixed reviews from students, who dislike being cut off from their devices. But there's been one unexpected outcome of the policy: More students are spending time in the library, where they're browsing the collection or hanging out during free periods, says teacher-librarian Paige Battle.

"They're checking out more books, and I feel like that's been so important in their education," Battle says. "We're seeing studies about students, even adults, not having the reading stamina they've had in the past, so I've been encouraged by this increase."

Roughly six in 10 parents of an 11- or 12-year-old say their child owns a smartphone, according to a 2025 Pew Research Center survey. And as more schools across the country enact phone-free policies—29 states and the District of Columbia have instituted bell-to-bell phone-free policies so far—many school libraries are experiencing a surge in popularity.

Grant was one of the first schools in Oregon to ban cellphones in 2024; the board of Portland Public Schools (PPS) followed suit the next year with a districtwide limit on student phone use across all grades, including during lunch and free periods.

"The research is clear: Cellphone use can create a trifecta of consequences for our young people—mental health issues, [less] safety in school, and distraction from learning," said Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek in a statement after she signed an executive order in July 2025. The order requires every school in the state to enact a policy banning phones during school hours. "I signed this order to stand up for the promise of every student in every corner of the state."

During the first semester that Portland's phone ban went into effect, PPS saw a 15% increase in library circulation, says Julie McMillan, another teacher-librarian in the district. That increase dwindled to about 2% districtwide over the following months, but McMillan notes that checkouts remain high at secondary schools, where the cellphone ban is likely to have a greater impact.

Battle recalled a group of 9th-graders who would hang out in her library every day, sitting together with their eyes on their phones. The following year, when they had to put their phones away, the group kept sitting together in the library, but now they were talking to one another.

"That really warmed my heart, because I thought, 'This is fabulous. You're actually conversing with one another in community,'" Battle says.

At Irma Lerma Rangel Young Women's Leadership School, a middle and high school in Dallas, students also keep their phones sealed in Yondr pouches. When the new policy began last fall, following a ban on cellphones in schools across Texas,

Photo: Amy Taramasso/Alliance High School

“If someone is super passionate about reading in 6th grade, they tend to consistently read after that.”

CHRISTENE ESTRADA, librarian at Irma Lerma Rangel Young Women's Leadership School in Dallas

librarian Christene Estrada saw book checkouts increase by 72%.

Godgift Igwe-Icho, a 10th-grader who volunteers at Irma Rangel's library, has noticed more students spending time there each week.

“Instead of just being on their phones or just talking, they have actually checked out books,” Igwe-Icho says. “When I come into the library and help Ms. Estrada reshelve books, there [are more] books that I need to reshelve than before.”

This year, Estrada has seen a stronger culture of reading, especially among 6th-graders new to the school.

“As [they] get older, the tendency is [that] kids have more important things to do, or the library is not as cool as it used to be,” Estrada says. “But if someone is super passionate about reading in 6th grade, they tend to consistently read after that.”

Some librarians are working to meet the needs of these young readers. When Waynflete School, a private college-preparatory school in Portland, Maine, implemented a phone-free policy this school year, middle school librarian Sam Stuart wanted to give students something to do, now that their

cellphones were dropped off in their homerooms for the duration of the school day.

He expanded the graphic novel and Japanese manga section, adding about 200 books to the shelves with a grant from the Association of Independent School Librarians. Stocking more of these visual, short books that already had high demand gave students more to read between periods.

“I wanted to give them something that really is like, ‘Hey, the library is your space ... I’m happy to get the books that you are interested in,’” he says.

Stuart has noticed more middle schoolers using the space during study hall and office hours, and he’s stocked more board games and puzzles for them. “It is nice to be in the library. Kids [are] actually socializing or doing work instead of just being on their phones,” he says.

At Grant High School in Oregon, Battle has assigned students in her library assistant internship class to create shelf talkers with blurbs and art to display, highlighting books that resonated with them.

She also holds quarterly book clubs and monthly lunchtime trivia competitions to quiz students on classroom curricula and current events. A few of Battle’s students even formed a pen pal club last year to exchange snail-mail letters with students at another school.

As districts consider smartphone rules, Battle advises school librarians to plan ahead. If schools ban or limit students’ phones, she says, “What are you going to offer kids in their stead?” **AL**

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

BY THE NUMBERS

Makerspaces

6

Number of MākMō vans in the LA County (Calif.) Library's fleet. MākMō (short for maker mobile) vehicles bring STEAM-focused equipment and activities to its 85 branches.



2011

Year that Fayetteville (N.Y.) Free Library opened the first recognized public library makerspace. The library's Fab Lab offers industrial-sized machines and tools for creative projects.

2

Number of hours at a time that patrons can book DC Public Library's (DCPL) Dance Studio, featuring wall-to-wall mirrors, ballet barres, and an audiovisual system. With a capacity for 10 people, the free space is part of The Labs at DCPL's Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, which also include a recording studio, Fabrication Lab, and Memory Lab with digital preservation equipment.

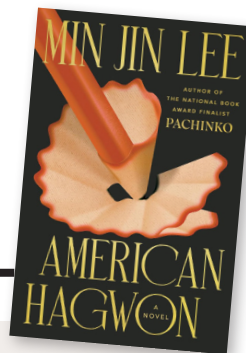
500

Number of at-risk and justice-impacted teens who participate annually in Madison (Wis.) Public Library's (MPL) Making Justice program. Organized through MPL's maker-space, the Bubbler, Making Justice offers weekly workshops and hosts local artists who work with participants on group projects like community murals. ●



Min Jin Lee

American Hagwon explores education across the Korean diaspora



if I would have learned how to read and write and speak English without the Queens Public Library and the kindness of librarians. It's a place where I feel very normal. Libraries are spaces in which I feel like I'm okay. I didn't always feel okay in schools.

Min Jin Lee has notched career milestones that few authors reach. Her immigration saga *Pachinko* was both a National Book Award finalist and a *New York Times* Top 10 Best Book of 2017, and it was adapted into a television series of the same name for Apple TV. Lee is also a Guggenheim fellow and the first Korean American to hold the role of New York State author laureate.

Her latest title, *American Hagwon* (Cardinal, September), examines the influence of Korean "cram schools" among families in the Korean diaspora. *American Libraries* spoke with Lee ahead of her appearance at the American Library Association's 2026 Annual Conference and Exhibition in Chicago. She discussed her new book, the library that shaped her, and her antidote to book bans.

You're a former PEN America trustee and have been a vocal opponent of censorship. What do you make of our nation's current wave of book bans, and what do you think it will take to pull through this moment? This is ironic, but I think the reason why people want to ban books is because ideas are dangerous. Rather than thinking that ideas are dangerous, and therefore I'm dangerous, I should really remember that they are trying to ban us because we're powerful. If you remember how powerful you are, you can stop the thing, rather than feeling hopeless or that we're already defeated.

I know that organization works. If you take a long view on American history—and it's not a very long history—Americans are local people. Because media has become so national, we forget about our local power. The local power is where we can take back the things that hurt our children. **AL**

BY
Terra
Dankowski

What inspired you to focus on the education system as it relates to the movements of a middle-class Korean American family in *American Hagwon*? My research process involved all these interviews—I've done hundreds of them, probably almost 1,000 at this point—and every single time I talked to somebody, they would mention their education path. It was such an important and controversial subject. I thought, if I had to think about the most important value for Koreans, especially in the diaspora, what would I write about? Education turned out to be a beast, because people have lots of feelings about it.

In the book, the Koh family loses wealth and status as they weather betrayal and financial crises. Do you see parallels between the events in your book and some of the forces at play in the world today? At the beginning of Book Five of the novel, I have a quotation from a sociologist in Korea named Chang Kyung-Sup. He proposes this important idea called compressed modernity, in which you have a great deal of

change happening in a tiny amount of time. That is the experience of Koreans, but it is also our experience in the technological industrial revolution that we're having. I was really struck by having [the book] bracketed by two different financial crises: the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the global financial crisis [that started in 2007], set in America.

People are saying that there's another one coming. If you happen to climb yourself out of poverty and don't have generational wealth, and then you have these [crises], it is very hard. I wanted to write about that experience. How do you weather these economic and cultural shocks, in which you have almost no control except how you behave?

You spent significant time at Queens (N.Y.) Public Library as a child after immigrating to the US. What role did the library play in your life? I don't know



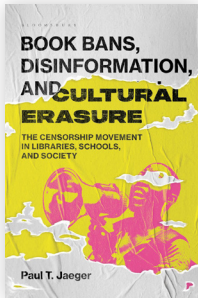
Photo: Hae Ran

Dismantling Disinformation

Books that explore the connection between propaganda and censorship

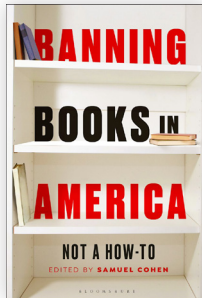


REANNA ESMAIL is lead librarian for instruction at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.



Book Bans, Disinformation, and Cultural Erasure: The Censorship Movement in Libraries, Schools, and Society

Jaeger situates the current book-banning movement within a larger social and political effort to erase marginalized communities and culture. He provides clear definitions and examples of these processes and goals, including the roles played by technological progress and economic inequity. With accessible references (like the Beatles, *Dungeons & Dragons*, and Holmes and Watson) and nuanced examinations of McCarthyism, the history of libraries, and the myth of neutrality, this is a recommended read for anyone interested in a more expansive understanding of current First Amendment challenges. Bloomsbury Libraries Unlimited, 2026. 320 p. \$31.50. 979-8-216-39714-4. (Also available as an ebook.)



Banning Books in America: Not a How-To

Bringing together authors, educators, librarians, and researchers, this anthology of essays examines why books are banned and how book bans affect everyone. It also shows the role privilege plays in censorship: For an established author, a book challenge may bring buzz or attention, but for new authors, a book ban can cause their work to languish in obscurity, often alongside the underrepresented topics and subjects they are writing about. Each essay adds a different nuance or layer to our understanding of book bans—and inspiration to fight back. Bloomsbury Academic, 2026. 192 p. \$21.60. 979-8-765-13807-6. (Also available as an ebook.)



Stories Are Weapons: Psychological Warfare and the American Mind

Newitz's book provides an engaging overview of how stories can be weaponized. Psychological warfare has not only been used against foreign adversaries, but it has also been used against cultural movements in the US, they explain. The book begins with Edward Bernays, the propagandist known as the “father of public relations,” and moves on to discuss eugenics, Wonder Woman, anti-LGBTQ+ groups, and more. Newitz concludes with strategies for disarming domestic psyops, including the role libraries play in safeguarding information. Beyond cataloging notable case studies, *Stories Are Weapons* prompts readers to think critically about the tales we are told. W. W. Norton & Company, 2024. 272 p. \$18.99. PBK. 978-1-324-11046-0. (Also available as an ebook.)



Routledge Handbook of the Influence Industry

This handbook for political scientists, though not primarily about book bans or censorship, provides important context on the digital landscape that supports the spread of disinformation. Briant and Bakir explore the influence industry, a contemporary network of private companies that, through data collection and analysis, can create targeted propaganda. The text offers case studies on Cambridge Analytica and the events leading up to the Arab Spring, while speculating on potential future harms. When read alongside other books on this list, this comprehensive anthology illuminates connections between censorship, disinformation, and the rise of data capitalism. Routledge, 2025. 434 p. \$56.79. PBK. 978-1-032-18900-0. (Also available as an ebook.) **AL**

Mall Wonder

How a California library found a temporary home inside a shopping center



RINO LANDI
is director of
Escondido
(Calif.) Public
Library and a
consultant.

After serving its community for nearly 45 years in the same building, Escondido (Calif.) Public Library closed in April 2025 for an \$11.6 million renovation. It was important to us, as the city's lone library, to preserve access during construction. So one month later, our library opened a temporary location in a very different kind of facility: the nearby North County Mall, where services and collections were spread across six storefronts, including a former Abercrombie & Fitch clothing store.

Of course, moving a library takes more than a month. Our planning took more than a year and required staff to work under tight deadlines, limited budgets, and high expectations. Here's how we did it, and what we learned from the process.

Choosing a location. It's essential to consider whether the new location will match, improve upon, or limit access. Retailers and mall operators have already studied traffic patterns, visibility, parking, and nearby amenities. Leverage that knowledge to evaluate access. In our case, the public benefited from a highway and bus stop near the mall, and adjacency to a city park. The arrangement also gave the mall a stable civic tenant and created natural cross-traffic between library patrons and shoppers. The mall was not just available space; it was a location where public access, economic development, and community visibility could overlap.

When selecting mall space, prioritize outside access, a single contiguous footprint, and a ground-floor location for accessibility. Because our location lacked outside access, we had to adjust our hours to fit the mall's schedule. (We added book drops outside the building to help patrons return items efficiently.) And because of site availability, our services were spread across multiple storefronts, which added confusion and limited collaboration. Clear signage, consistent staff talking points, and patience at service desks became essential as patrons learned which storefront housed which service.

Moving your collection. We aimed to preserve as many collections, programs, and services as possible, even while reducing public space from 40,000 to 15,000 square feet. To know what fits, you need to know what you have. Collections management and evaluation tools, such as LibraryIQ and collectionHQ, are highly useful when relocating.

Floor plans and item counts helped us calculate what percentage of collections could fit. Only the most popular items made their way to the browsing collections; the rest went to storage.

If the timeline is short or the budget is tight, consider renting shelving rather than buying. We rented 200 six-shelf wooden carts, which cost half as much as purchasing mobile shelving. Our existing furniture

and equipment helped re-create play, study, and computer areas. The most costly purchases for the move were the two book drops (\$16,000) and lumber used for retail shelves (\$10,000).

Maintaining library operations. Cultural events and storytimes moved to the mall plaza, where shopping families—sometimes on their way out of the nearby coffee shop or Old Navy—stopped to join. Mall management was helpful as we planned and promoted events, though ambient music sometimes pushed programs into the community room included in our lease, where we also held smaller info sessions and other events. Keeping familiar programs on the calendar helped reassure patrons that the setting had changed, but the library's role had not.

Meanwhile, patterns emerged: New releases moved quickly, average checkouts per visit rose from seven to 10, library card registrations grew 40%, and patrons came from more neighborhoods. This reinforced what staff intuited in selecting the space; the mall acted as a regional attractor. Yet total circulation never caught up with what we saw at our home library, likely attributable to having less browsing space.

The library returned home in August with new meeting rooms, a café, a makerspace, tween and teen spaces, and other improvements. Still, the public loved their makeshift library enough to ask that we open a permanent branch at the mall. Whether that happens will depend on funding and continued support. Our year at the mall reminded us that libraries are defined less by their buildings than by the access, services, and relationships they carry into the community. **AL**

The setting had
changed, but
the library's
role had not.

BANNED BOOKS WEEK

OCTOBER 4-10, 2026

Books are for everyone. Books should be read. Books should be uncensored. Together, we can protect the freedom to read. We must **Let Books Be**.



Let Books Be
Poster & Bookmark
by Hyesu Lee



Let Books Be Poster &
Bookmark by Loveis Wise



Let Books Be
Poster & Bookmark
by Mikey Burton



Let Books
Be Buttons



Let
Books Be
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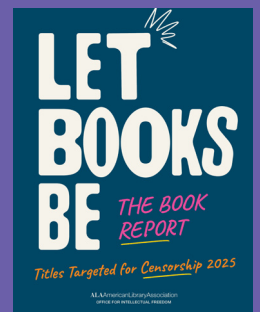
Let Books Be
Bracelets



Most
Challenged
Books
of 2025
Bookmark



The Book
Report: Titles
Targeted for
Censorship
2025 (25-pack)



SHOP AT ALA.ORG/LETBOOKSBE

2026 LIBRARY DESIGN SHOWCASE

The year's most
impressive new and
renovated libraries

by Sallyann Price

Welcome to *American Libraries'* 2026 Library Design Showcase, our annual celebration of new and renovated libraries across the US and Canada. The word *welcome* appeared in many of this year's submissions, reflecting a growing understanding that in anxious times, the library is a place that should feel *good*: safe, comfortable, well-lit, plugged in, and deeply connected to its surroundings.

More than two-thirds of this year's 15 selections are renovations or adaptive reuse projects. Libraries of all types are finding ways to acknowledge historical and environmental realities, embrace natural elements and cultural identities, evolve traditions, and build in flexibility to account for the unexpected. Read on for snapshots of these communities in motion. **AL**

SALLYANN PRICE is a writer and editor in Seattle and a former associate editor of *American Libraries*.





NATURAL IMMERSION

◀ Maplewood (N.J.) Memorial Library

Adjacent to a historic park, with protected natural areas on all sides, this 1955 masonry structure had nowhere to expand but up. The new, light-filled second floor features bird-safe glass, wood battens, and green roofs for a treehouse feel. The all-electric building, the first LEED Gold-certified library in New Jersey, includes solar panels that offset more than half of the library's energy use. **PROJECT TYPE:** Renovation/expansion **ARCHITECT:** Sage & Coombe Architects **SIZE:** 32,000 square feet **COST:** \$24 million **PHOTO:** Chuck Choi



◀ Clackamas County (Ore.) Libraries, Oak Lodge Library in Oak Grove

This new branch, nestled against a new community park and civic commons, leans into its leafy Pacific Northwest setting with natural materials and acoustic installations that suggest falling leaves. Expansive windows in the main reading room and direct park access keep the focus on the surrounding natural environment, while a roof system made of dowel-laminated timber adds warmth and texture throughout the open layout. **PROJECT TYPE:** New construction **ARCHITECT:** Opsi Architecture; Johnston Architects **SIZE:** 15,300 square feet **COST:** \$22.8 million **PHOTO:** Nicholas Kielbasa

◀ Chaffey College Library Learning Commons in Rancho Cucamonga, California

This community college in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains aimed to create a central hub for commuting students. The three-story atrium of the new building is anchored by a bleacher-style staircase to encourage connection and movement. Floor-to-ceiling windows and covered balconies commune with the natural environment, echoed by warm wood finishes, terracotta hues, and moss-green furnishings throughout. **PROJECT TYPE:** New construction **ARCHITECT:** LPA; DLR Group **SIZE:** 76,000 square feet **COST:** \$75 million **PHOTO:** Swinerton



PLAYING WITH LIGHT

► Robert E. Kennedy Library, California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo

With this renovation, a brutalist landmark—completed in 1980 and described by students as “scary”—has been transformed into a bright, open center of activity. The building retains its bones, including waffle slab ceilings and concrete shade fins on the exterior, but the courtyard was expanded and the staircase redesigned into a five-story glass column to let in natural light and invite students to explore the refreshed space.

PROJECT TYPE: Renovation/expansion **ARCHITECT:** Miller Hull **SIZE:** 200,000 square feet **COST:** \$78 million **PHOTO:** Lara Swimmer Photography



► Nicholson Memorial Library System, West Garland (Tex.) branch

Sunlight passing through tinted glass creates a kaleidoscopic effect that animates the atrium of this new facility. Color themes are carried throughout children's and teen spaces and a makerspace. An art plaza and outdoor gathering area—studded with bold, colorful seating and structural elements—connect the library to the neighboring civic campus.

PROJECT TYPE: New construction **ARCHITECT:** HBM Architects **SIZE:** 18,708 square feet **COST:** \$10.3 million **PHOTO:** Milt Mounts



DISTINCTLY LOCAL

◀ St. Petersburg (Fla.) Library System, President Barack Obama Main Library

The renovation of St. Petersburg's main library, originally designed in 1963, embraces the city's waterfront identity through airy gathering spaces and artwork inspired by the ocean. A large-scale wood installation by artist Benjamin Butler references both the waters of President Obama's Hawaiian childhood and nearby Tampa Bay. The structure includes a functional mezzanine reimagined as a tech loft and an auditorium space for programs and community events.

PROJECT TYPE: Renovation **ARCHITECT:** HBM Architects **SIZE:** 43,200 square feet **COST:** \$4.8 million **PHOTO:** Milt Mounts

ADAPTIVE REUSE AS PLACEMAKING

► Salt Lake City Public Library, Ballpark Library Lab

In Ballpark, a rapidly growing neighborhood without its own library branch, the new Library Lab provides flexible services while plans for a permanent facility move forward. A converted brick duplex houses a small collection of materials, holds pickup, and pop-up programming. The building is wrapped in a colorful mural by local artist Caro Nilsson that features native plants and a bee motif honoring the Salt Lake Bees, a minor league baseball team that once called the neighborhood home. **PROJECT TYPE:** Adaptive reuse **ARCHITECT:** GSBS Architects **SIZE:** 1,250 square feet **COST:** \$500,000 **PHOTO:** Jeri Gravlin

► Jefferson County (Colo.) Public Library, Conifer Library

Anchoring a foothills community southwest of Denver, this project converted a strip of five adjoining retail spaces in a neighborhood shopping center into a library. It replaces a public library housed inside Conifer High School that raised significant operational challenges. The relocated branch offers expanded public access, natural light, flexible gathering areas, and dedicated spaces for children and teens. **PROJECT TYPE:** Adaptive reuse **ARCHITECT:** EUA **SIZE:** 5,073 square feet **COST:** \$1.7 million **PHOTO:** Moss Photography



BOLD RESTORATION

◀ Jerome Library, Bowling Green (Ohio) State University

Visible for miles, the nine-story relief mural covering the east and west facades of Jerome Library has served as a defining campus landmark since Ohio artist Don Drumm created it in 1966. This restoration project went far beyond cosmetic repainting of the weather-faded concrete, combining structural repair, crack stabilization, tuckpointing, and protective sealants to preserve this large-scale work of art for generations.

PROJECT TYPE: Renovation **ARCHITECT:** NR Lee Restoration Company **SIZE:** 194,920 square feet **COST:** \$1 million **PHOTO:** Bowling Green State University



▲ Boulder (Colo.) Public Library, Gunbarrel branch

Housed in a former bank, Gunbarrel is the neighborhood's first dedicated civic gathering space and freestanding library branch. Playful design elements shape the children's area, where a woodland-inspired installation includes a mushroom reading house, interactive art, and whimsical archways created to encourage exploration. Elsewhere, the branch preserves the building's original vault as a reading room decorated with fiber artwork. **PROJECT TYPE:** Adaptive reuse **ARCHITECT:** PEH Architects; JOC Construction; Bree Angela Design **SIZE:** 9,898 square feet **COST:** \$2.7 million **PHOTO:** Boulder Public Library

CHILD'S PLAY

▼ Sevier County (Tenn.) Public Library System, Kodak branch

Designers brought the Great Smoky Mountains indoors for this new children's area, which includes speckled mushroom stools, a mural of soaring trees and woodland creatures, and a campfire-themed storytime rug. This mountain-lodge-inspired library is anchored by a central fireplace below a soaring cupola and flanked by locally sourced stone and exposed wood beams, while a covered porch and outdoor pavilion invite patrons to enjoy the fresh mountain air. **PROJECT TYPE:** New construction **ARCHITECT:** SRA Architects **SIZE:** 12,392 square feet **COST:** \$5.5 million **PHOTO:** Robin Cogdill and Rhonda Tippitt/Sevier County Public Library System



RENOVATIONS THAT REVIVE

► Leon County (Fla.) Public Library, Main Library

A targeted renovation has revamped the second floor of Tallahassee's downtown flagship library into a flexible, tech-enabled hub for learning, workforce development, and community services. The project introduced spaces for specialized activities: a soundproof recording studio, a Learning Commons for ESL classes, an Ancestry Alcove for genealogy research, and a Career Corner featuring an excavator simulator for construction training. **PROJECT TYPE:** Renovation **ARCHITECT:** Architects Lewis + Whitlock **SIZE:** 30,000 square feet **COST:** \$3.5 million **PHOTO:** Leon County Government





NEW CHAPTERS

▲ Vaughn Public Library in Ashland, Wisconsin

This library has operated continuously in the same mixed-use brownstone in downtown Ashland, near the brisk shores of Lake Superior, since it opened in 1888. The renovation modernized aging infrastructure while restoring historic features, including the building's original Vaughn Avenue entrance beneath a brownstone arch, and adding features like a new central staircase and large demonstration kitchen. **PROJECT TYPE:** Renovation/expansion **ARCHITECT:** Engberg Anderson **SIZE:** 18,800 square feet **COST:** \$7.8 million **PHOTO:** Dan Jandl Photography



▲ Margaret J. Clapp Library, Wellesley (Mass.) College

The renovation of Clapp Library focused on carefully reconnecting and modernizing a historic building shaped by more than a century of additions and evolving academic needs. Original features, including the 1910 Presidential Portrait Room and mid-20th-century atria, were restored, and a high-tech makerspace was added. The design also includes all-electric building systems, accessibility and sensory improvements, and adaptable spaces for ongoing evolution. **PROJECT TYPE:** Renovation **ARCHITECT:** Shepley Bulfinch **SIZE:** 187,246 square feet **COST:** \$97 million **PHOTO:** Marjorie Becker Photography

▶ Li Lu Law Library, Columbia University in New York City

An overhaul of Columbia's 65-year-old Jerome Greene Hall has remade the law library. A bright, versatile academic commons replaces dense, inward-facing stacks while keeping a tight urban footprint. At the center of the space is a dramatic two-story reading room offering expansive views of campus, connected by wide stairways and surrounded by spaces for group collaboration, quiet study, and informal gathering. **PROJECT TYPE:** Renovation **ARCHITECT:** Perkins Eastman **SIZE:** 50,000 square feet **COST:** \$40 million **PHOTO:** Andrew Rugge





2026 ALA/IIDA INTERIOR DESIGN AWARDS

The American Library Association (ALA) and the International Interior Design Association have announced the winners of the 2026 Library Interior Design Awards. Submissions are open to any library worldwide and are judged by industry professionals for extraordinary interior design and innovative concepts. Of the selected projects, one is named Best of Competition. The winners were recognized in June at ALA's Annual Conference and Exhibition in Chicago. [AL](#)

ACADEMIC AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES

More than 30,000 square feet

◀ Jen Library, Savannah (Ga.) College of Art and Design

DESIGN FIRM AND PHOTO: Savannah
College of Art and Design

▶ Li Lu Law Library, Columbia University in New York City

DESIGN FIRM: Perkins Eastman
PHOTO: Andrew Ruggie



30,000 square feet and less

▲ Confluence Library, Church of Christ in China Kei To Secondary School in Kowloon, Hong Kong

DESIGN FIRM AND PHOTO: Design Action

▶ Innovation and Discovery Center, Hawaii Baptist Academy in Honolulu

DESIGN FIRM: G70
PHOTO: Olivier Koning





– BEST OF –
COMPETITION



PUBLIC LIBRARIES

More than 30,000 square feet

▲ Cedar Park (Tex.) Public Library

DESIGN FIRM: Lake Flato

PHOTO: Lara Swimmer Photography

◀ Deschutes Public Library, Redmond (Ore.) branch

DESIGN FIRM: Miller Hull

PHOTO: Lara Swimmer Photography



30,000 square feet and less

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

DESIGN FIRM: Integrus

PHOTO: Lara Swimmer Photography

▼ Mesa (Ariz.) Public Library, Gateway branch

DESIGN FIRM: Richärd | Kennedy Architects; White Baux Studio

PHOTO: Jason Roehner

ON THE BOARDS

▲ Lincoln (Neb.) City Libraries, Central Library

ANTICIPATED COMPLETION: June 2028

DESIGN FIRM: MSR Design;
BVH Architecture



Secrets of Effective Upskilling



How education, experiences, exposures, and dynamic environments can foster professional growth

BY Ann Medaille

With the advent of new technologies and rapid social and economic shifts, library workers' jobs are being transformed. Compared with a decade ago, library workers now spend more time consulting on complex research tools, teaching digital literacy classes, supporting virtual learning environments, helping users troubleshoot devices, and codesigning projects with community partners. The pace at which library staffers are called upon to learn new skills is accelerating, and workers may struggle to keep up. In addition, automation and artificial intelligence (AI) are altering many aspects of work. In the long run, technological innovations have the potential to increase productivity and lead to more interesting kinds of work, but in the short term, they often cause disruptions that can be difficult for workers to navigate. To address these changes—and manage the anxieties that come along with them—workers need constant support for skill development.



While corporations may embrace upskilling to stay competitive, libraries will have to support upskilling to remain relevant.

HOW TO UPSKILL EFFECTIVELY

Upskilling initiatives in libraries are often conceived solely in terms of formal trainings, delivered through workshops, webinars, and courses using lectures, slideshows, videos, text, and assessments. While formal training has its place, it is just one component of a successful upskilling program.

Learning and development specialists often refer to the 70-20-10 rule: Only 10% of workplace learning comes from formal education, while the other 70% comes from on-the-job experiences and 20% comes from interactions with others.

While these percentages have not been scientifically verified, the idea is striking—if a small percentage of workplace learning occurs through formal education, then it should be only a small part of an organization's upskilling strategy.

Instead of approaching upskilling solely through formal training, libraries need to create dynamic programs centered around what the human resources expert Dani Johnson of RedThread Research has described as the four E's: education, experiences, exposures, and environment.

When all four E's are incorporated into an upskilling program, library workers have opportunities to engage in a process of continual learning that helps them develop and reinforce their skills, gaining confidence and even expertise.

EDUCATION: formal training opportunities

Educational opportunities are essential for delivering some fundamentals of skill development that may be cumbersome to pick up while on the job, such as cataloging standards, data analysis strategies, copyright law, digital preservation best practices, or database management skills. Education is often essential for new employees or those who are transferring to a different position.

While corporations may embrace upskilling to stay competitive, libraries will have to support upskilling to remain relevant. Library leaders are under greater pressure to respond rapidly to changing social and economic conditions and demonstrate that their libraries make a difference in their communities. Continual upskilling of library workers is essential for ensuring that they have the skills to accomplish today's tasks while enabling library leaders to plan for the future.

Learning should not be confined to one hour a month or the occasional webinar viewing. Library leaders cannot assume that workers will learn what they need on their own during their unscheduled or project work time. The charge of upskilling is too big to be handled passively.

Leaders must decide whether their training will be conducted in person or virtually. In-person training allows for more discussion, more interaction, more chances to build connections, and more opportunities to strengthen social cohesion than virtual training. Workers often get a chance to meet and interact with people in other departments, branches, or libraries. In many cases, in-person learning serves as the impetus for the creation of informal learning networks that can be sustained virtually.

Virtual training is often easier to deliver and more convenient to attend, and sessions can be recorded for future viewing for those who cannot be present. Some virtual training materials can be accessed on demand, so employees can apply the training right away on the job. At the same time, virtual learning has become so common in a post-pandemic world that learners are a little burned out on it.

Microlearning, also called learning bursts, consists of very short pieces of content that are focused on a single concept or learning outcome. Microlearning is typically delivered virtually, through text messages, infographics, podcasts, flash cards, short e-learning modules, videos, quizzes, or games. Often, small chunks of content, each with a single learning outcome, are delivered as part of a greater whole.

Mentors provide emotional and psychological support that can help workers develop confidence with a particular skill.

Microlearning should not serve as a substitute for other types of education, such as longer in-person workshops or online courses, in which more time can be spent on developing knowledge and skills. Instead, it can coexist with these instructional options, fulfilling a unique purpose when it is needed.

EXPERIENCES: on-the-job activities

When one engages in experiences, they learn by executing real tasks that address messy problems in authentic contexts. Often, these experiences enable workers to apply what they have learned in formal training programs to job tasks.

Once learned, skills need to be constantly practiced, developed, and refreshed or they will soon fade. But workers can engage in continual practice only if their managers give them opportunities to do so. Library managers should recognize areas for growth for library workers and plan experiences that can help them develop. Some possibilities include special projects, stretch assignments, job rotations and exchanges, internships, and early career opportunities.

Employee development can sometimes be resource-intensive. Peter Cappelli, management professor at the Wharton School of University of Pennsylvania, recommends stretch assignments, a low-investment option intended to apply workers' emerging skills at a higher level. "The way you train people and develop them the best is through stretch assignments and giving people opportunities, which cost you nothing," Cappelli said on the Harvard Business School podcast *Managing the Future of Work*.

Stretch assignments should be demanding and push employees to the edge of their capabilities, but they should also be challenges that workers have the potential to meet. An e-resources technician, for example, could be tasked with a short-term project that involves visualizing collections data. A business librarian with good project management and planning skills might be charged with leading a user survey project.

Job rotation and exchange programs can help library workers learn new or enhance existing skills by giving them more exposure to different types of functions and situations within the library. They can also broaden workers' perspectives, improve their flexibility, make them aware of other areas or job roles that they might want to move into in the future, and introduce greater variety into the workday, contributing to employee engagement.

EXPOSURES: structured workplace interactions

Exposures are important for all workers, especially for those who are new to the library profession or organization and could benefit from opportunities to learn



from interactions with peers and more senior staff. If novices work closely with excellent people, they are more likely to improve their skills. Shadowing others is often a good way to begin learning from others, not only for new library workers but also for those who move to different departments.

While exposure to experts may occur organically during shared work, this is not always the case. Instead, library leaders and managers may need to be deliberate in providing workers with the right kinds of exposures that will help them develop their skills. This may occur through strategies such as coaching and mentoring programs or by creating networks and communities of practice.

To support skill development, mentors can provide strategies for completing tasks, offer input on ideas, suggest alternative possibilities, suggest supporting resources, review work, and provide feedback about performance. Mentors and mentees can also collaborate on joint projects, enabling mentees to learn by observing how the mentor approaches tasks. These mentors also provide emotional and psychological support that can help workers develop confidence with a particular skill.

While networks may not be explicitly focused on helping members to learn skills, learning often occurs as a by-product of shared interactions and discussions. Anyone up and down the management chain, from administrators to frontline workers, can form networks and communities of practice to promote the learning of new skills. In addition to fostering learning, these groups may reinforce members' identities, which can contribute to a greater sense of belonging and well-being.

ENVIRONMENT: tools, resources, and other supports

Resources that library workers can use to enhance their skills within the environment include intranets, wikis, department manuals, book collections, checklists, handouts from training sessions, instructions for accomplishing tasks, and collaboration tools, such as chat channels, that provide learning support at the point of need.

The environment also encompasses characteristics such as the amount of autonomy that library workers have to pursue education, experiences, and exposures; the amount and types of opportunities workers have to practice skills; and the time allotted to them for learning.

A critical feature of any upskilling environment is the degree of performance support that it provides. Performance support consists of tools and resources provided in a normal workflow that give information on how to complete a task.

If library workers need to learn new software, for example, they can access online help manuals or contact the company's support line for external support, but if they can access a cheat



This is an excerpt from *Upskilling for Library Workers: A Guide for Future-Ready Professionals* by Ann Medaille (ALA Editions, 2026).

sheet on their desk or message an expert on staff, that is even better. Tasks are better accomplished when performance support resources are in close proximity to the time and place in which they are needed.

Often workers forget what they learned in formal classes and workshops before they have a chance to apply the knowledge, or they struggle to know how to apply these skills in real-world contexts. Thus, integrating performance support addresses the limitations of formal education programs by reinforcing content and skills at the critical point of need.

Job aids, a type of performance support, are written or visual guides that are there to help people complete tasks when they need it. Even simple handouts with step-by-step instructions can be critical for helping people get work done more accurately, more efficiently, and with fewer frustrations.

INTEGRATING THE FOUR E'S

Library upskilling strategies should take all four E's into consideration. When deciding which of the four E's a library worker would benefit from at any particular moment, the following questions should be considered:

- Is the library worker new to a particular skill, and do they need grounding in the basics? If so, education may initially be beneficial.
- Does the library worker need an opportunity to practice a skill or continue to grow a skill? If so, then experiences may be helpful.
- Does the library worker need ongoing support for the growth of a skill? If so, exposures may be the correct step.
- Does the library worker need to have access to information that supports the enactment of a skill at the point of need? If so, education in the form of virtual education and micro-learning, exposures in the form of access to experts, and environmental aids in the form of performance support and job aids may be beneficial.

Ideally, upskilling in libraries should incorporate all four of these E's simultaneously to support a model of continuous learning that can be responsive to quickly changing needs. **AL**



ANN MEDAILLE is director of research and instructional services at University of Nevada, Reno, Libraries. She is former editor in chief of the journal *Evidence-Based Library and Information Practice* and a current faculty member of the Medical Library Association's Research Training Institute. She is also author of *The Librarian's Guide to Learning Theory: Practical Applications in Library Settings* (ALA Editions, 2023) and coauthor of *Visual Literacy for Libraries: A Practical, Standards-Based Guide* (ALA Editions, 2016).

PEOPLE

Announcements

ON THE MOVE

January 20

Sallie Hedrick Bowman became children's librarian for Dare County (N.C.) Library's Kill Devil Hills branch.



In June **Mary Diaz** became acquisitions assistant librarian at University of Central Florida Libraries in Orlando.

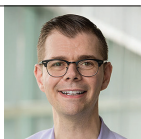
Bill Goodwin joined Girard (Kans.) Public Library as teen librarian in March.

In April **Lisa McClure** started as director of Washoe County (Nev.) Library System.



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

Mark Paris became dean of West Virginia University Libraries and Press in Morgantown April 27.



August 3 **Seth Porter** started as dean of Texas Tech University Libraries in Lubbock.

January 20 **Graciela Rivera** became branch manager at New Haven (Conn.) Free Public Library's Fair Haven branch.

In May **Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz** started as commissioner of New York City's Department of Records and Information Services, the agency that oversees the city's Municipal Archives, Municipal Library, and Records Center.



In March **Vashti Jenkins Taylor** was appointed academic engagement librarian at University of Central Florida (UCF) Libraries in Orlando and UCF Connect librarian for Seminole State College of Florida.

Kudos

In January **Shantelle Grant**, children's coordinator at Toccoa-Stephens County (Ga.) Public Library and regional children's and youth services director at Northeast Georgia Regional Library System, was named 2025 Public Library Employee of the Year by the Georgia Public Library Service.

May 5 **Kristi Holmes** was named 2026 Medical Librarian of the Year by the Friends of the National Library of Medicine. Holmes is professor, associate dean for knowledge management and strategy, and director of Galter Health Sciences Library and Learning Center at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. ●



PROMOTIONS

Nicholas Brown-Cáceres was appointed chief of the Music Division at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., effective April 19.



April 20 **Tricia Edwards** was promoted to director of the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives in Washington, D.C.



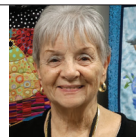
April 30 **Amber Lannon** was promoted to university librarian at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario.

Heather Sharpe became Pennsylvania's state librarian and deputy secretary of the Office of Commonwealth Libraries May 30.

RETIREMENTS

Susan Banks retired as Pennsylvania's state librarian and deputy secretary of the Office of Commonwealth Libraries May 29.

March 27 **Lois Eannel** retired as director of East Lake (Fla.) Community Library.



Ann Hornbach retired February 27 as librarian of Free Library of Philadelphia's Torresdale branch.

In July **Sara Jones** retired as Washington State Librarian.

May 13 **Linda Larue** retired as librarian at Barboursville (W.Va.) Public Library, after 47 years of service.

Cecile Oshima retired May 12 as librarian at Kahuku (Hawaii) High and Intermediate School, after 66 years in public education.

In January **Richard Rekowski** retired as director of Mary H. Weir Public Library in Weirton, West Virginia.

AT ALA

In April **Irina Devora** left ALA as associate controller of Finance and Accounting.

Alejandra "Alex" Diaz left ALA Editions as senior graphic designer May 14.

In April **Rachel Hendrick** was promoted to senior director of ALA Publishing and Media and publisher of *Booklist*.

Bill Mickey was promoted to editor and publisher of *Choice* in June.

April 13 **Ninah Moore** began as conference systems manager for Conference Services. She was previously program officer for continuing education at the Reference and User Services Association. [AL](#)

In Memory

Charles “Charlie” Fineman, longtime academic librarian, died in December. Fineman joined Harvard University’s Widener Library in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the late 1980s as Western European bibliographer. He later became librarian for France, Italy, and Scandinavia, before retiring in 2008. Prior to that, he worked as a Romance languages bibliographer at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut; secretariat for the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in The Hague, Netherlands; and librarian at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and University of California, Santa Cruz. Fineman was active in ALA’s Western European Specialists Section (WESS) of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) for decades and served as editor of the *WESS Newsletter*.

Robert J. “Bob” Grover, 83, died November 22, 2025. Grover worked at Emporia (Kans.) State University for 24 years, serving as professor and dean of the School of Library and Information Management, among other positions. He retired in 2008. Grover also served as professor and director of University of South Florida’s School of Information in Tampa and assistant professor and assistant dean at University of Southern California’s School of Library and Information Management in Los Angeles. Earlier in his career, he was a school library media specialist.

Joan Schroeder Kindig, 73, died February 1. Kindig started her career as a school librarian at Hollymead Elementary School in Charlottesville, Virginia. She later taught children’s literature for University of Virginia’s McGuffey Reading Outreach Program. In 2008, she joined James Madison University’s College of Education in Harrisonburg, Virginia, where she would later become professor emeritus. Kindig was a longtime committee chair of the Virginia Readers’ Choice program, an annual initiative by the Virginia State Literacy Association that promotes reading among K–12 students. She also served on numerous ALA committees, helping select recipients of the Caldecott, Carnegie, and Newbery medals. She chaired the 2018 Odyssey Award Committee and served on the Young Adult Library Services Association’s Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults Committee. Kindig authored *Choosing to Read: Connecting Middle Schoolers to Books* (2012) and was a cowriter of Great Source’s Reading Advantage series.

Hartley “Hart” Keith Phinney Jr., 87, died March 15. He worked as a librarian for institutions including Chevron Corporation; Colorado School of Mines in Golden; Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta and its Institute of Paper Science and Technology; Princeton (N.J.) University; and the US Geological Survey.

Charles E. “Ed” Shreeves, 79, died January 7. Shreeves retired as associate university librarian for collections at University of Iowa in Iowa City in 2012, after nearly 25 years in the role. Previously, he worked as Medieval and Renaissance Studies bibliographer at UCLA Library and government documents librarian at Berry College in Mount Berry, Georgia. Shreeves was deeply involved with the Center for Research Libraries. He published regularly on collection development amid the transition from print to electronic publishing.

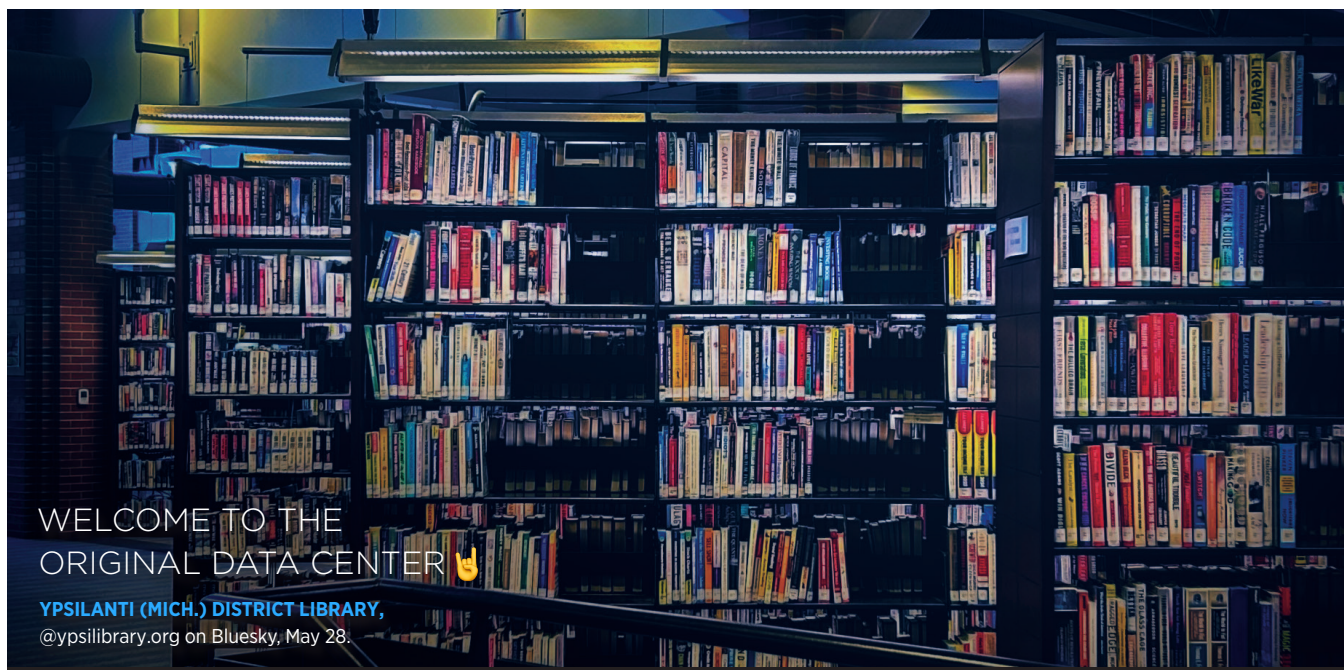


Donavan Emil “Don” Vicha, 73, who worked at ALA for more than 20 years, died April 6. Vicha was a web developer, production editor, and design coordinator at ALA. After retiring, he wrote science fiction and fantasy book reviews for *Booklist*.

Diane Vizine-Goetz, 68, died March 3. Vizine-Goetz worked as a senior research scientist at OCLC Research until her 2022 retirement. Her research focused on subject headings, digital versions of the Dewey Decimal Classification, authority control, database quality, and bibliographic models. Vizine-Goetz served on many committees and working groups within ALA and IFLA.

David Carter Weber, 101, died December 9. Weber served as director of Stanford (Calif.) University Libraries (SUL), from 1969 until his 1991 retirement. He also worked as an associate director and assistant director at SUL and was involved with the direction of the Research Libraries Information Network, the database of the Research Libraries Group consortium that moved to Stanford in 1978. Weber started his library career at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was considered a leader in library automation and served as 1967–1968 president of the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services and 1981–1982 president of ACRL. ●





“The library was the center of my world when I was growing up, a priceless public resource, and we need to ensure that it’s there to inspire new generations of readers.”

JONATHAN FRANZEN, National Book Award-winning author, in “Jonathan Franzen Endorses Webster Groves (Mo.) Library Tax,” *St. Louis*, July 16.

“Libraries are a place of self-selection and volunteer reading. If you don’t like a book, you don’t have to read it, and I think we’ve lost sight of that.”

STEPHANA FERRELL, cofounder of the Florida Freedom to Read Project, in “What Comes after Book Bans? One School District Questions Traditional Libraries,” *WUSF-FM* (Tampa, Fla.), July 16.

“I WANT MY KID TO READ. WANT TO KNOW WHY? BOOKS START CONVERSATIONS. KNOW WHAT WE’RE NOT HAVING ENOUGH OF IN THIS COUNTRY? CONVERSATIONS.”

Author and journalist **JENNA BUSH HAGER**, *Las Culturistas*, May 20.

“The president was very, very hands-on with the design. He talked a lot about his love of [Romanian sculptor Constantin] Brâncuși. And he wanted to make things more angular and cut.”

Architect **BILLIE TSIEH**, in “‘Like a Klingon Prison’: Inside Barack Obama’s Audacious, Near-Windowless, \$850 Million Presidential Library,” *The Guardian* (US), June 2.

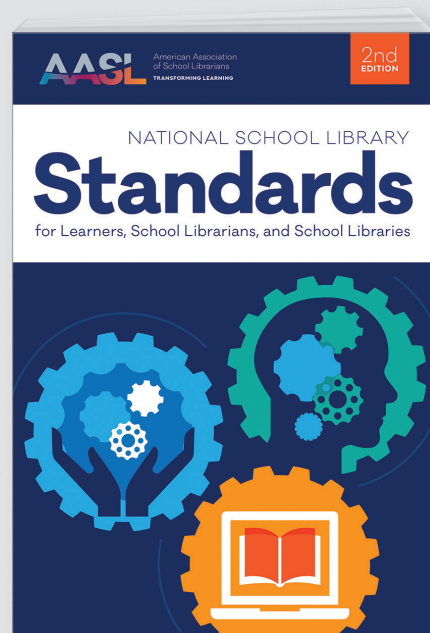
“Reading for 24 hours awakened a part of myself—my inner child—that I have been rejecting for years. The dreamer who finds comfort in romance novels. The aspiring author who believes in the power of fiction. The introvert who doesn’t mind being an outcast. I’ve become so detached from my younger self that I’ve shamed the very essence of her being, but this reading challenge reminded me she’s still in there.”

Writer **SAMMI CAMELA**, “I Tried the Viral 24-Hour Readathon—The Biggest Surprise Had Nothing to Do with the Books,” *Real Simple*, July 16.

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