

ARKANSAS LIBRARIES



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ANNUAL CONFERENCE RECAP



2025 ARLA ELECTION RESULTS



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North Little Rock Public Library System
crystal.gates@lamanlibrary.org

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East Central Arkansas Regional Library
jpaul@ecarls.org

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murphyb@hendrix.edu

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Lacy Wolfe
lacy.wolfe@lamanlibrary.org

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John McGraw
john@fcl.org

Member-at-Large

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devooght@hendrix.edu

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Amber Wilson
University of Central Arkansas
amberc@uca.edu

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Tina Bradley

WMS CI

Britt Anne Murphy

Youth Services

Tiffany Hough

Arkansas Library Association Office

P.O. Box 3821

Little Rock, AR 72203

(501) 313-1398

info@arlib.org - arlib.org

Arkansas Libraries

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Managing Editor:

Britt Anne Murphy

Associate Editors:

Robin Campbell

Heather Hays

April Sheppard

Darby Wallace

Copy Editors:

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Janice Weddle

Indexer:

Joanna Warren

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Column Editors:

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Submit articles to:

Britt Anne Murphy, Managing Editor, *Arkansas Libraries*, murphyb@hendrix.edu

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FROM THE ARLA PRESIDENT: Be a Light in Your Next Chapter by Taylor Vanlandingham, ArLA President

As I write this, many emotions are flooding my mind: gratitude for the opportunity to serve you as your president this past year, joy at the many things this past year has brought, and apprehension for the future.

When I was a little girl, I was inspired by a librarian, telling my mom I wanted to be a librarian when I grew up. My parents encouraged my love of reading, keeping me stocked with reading material, but not seeing many librarian positions open, they pushed me in another direction. My mom likes to tell anyone who will listen that “I proved her wrong.” That same love of libraries that inspired my career is still with me today, feeling home in the sounds of story time, vibrant book clubs, and the lovely people who assist their patrons daily with kindness and expertise.

In this time of uncertainty for libraries, I wish I could wave a magic wand and push past the cloud of misinformation and show others the tremendous good libraries have given each community. Alas, that is not how the world works. Instead, we must continue to communicate, advocate, and stand up for the value each of our libraries brings to their school and community. This is not easy work, but it



Vanlandingham

is necessary. To do nothing is to let ignorance win, and this ignorance does a disservice to the patrons we care for and our communities. Libraries make a measurable positive economic and quality of life impact in the cities in which they reside. Our places of work make humanity better; how many people can say that?

The librarians I see in this excellent state temper my apprehension about the future. I know we are up to the challenge. When we met in Hot Springs in October, I was again heartened. I returned from the conference feeling proud of the many programs, resources, and innovations Arkansas libraries make available to our constituents. I am honored to be in the same organization as the accomplished award winners. As I pass the baton on to the new president and look for well-qualified ArLA members to serve on the executive board, you make my job easy. In this state, we have so many great leaders and innovative thinkers; I know that ArLA is in good hands for the foreseeable future.

To conclude, thank you so much for the honor of serving you this past year. I feel I need to say we are all in this together. Lean on each other during this difficult time, take turns carrying on our cause, pace yourself, focus on the positive, and be a light; let us let this next chapter of ArLA be one of the best as we continue to stand up for ourselves and those who rely on the incredible libraries in Arkansas.

Taylor Vanlandingham is library director at John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. She is the 2024 ArLA President.



Therapy animals session at the ArLA Annual Conference (please see article on page 12).

FROM THE EDITOR: Library Heroes

by *Britt Anne Murphy*

Library Director, Hendrix College

While the Fall/Winter issue is being published a little later than usual towards the end of winter, the late issuance has provided more time for me to witness overt heroism among librarians in our state. I must thank some of our legislators, past and present, for how good they're making librarians look, in fact. Perhaps the court victories given to library supporters earlier in the winter have spurred recent seemingly punitive legislation that eliminates independent boards overseeing the State Library and Arkansas PBS. And in an attempt to punish librarians for doing our jobs so professionally, another piece of proposed legislation would eliminate the requirement for public library directors to have an MLS.

The outcry over the proposed legislation feels muted, perhaps because the Arkansas State Library does its job very well, and keeps an array of services and resources for libraries humming along despite funding and staffing cuts. This disinterest from our constituents is not surprising. In my experience, the public barely understands what any of us do, and our service ethic ensures we don't shame anyone for their uninformed stereotyping. I speak for many of us when I maintain that we librarians are tired of being punished for doing our jobs so well. I myself suffer from "library-defense fatigue," wondering at the general blockheadedness of administrators, boards, and others in authority who don't seem to absorb all the rational and data-driven arguments we library directors are constantly making that demonstrate how *much* we do with so little!

But rather than being defeatist, many library leaders from around the state have exhibited overt heroism. It's easy to be a leader when things are going well, and you're flush with money and support. When you're testifying to hostile Arkansas legislators, or speaking up in a school board or library board meeting, or giving public comment at an Arkansas State Library Board meeting – that's the fire that forges heroes. We all admire library leaders such as Patty Hector, Adam Webb, Allie Stevens Gosselink, Misty Hawkins, Nate Coulter, Judy



Murphy

Calhoun, and John McGraw (just to name a few!) for taking the heat and speaking up when us introverts (and there are a lot in our profession) just can't.

Another, subtler, type of heroism is found within the pages of this issue. If you look at the verso page, you'll see a list of those who make the Arkansas Library Association tick. From our Executive Board to committee and CI chairs to our column editors, these individuals are also heroes. As you read these pages you'll find quieter expressions of heroism in the ordinary things our Arkansas librarians are up to. Crystal Gates is a resource for us all in her role as ALA Councilor. Karen O'Connell describes the greater network and resources of the Center for the Book. We see the fruits of a year's worth of labor by the Conference Committee, the Awards Committee, and the Scholarships Committee. We are reminded of the great professional development offered by COSLLE to school librarians and the innovations of Bentonville PL. Vanessa Adams and Shawna Thorup describe how responding to change can be invigorating rather than just scary. We are kept informed about Arkansas literature and international technology trends. While I admire the fiery courage of those loudly defending our profession, I also view each contributor to this issue as a hero – they remind us that libraries and our communities are worth fighting for.

Britt Anne Murphy, the managing editor of Arkansas Libraries, is the director of the Olin C. Bailey Library at Hendrix College.



Jasmine Jobe of Central Arkansas Library System as a Ticonderoga pencil for Halloween.

WHAT'S UP? DOCS. Civics Review

by *Dominique Hallett*,
Arkansas State University

As this is an election year (although you will be seeing this after the election has already taken place), I thought it was a good time for a quick civics review. One of the best resources to understand the government is *The United States Government Manual* (<https://usgovernmentmanual.gov/>). I am particularly fond of this government resource because it includes one of the most useful diagrams I have ever found – the “Organizational Chart of the U.S. Government.” You will find it on the left-hand side of the page. This chart shows you which branch is over what. The site also includes the *Declaration of Independence*, the *Constitution*, and one of my other favorite things – the *Agency Acronyms/Initialisms*. Our government is full of acronyms, and they are a pain to keep straight. Did you know this was *the* place to find out what those acronyms stand for?

Now on to today’s lesson. As you know, our government is made up of three branches, each established by the *Constitution of the United States* in an attempt to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful. Having the three branches helps to ensure a system of checks and balances to promote an effective government and to ensure that citizens’ rights are protected. These branches each have their own powers and responsibilities, but are also dependent on the other branches to function effectively.

Executive Branch

We will start by talking about the Executive Branch and its related government information resources. The Executive Branch is led by the duly elected President of the United States. Many people do not realize that this branch includes not just the President but also the Vice President, the Cabinet members, the federal agencies, departments, committees, and various other groups.

The primary site for the Executive Branch is <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>. This site includes information about the administration and has links to the cabinet members as well as the Executive Office of the President. Not only does this site have



Hallett

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information about individuals, it has a link to the “immediate priorities” of the current administration. While information on this page may seem a bit limited, if you delve deeper, there is a link to “The Executive Branch” (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/our-government/the-executive-branch/>) which contains quite a bit of information about the roles of various entities of the Executive Branch. There is also a link to information about visiting the White House.

Legislative Branch

The Legislative Branch of government is made up of Congress (the Senate and the House of Representatives) as well as special agencies and offices that provide support services to Congress. This branch of government is covered by three primary websites.

The Senate website (<https://www.senate.gov/>) includes current floor proceedings, a hearings schedule, recent roll call votes, and information about how to find your senators. This last is the feature I get asked about most – how to find out who my state senators are, and how to contact them. You can also find out about committee memberships and assignments, as well as the history of the Senate.

The House website (<https://www.house.gov/>) is similar to the Senate website. You can locate representatives for a geographic area by typing in a zip code. The site also allows you to watch live house proceedings when the House is in session. Much like the Senate website, there is a history of the House, information on how House members voted on recent issues, their schedule and much more.

Both of these are excellent websites for finding information about the House and Senate, but my favorite site deals much more with the actual legislative activity. Congress’ website (<https://www.congress.gov/>) allows you to look up current legislation, see what has happened, and where it is going next. You can find out who sponsored a piece of legislation, view a quick summary, and even look at past legislation. You can scan the most viewed bills for the past week, and search to see what a particular member of congress has sponsored. This site includes the “Daily Digest” of *The Congressional Record*, information on how to contact a Senator or Representative, links to video archives of the Senate and House floor activities,

Library of Congress reports such as *Congressional Research Service Reports* (CRS Reports), links to *The Law Library of Congress Reports*, and much more. This is my go-to site for all things Congress. It is maintained by the Library of Congress using data that originates from and is owned by the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives. Congress.gov is usually updated the morning after a session adjourns. At the bottom of the main page there are a plethora of resources.

Judicial Branch

The Judicial Branch of course includes the U.S. Supreme Court, but many people don't realize it also includes other federal courts. I would dare to say this is the branch of government the public knows the least about. An excellent website to send folks to is <https://www.uscourts.gov/>, where you can find information about the Federal Courts system and discover which Circuit Court covers which geographic area (Arkansas is in the Eighth Circuit).

There is an extensive amount of information about the Federal Court System on this site.

Then of course there is the U.S. Supreme Court (<https://www.supremecourt.gov/>). Here you can find the schedule for when the Court is in session, what they will be hearing, who is presenting the cases, and all such information. You can also find the opinions of the court. When the court is in session, you can listen to "live audio" of the session.

I hope this has served as a useful overview of the branches of the U.S. Government and websites you might want to explore and share with your patrons. If you have questions or suggestions for future columns, contact me at dhallett@astate.edu.

Dominique Hallett is the government information and STEM librarian at the Dean B. Ellis Library at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

ADVOCACY ARKANSAS:

Adapting to the Changing World

by *Vanessa Adams, Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library*

Recently a question was put to readers on the public platform Quora.com that asked: "What are some ways in which libraries can adapt to changing times and increase their patron participation?" The number one reply to the question was to embrace digital resources. Another common answer was to make the library's physical space more inviting. Also popular was the reply that libraries needed to offer more programs relevant to their community's interests. These are trying times for libraries, but also exciting with the advent of new technologies and ideas for libraries' spaces.



Adams

Libraries are aware of, and continue to narrow, the digital divide in their communities. Arkansas is a good example of a state that is mostly rural and lacking in broadband services. According to the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Arkansas is one of the most rural states in the country, with 41 percent of its residents living in rural areas, compared with 14 percent of the U.S. population. Many rural libraries have become their

communities' only source for internet access.

Internet access is not, however, the only digital resource library patrons need. Persons with disabilities often need Wi-Fi hotspots to access the internet from home, if broadband service is available. The growth of eBooks use during the pandemic has not slowed since libraries have re-opened. According to Katie Walton, manager of acquisitions at the Arkansas State Library, eBooks circulation in 2020 was 656,973 and rose to 815,181 checkouts in 2023. Digital users also enjoy audiobooks, magazines, and databases, thanks to libraries' digital services. The most common complaint from patrons, however, is that hold times are too long for eBooks and audiobooks. Digital circulation is now greater than print circulation in my library, and is likely an indication that other libraries in Arkansas would report the same statistics. Libraries are needing to reallocate more and more of their print materials budget to their digital resources budget to satisfy the needs of their patrons.

Libraries have greatly reduced their DVD and books on CD collections, according to Public Libraries Online, and will eventually eliminate these collections. Even in Arkansas, where broadband isn't available in areas throughout the state, libraries are cutting their DVD and CD collections. In my library, we have significantly reduced our DVD collection and no longer purchase books on CD. We discarded all of our music CDs in 2022, leaving a significant amount of empty space. Libraries reducing their physical collections need to reimagine their spaces to make them more inviting and accessible to patrons.

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More areas for programming, more quiet study rooms, and sometimes more public computers are good ways to make use of the extra space. We held a series of focus groups while working on a five-year strategic plan, and patrons suggested that if we had a coffee shop we would attract more people to the library. Now that we have extra space, this idea is entirely doable without having to build on to the library, and it will add a revenue source to our budget.

With more physical space available, libraries can rethink their programming and try new approaches that better reflect the needs of their community. Smaller, niche programming, such as knitting classes, writing groups, or AI instruction could be held in areas in the library that once housed physical items that the library has discarded. A Library of Things could be set up in place of audio CDs. Or, our library converted one of the study rooms into a multimedia room last year. It immediately became popular, and there was such a long waitlist to use it for interviews, Zoom meetings, and podcast recordings, that we've now created a second multimedia room. Augmented reality, or AR, is transforming technology and will soon be common in libraries. According to the blog Pressreader.com, AR can create an immersive environment for patrons that will allow them to experience virtual

tours, exhibits, and other engaging adventures. Libraries will simply need to provide a chair and the AR equipment, which might be pricey now for libraries, but as with most new technology, prices will drop and libraries will be able to budget for the equipment.

To be blunt, libraries must adapt to the changing world in order to stay relevant, or they will not survive. Walk into most libraries today and there are shelves and shelves of print material that are not circulating. There are at least twenty magazine titles on shelves, and no one is reading them. People are staying home and downloading books and periodicals to their eReaders, while libraries hold on to physical collections that need to be reduced to make room for people to gather and participate in activities. Slowly, people are beginning to venture from their homes after being quarantined during the pandemic. Although inflation has dropped in the last year, prices are still high and people are looking for activities that are affordable. We are that place. We are the one free outlet for people to gather, socialize, and learn. We must adapt to keep our doors open.

Vanessa Adams is director of the Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

COSLLE Summer Conference Report

by Rachel Shankles

Emerita School Librarian

Last summer on July 31 the Community of School Librarians and Library Educators (COSLLE) held a one-day workshop for school librarians in northeast Arkansas. COSLLE co-chairs Rachel Shankles and Quanta Wyatt planned a full day of speakers and activities for the group of 53 participants in the Round Room at the Jonesboro Public Library. A small fee was charged to cover the lunch catered by Tacos for Life.

Cassandra Barnett spoke to the group first about selection policies that would stand the test of challenges. It was a highly engaging session with many questions asked and answered. Barnett talked about the most censored and challenged books in



Barnett

Arkansas schools. She is always a popular speaker and the crowd was very pleased to be able to ask her questions.

After lunch Arkansas author Talya Tate Bourner spoke on "Telling Your Story." Her books are mainly for adults, and take place in the Arkansas Delta, where she grew up. Her blog and webpage cover cooking, gardening and book clubs, and she also writes a monthly story for Farm Bureau Magazine called "Delta Child."

The Arkansas illustrator of the "Tiny the Dog" series canceled at last minute due to illness so Rachel stepped in to do a session on Library Programming. Door prizes were given out at the end of the day, and Cassandra had loads of books to give away so no one went home empty handed.

COSLLE plans another late summer conference for 2025 in southeast Arkansas, probably at



Bourner

Monticello, and the budget has been approved. The school librarian group also met with the two year college and private school attendees at the ArLA Conference and plan some Zooms to help prepare seniors for college research.



Cassandra Barnett speaks to participants.

Rachel Shankles is a retired high school librarian and LIS instructor, and has authored children's books. She served as co-chair of ArLA's Community of School Librarians and Library Educators CI for 2024.



Rachel Shankles and Quanta Wyatt.

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Web 3.0 – The Next Frontier in the Evolution of the Internet: Are the Growing Pains Worth It?

by F. Tracy Farmer, Arkansas State University

Prior to the Web 0.0 era, there was the ARPANET. DARPA, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, developed ARPANET, which initially aimed to connect the military and universities to do military research during the Cold War and the space race. DARPA was formed in 1957 in response to Russia launching Sputnik (Rosanne Welch & Peg A. Lamphier, 2019). DARPA continued the work of Paul Baran of the RAND Institute in the early 1960s to develop the ARPANET (Rosanne Welch & Peg A. Lamphier, 2019). Baran conceived of a “distributed” network employing digital technology that would have no centralized switches or dedicated transmission lines and that would continue to operate even if several of its switching nodes had been disabled,” thus giving life to the packet-switching network (Paul Baran | *Biography, Packet Switching, Distributed Networks, & Facts* | Britannica, n.d.). Packet-switching allows information to be exchanged on the network by breaking it up into



Farmer

small packets and sending them across the network, even if the network is fractured, meaning that a direct connection is not available (Rosanne Welch & Peg A. Lamphier, 2019). Even today, our digital landscape is shaped by the enduring legacy of packet-switching.

Web 0.0, the brainchild of the visionary Tim Berners-Lee, was born in 1989 during his tenure at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) (*The Birth of the Web* | CERN, n.d.). Berners-Lee developed the original World Wide Web as a solution to share information between scientists and universities. “By the end of 1990, Berners-Lee had developed the first web browser, web server, and web page” (Tools, 2023), all of which ran on Berners-Lee’s computer at CERN (*The Birth of the Web* | CERN, n.d.). “On 30 April 1993, CERN put the World Wide Web software in the public domain. Later, CERN made a release available with an open license” (*The Birth of the Web* | CERN, n.d.), thus launching us into the Web 1.0 area.

Imagine a web without big tech companies like Google, Facebook, and Amazon. While Microsoft and Apple did exist at this time, neither were the internet landmarks they are today. Instead, websites consisted of static webpages with no interactions, except for maybe the ability to leave your email address to sign up for a newsletter. Search engines were rudimentary at best. This was Web 1.0. It was a decentralized environment where the person or organization that created a website owned and

maintained it. It was a read-only by design and relied on a client pull model (Chiş & Salanță, 2023), meaning the end-user had to initially visit a web page to obtain access to the information on the web page. Web 1.0 took off in the early 1990s with the arrival of the Netscape Navigator web browser (*Web 3.0 Explained, Plus the History of Web 1.0 and 2.0*, n.d.-a), soon followed by Microsoft Internet Explorer (By, 2024), and lasted until 2004 (*Understanding Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 along with Comparisons*, n.d.). As time went by, technologies such as CSS, XML, and both server- and client scripting were developed and led to Web 2.0.

“Web 2.0 is a term describing changing trends in the use of World Wide Web technology and web design that aims to enhance creativity, secure information sharing, collaboration, and functionality of the web. Web 2.0 concepts have led to the development and evolution of web-based communities and its hosted services, such as social-networking sites, video sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and folksonomies” (*The First Web 2.0 Conference Occurs : History of Information*, n.d.). Web 2.0 was created around 2004 by Tim O’Reilly (*Web 3.0 Explained, Plus the History of Web 1.0 and 2.0*, n.d.-a) and gained “popularity after the first web 2.0 conference was held by Tim O’Reilly and Dale Dougherty” (*Understanding Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 along with Comparisons*, n.d.) in October 2004 (*The First Web 2.0 Conference Occurs : History of Information*, n.d.). Web 2.0, as opposed to Web 1.0, is the read-write web. It’s the age of big tech companies like Google, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft. Social networking services like Twitter and Snapchat grew into large companies with large valuations. Web 2.0 also brought about smart devices and the numerous applications (apps) we use today.

While Web 2.0 has delivered many new technologies we use daily, it also has a dark side. Unlike Web 1.0, Web 2.0 is a centralized environment, meaning all data is stored on a centralized server. For example, let’s consider Facebook. We no longer own the post’s data when we post on Facebook. Instead, it now resides on one of the many servers in one of the numerous data centers owned by Facebook. Facebook then uses your data as they see fit. By using a service Facebook offers, “you agree that [Facebook] can show you ads [they] think may be relevant to you and your interests. [They] use your personal data to help determine which personalized ads to show you”(Facebook, n.d.).

Privacy is also a concern in the Web 2.0 era, especially with minors. Staying with Facebook,

assume a video was taken and posted on Facebook of you doing something inappropriate when younger, say you were partaking in marijuana. It has been over ten years since the video was posted to Facebook, and you are now trying to get a job as a police officer at your local police station. Doing their due diligence, the police station does a thorough background check and discovers the video of you smoking marijuana. From the footage, they decide you are not the right person for the job, even though you never used marijuana again.

Now, let’s explore Web 3.0 or Web 3, but before jumping into Web 3, we must look at the Semantic Web. The Semantic Web, another concept initially developed by Tim Berners-Lee (*Web 3.0 Explained, Plus the History of Web 1.0 and 2.0*, n.d.-b), can be described as a way for “linking data across webpages, applications, and files. ... [I]n which Web 1.0 was about linked webpages, Web 2.0 was about linked apps and Web 3.0 is about linked data” (*What Is the Semantic Web?*, n.d.). “Linked Data is about communities agreeing on the meaning of their data and sharing it in a massively networked information space” (*Linked Data Overview*, 2024). Web 3 allows for creating a “web environment where data is interconnected, easily understood by machines, and controlled by users, making a convergence between the real world and the virtual means of communication and information access, enabling an ambient intelligence scenario of pervasive and ubiquitous computing” (Chiş & Salanță, 2023; Silva et al., 2008).

Web 3, a term coined by Gavin Wood, the co-founder of Ethereum, in 2014 (Edelman, n.d.; Lutz, 2022), incorporates “individual control of personal data and the use of cryptocurrencies and blockchain” (*Web 3.0 Explained, Plus the History of Web 1.0 and 2.0*, n.d.-a). It is also “built upon the core concepts of decentralization, openness, and greater user utility” (*Web 3.0 Explained, Plus the History of Web 1.0 and 2.0*, n.d.-a).

As stated earlier, decentralization means that “big tech” does not own or control the data flowing across Web 3. Instead, the end-user controls how their data is used by opting in to allow Web 3 companies to use it, unlike today, when you must opt out of having your data used by the company.

Web 3 relies on blockchain technology, the same technology used in cryptocurrency, to facilitate information exchange on the web. So, what is a blockchain? In its simplest form, a blockchain is a “tamper-resistant ledger that maintains transactional records” (“Blockchain,” 2019). To make blockchain ledgers tamper-resistant, a unique identifier links

each block in the chain to the previous block. When a new block is added to the chain, the new block's identifier is created by combining the last block's data block, timestamp, and header. The complexity of the identifier is what allows for the immutability of the chain because if a previous block lower in the chain is changed, it would invalidate the identifier of every block thereafter because the hashes would not be the same. Each person using Web 3 must have a copy of the ledger on their device, updated in real time.

Another way blockchain is utilized in Web 3 is in e-commerce. Suppose you purchase a digital item from a Web 2 company like Amazon. In that case, you do not own the digital item; instead, you are granted a limited license to use the item. But what happens when the digital item's creator decides they no longer want to license their digital intellectual property to a vendor? You will lose access to the item because the provider's terms and conditions only grant you a limited-use license. So, how will blockchain prevent this from happening on Web 3? First, the only way to pay for purchases from e-commerce vendors like Amazon will be through cryptocurrency, such as Ethereum. Cryptocurrency relies on the immutability of the blockchain to keep accurate records of each user transaction. Ethereum is at the core of Web 3, so it is a fair assumption that Ethereum will be the dominant cryptocurrency for Web 3. Since the underlying technology for Web 3 is blockchain, e-commerce vendors can sell NFTs for digital content instead of using a license.

What is an NFT? The acronym NFT stands for non-fungible token. In the simplest form, "NFTs are tokens that are individually unique. Each NFT has different properties (non-fungible) and is provably scarce....The uniqueness of each NFT enables tokenization of things like art, collectibles, or even real estate, where one specific unique NFT represents some specific unique real world or digital item. Ownership of an asset is publicly verifiable on Ethereum blockchain" (*Non-Fungible Tokens (NFT)*, n.d.).

The following example will make NFTs easier to understand. Suppose you own a rare coin, such as one of the scarce 1943 solid copper pennies. You can represent the coin as an NFT and store that NFT on the Ethereum blockchain. The NFT might have properties associated with it, such as the acquisition date of the coin, the coin's mint location, the date of the coin, the grade of the coin from a rare coin certification company, the certification number, and the owner's Ethereum username. Once the token

has all the required properties supplied, the token is placed on the blockchain. So, how would NFTs fix the issue of owning digital content? Assume Amazon is an early adopter of Web 3. Instead of issuing limited-use licenses for selling digital content, when a consumer purchases a digital video or any other digital content, Amazon creates an NFT containing the consumer-purchased content and various other properties and places the NFT on the blockchain. The seller can no longer arbitrarily remove access to the content by placing the sales and content information on the blockchain. The use of NFTs further decentralizes Web 3 because big tech does not centrally control the blockchain. Unlike Web 2, consumers are not locked into a big tech company environment when purchasing digital content. The consumer is not prohibited from selling or trading NFTs to other users on the blockchain. NFTs can be bought/sold/traded at will.

The concept of privacy and anonymity on Web 3 is bittersweet. Given that Web 3 requires the use of blockchain, every event is documented and stored on the blockchain. This means privacy and anonymity do not exist in the Web 3 environment. The lack of privacy and anonymity will assist in eliminating things such as cyberbullying and cyberstalking because the victims of such attacks could just examine the blockchain to determine the individual responsible. Furthermore, Web 3 enforces non-repudiation (Editor, n.d.). This means that once an individual commits a transaction to the blockchain, they cannot deny it was them. On the other hand, individuals who require privacy and anonymity for their safety will have issues with using Web 3.

When will Web 3 dethrone Web 2 as the ubiquitous web we use daily? Before it does, Web 3 must address and overcome several issues. For instance, "Web 3 is still largely theoretical and has a steep learning curve" (*What Is Web3 and How Will It Work?*, n.d.). The user must be educated in blockchain and cryptocurrency concepts, which is not a task most want to undertake. Next, the issue of the non-existence of privacy and anonymity must be overcome before the public at large will accept Web 3. Early adopters will be people who do not think they have anything to hide and will not be bothered by the lack of privacy. Lastly, big tech companies will not give up their control easily. After all, your data is one of their most significant resources. It could take legislation for Web 3 to become a reality; even then, there are no guarantees. Web 3 is the next milestone in the evolutionary growth of the World Wide Web. And like biological growth, there will be growing pains.

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F. Tracy Farmer is the systems librarian at Arkansas State University Jonesboro's Dean B. Ellis Library.

ALA COUNCILOR'S REPORT: Advocacy, LibLearnX & More

by *Crystal Gates*, North Little Rock Public
Library System

Advocacy

ALA recently launched a new campaign urging library advocates to engage with their elected officials on two critical issues: protecting the freedom to read and supporting federal funding for libraries. Advocates are encouraged to personalize their messages, emphasizing how libraries positively impact their communities and the essential role they play in providing access to information. By encouraging direct communication, the ALA aims to ensure that legislators understand the value of libraries, with personal stories often carrying more weight than template messages. This campaign emphasizes the power of grassroots advocacy in shaping policy decisions that affect libraries nationwide. As we know, our communities love their libraries; now is the time to move from library lover to library advocate.



Gates

LibLearnX

The final LibLearnX was held January 24-27, 2025, with 1,625 attendees. On Friday, attendees attended the ALA Governance Institute to learn more about ALA and its inner workings. Leadership announced a generous \$25 million bequest by James W. Lewis, of Washington, D.C. The gift, the largest individual bequest in ALA's history, will fund scholarships for aspiring librarians.

Council elected four members to serve on the Executive Board for a three-year term, 2025-2028. Newly elected board members are Tanisha Love (at-large), Janice Moore Newsum (RT), K.C. Boyd (AASL), and Ziba Perez (Chapter).

Nine ArLA members attended a dinner at Chico Malo in downtown Phoenix. Delicious cuisine in a cozy atmosphere with library colleagues – what could be better!

ALA 2025 Annual @ Philadelphia, PA

It is an exciting time to be attending ALA Annual. We will be back in Philly June 26-30, 2025. If you haven't visited the Reading Terminal, I strongly encourage you to do so. There are also several walking tours near the convention center that



are worth noting. Early registration opens in mid-February and ends March 31. An ArLA dinner will be planned and details shared closer to conference.

Council Actions

Over the last few years, Council has seen significant changes to its governance structure. Last month, Council approved moving the Executive Board composition back to its former size and election rules. Going forward, the Executive Board of the American Library Association shall consist of thirteen (13) members including: the four (4) officers of the Association, the immediate past president, and eight (8) councilors elected by Council to three-year (3-year) terms. The original and current intention of Council is to create a diverse, inclusive Executive Board. To continue this important work, Council approved for the Executive Board to create an ad hoc committee to explore possibilities for ensuring diverse representation in ALA's Executive Board including but not limited to the possibility of those standing for election not being limited to council members. The Committee is tasked with reporting to the Executive Board with recommendations by October 2025.

Memorials from LLX25 were made for: Chrystal Carr Jeter, Helen Amabile, Alden Rollins, George Abbott, Garrett Crowell, Ellen Spring, Kathleen Weibel, and Sheila Intner. Tributes were made for: Alan Inouye, Jessica Rosenworcel, and Clara Nalli Bohrer.

Other News

ALA continues its work to find the best Executive Director possible. Interviews are scheduled for April. The Search Committee hopes to announce a new Executive Director shortly thereafter.

ALA will celebrate 150 years in 2026, with a large celebration being planned for January 2026 in Chicago. Stay tuned at ala.org for more details as they become available.

Crystal Gates serves as ArLA's ALA Councilor and is executive director at the North Little Rock Public Library System.



Left to right: Ron Russ, Clare Graham, Stephanie Brown, Crystal Gates, Lacy Wolfe, Kacy Earnest Spears, Lynn Valetutti and Jessica Reeves at LibLearnX.

The Next Chapter *ArLA 2024 Annual Conference*

by Lynn Valetutti

ArLA 2024 Conference Chair

Librarians gathered from all over Arkansas on the weekend of October 4-6, 2024, to attend the annual conference at the Hot Springs Convention Center. It was an extremely hot weekend that mirrored the temperature of today's library culture. It was an opportunity to reconnect, bond, and share our successes and failures. It was a refresh for us mentally and educationally. The conference would not have been a success if I did not have the support of the conference team: Kristin Quintanilla, Alexis Wilson, Amy Wallace, Misty Hawkins, Amy McGohan, Kacy Ernest Spears, Judy Calhoun, Ron Russ, Amber Wilson, Jessica Riedmueller, and Britt Murphy. I can't thank you enough.

By the numbers, this year's conference included:

- 189 Arkansan attendees
- 43 baskets in the silent auction
- 34 breakout sessions
- 20 vendors to visit in the vendor hall
- 12 awards
- 4 poster sessions
- 7 trivia teams
- 5 bookmobiles participating in the "Petting Zoo"
- 3 authors at the Authors' Luncheon
- 3 sessions of yoga
- 3 keynotes
- 2 ALA speakers
- 2 general sessions
- 2 board meetings
- 1 pre-conference with three sessions

1 membership reception

The Next Chapter

More than the numbers, this was a weekend for library workers to find joy in their profession and feel supported in our work preparing for the next chapter. Some of our previous chapters this year have been challenging, and it's hard to believe the developments that affected our libraries. The meaning of this year's conference theme took on full significance for each attendee. We gathered to learn from each other, continue working together, and grow stronger for the chapters ahead. The descriptions below will give you a sense of the engaging programs and events offered at conference this year.

Pre-Conference

Knowledge Advocates: Libraries and the Public Policy Center

Misty Hawkins (ARVRLS) opened the pre-conference with a session that highlighted the resources and services provided by the Arkansas Public Policy Center. She shared examples of past library collaborations and activities focused on voter resources. The Center's mission is to equip Arkansans with research-based information and education on important public issues, which are defined as those with multiple viewpoints and significant consequences. The presentation was in line with the conference theme "The Next Chapter," which seeks to emphasize renewed efforts in advocacy, awareness, and public action, showcasing how libraries can promote civic engagement within their communities.

Yukon Do It: Student Community Engagement

This session was created by Jennifer Johnson and delivered by Kacy Earnest Speers. Jennifer describes volunteer programming for young people that brings value to the community and library, and teaches youngsters how they can make a discernable difference improving their environment, which elevates self-worth. The programming has young volunteers engage in tasks such as cleaning, organizing, and shelving library materials. These activities help them develop essential skills including hand-eye coordination, attention to detail, time management, and the ability to follow directions. Jennifer emphasized the importance of providing valuable experiences through regular follow-ups and ongoing dialogue with the volunteers.

Additionally, the volunteers participate in community projects, helping to create materials for various community partners. These efforts not only benefit the library but also promote a sense of community and encourage active citizenship among the young volunteers.

Librarians Are Not Babysitters: Enacting Legislation to Curtail Unconstitutional Book Bans

Presented by UALR law student Gracie Roper, this session focused on recent trends in censorship within libraries, the constitutional issues surrounding book bans, and how state legislatures are responding by enacting laws that prohibit such bans. Her program examined the “next chapter” of legislation that supports First Amendment rights while also reviewing previous developments that have been firmly established in American law.



Gracie Roper and Jessie Burchfield. Please see Roper’s Law Note on page 16.

Keynote Speakers

The first session in the afternoon after the pre-conference was presented by **Clare Graham**, the recipient of the ALA I Love My Librarian Award. She shared her journey to becoming the director of the Malvern-Hot Spring County Library and her dedication to the community.



Graham

Following Ms. Graham, **Kent Oliver**, senior public policy fellow for ALA’s Public Advocacy Office,



Oliver

led a panel discussion with **Becky Calzada** and **Nate Coulter** about opposing book banning and censorship. Oliver’s role with ALA is to enhance the association’s involvement in policy discussions related to First Amendment freedoms and intellectual property. Becky Calzada is currently a member of the ALA Policy Corp and has served on the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee and the Texas Library Association Legislative Committee. Calzada is a co-founding member of #FReadom Fighters, a grassroots effort led by four Texas librarians to fight censorship, provide a supportive space for librarians, and offer resources for anyone wanting to advocate for



Calzada

intellectual freedom. She currently serves as the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) president. Nate Coulter is executive director of the Central Arkansas Library System (CALs). Coulter oversees the entire CALs organization and reports to the Board of Directors. His work primarily focuses on identifying and implementing the library’s goals by advocating for the library in the community, fostering partnerships with other organizations with common or similar missions, and securing



Coulter



O'Neill

the resources necessary for CALS staff to do their critically important work.

It was good to laugh with **Craig O'Neill**, a news anchor and author who has recently begun a new chapter in his life. With years of experience behind him, he shared insights on living a fulfilling life and what he envisions to be a retirement filled with new experiences.

ArLA Business

The ArLA Board and Communities of Interest met on Friday, confirmed newly elected members, and heard reports regarding general business. We ended the conference with our annual member business meeting on Sunday afternoon where annual reports were delivered to the general membership, and leadership elections were announced to those present. An article in this issue of *Arkansas Libraries* will detail the results of the election. Members were encouraged to go out on the town Saturday night with dine-arounds highlighting the great food around Hot Springs and meeting with other members.

Fun Events

The Membership Committee held a fun gathering in the Embassy Suites common area on Friday before the Awards Dinner. Games and prizes were awarded, and happy hour enhanced the interaction. Later that weekend on Saturday, the annual Trivia event kicked off in the Embassy Suites' Bistro. Gurus Amber Wilson and Jessica Riedmueller conducted the competition, and there was fierce fighting between library teams for prizes and bragging rights, as well as a lot of great music (thanks to our emcees!). David Dubard from EBSCO hosted the event with a variety of beverages, along with sweet and savory snacks and accompanying dips. Seven teams fought bitterly to the end. John McGraw's team recaptured the winning title and exploited the bragging rights. Trivia night raised \$705.00 for LEAF (Library Education & Aid Fund).

Awards and Arkansas Authors

The Awards Dinner was held on Friday night which featured a gourmet sirloin steak dinner. Librarians proudly gathered to celebrate years of dedicated work, newly launched careers, academic achievements, children's librarians, scholarships, and a range of prestigious awards. Articles in this issue of *Arkansas Libraries* will feature our awardees and scholarship recipient.

Kristin Quintanilla, author event coordinator, stated the luncheon was a success. Turf's Catering served a Cinco De Mayo spread which was a culinary delight. Three authors talked about their

work, past and/or present, their writing process, or anything they thought might interest a room full of librarians! The authors were **Katy Duffield**, **Bitty Martin**, and **Sean Fitzgibbon**.

Katy Duffield, children's author, shared about growing up in Arkansas, her early interest in libraries, and one of her more recent books, *Crossings: Extraordinary Structures for Extraordinary Animals*, a nonfiction children's book that teaches children about structures built around the world that keep animals safe while crossing busy roads. Bitty Martin, a Hot Springs native, wrote a true crime novel about the city, *Snake Eyes: Murder in a Southern Town*. It tells of Ms. Martin's classmate who was murdered in the 1960s and Bitty's journey to discover the truth about her murder. Her knowledge of the history of Hot Springs was impressive. Sean Fitzgibbon is an artist and author who combined his talents to create the graphic nonfiction book *What Follows is True: Crescent Hotel*. This beautiful book is about what is now the Crescent Hotel in Eureka Springs, AR. Before it was the hotel, it was briefly the Baker Hospital, an infamous cancer hospital rumored to be haunted and was the initial source of several dark legends.

These three nonfiction books, which showcased different genres and highlighted the talents of their authors, were fascinating to learn about. All three authors graciously stayed afterward to meet the librarians and sign copies of their books, which had been provided by Black Ribbon Books in Hot Springs.

Programming a Variety of Choices

The breakout sessions provided a diverse range of programs tailored for different types of libraries. Topics included AI, animal-assisted therapies, designing with Canva, library survival guides, engaging adults, bringing programs home, supervisory training, and K-16 initiatives. The theme "Crafting the Next Chapter



Hohl

of Libraries through Unity and Education" beautifully encapsulated our conference's focus. We were honored to hear from **Cindy Hohl**, ALA President, and **Leo Lo**, ACRL President, who joined us virtually.

We hosted the first Bookmobile Petting Zoo in the parking lot of the



Lo

Convention Center. Five bookmobiles from across Arkansas were present to showcase the newest and most innovative models currently servicing patrons. It was a librarian's dream-come-true to see such a diverse collection of bookmobiles equipped with the latest traveling technology.

Putting the Fun in Fundraising and Socializing

The Basket Auction remains ArLA's largest and most popular fundraiser. This year, 43 baskets raised a total of \$1,359.00 for the Library Education & Aid Fund (LEAF). The baskets included a variety of items, such as the latest games, homemade gifts, spa relaxation products, Razorback and sports-themed merchandise, books, kitchen tools, and adult beverages. I ended up taking home a large basket filled with games, so now you know where to go for game night!

ArLA T-shirts, sweatshirts, and tote bags were available for purchase through a company called Sweet Summertime. Attendees could preorder items for pickup at the conference or buy from a limited selection available at the event. The quality of the products was top-notch. In addition, there were ArLA 2025 calendars hot off the press, promoting all the wonderful patrons, staff, and programming around the state. The proceeds of calendar sales benefited

the LEAF and scholarships funds.

In all ArLA was able to raise \$2,186 to support education and assist Arkansas libraries through whatever challenges lie ahead.

See You Next Year!

Next year's conference, titled "Turning the Pages for Advocacy," will be held again at the Hot Springs Convention Center, with hotel accommodations available at the Hilton Embassy Suites. The annual Trivia Night will kick off the conference on the evening of Friday, October 17, 2025. The main conference will feature full days of sessions on Saturday, October 18, and Sunday, October 19, 2025. This year, we have made slight changes to the venue. My focus for the conference aligns with my presidential goals of increasing advocacy and promoting intellectual freedom within ArLA.

Lynn Valetutti is the director of the library and LMS departments at National Park College in Hot Springs, Arkansas. She serves on the Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP) Committee for the American Library Association, and is the 2024 ArLA president-elect and chair of the Conference Committee.



Five bookmobiles from around Arkansas traveled to the ArLA Conference.



The Basket Auction remains ArLA's largest fundraiser.

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW—LIBRARIANS ARE NOT BABYSITTERS: ENACTING LEGISLATION TO CURTAIL UNCONSTITUTIONAL BOOK BANS

by *Gracie Roper*

*J.D. Candidate, University of Arkansas at
Little Rock, William H. Bowen School of Law*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the apt words of Kurt Vonnegut, a champion of free speech and the author of the banned book *Slaughterhouse-Five*:

If you are an American, you must allow all ideas to circulate freely in your community, not merely your own . . . [I]t was a rotten lesson you taught young people in a free society when you denounced and then burned books—books you hadn't even read. You should also resolve to expose your children to all sorts of opinions and information, in order that they will be better equipped to make decisions and to survive.¹

Slaughterhouse-Five has long been the subject of book bans in the United States since its publication in 1969.² Vonnegut's controversial novel served as one of the bases for the United States Supreme Court's landmark case on the issue of book bans.³ A few years after a North Dakota school district burned thirty-two copies of Vonnegut's book in its high school's coal burner, the Island Trees School District of Levittown, New York, removed *Slaughterhouse-Five* and several other books from the district's libraries.⁴ The school district board members deemed

the books “anti-American, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, and just plain filthy.”⁵ A suit challenging the district's book bans eventually made its way to the Supreme Court in the 1982 case of *Board of Education v. Pico*.⁶ In a fractured 5-4 decision, the Court held against the board, with Justices Brennan, Marshall, and Stevens stating that the book bans blatantly violated the First Amendment, Justice Blackmun concurring that the First Amendment places restrictions on book bans, and Justice White concurring in the judgment only and failing to consider the First Amendment question.⁷

The Supreme Court's fractured decision in *Pico* did little to settle the issue of book bans in the United States.⁸ In the last few years, book bans have surpassed school district squabbles, and states have taken it upon themselves to pass laws that reinforce book bans.⁹ While most of the United States's history with book bans involves school settings, current book-banning laws extend to public libraries and bookstores and impose criminal penalties on librarians for allowing minors to access banned materials.¹⁰ Although some libraries, bookstores, and private organizations have quickly challenged these state laws, book bans only seem to be gaining traction as many states have introduced bills that seek to criminalize book providers for furnishing, disseminating, or promoting certain harmful and obscene materials.¹¹ Based on this pattern, the

1 Kurt Vonnegut, *Two Letters*, 51 INDEX ON CENSORSHIP 61–63 (Apr. 2022), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/03064220221085930>; Kurt Vonnegut: *Remembering a Hero of Free Speech*, NAT'L COAL. AGAINST CENSORSHIP, <https://ncac.org/resource/kurt-vonnegut-remembering-a-hero-of-free-speech> (last visited Sept. 23, 2024).

2 Betsy Morais, *The Neverending Campaign to Ban 'Slaughterhouse Five'*, ATLANTIC (Aug. 12, 2011), <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/08/the-neverending-campaign-to-ban-slaughterhouse-five/243525/>.

3 Bd. of Educ. v. Pico, 457 U.S. 853, 856 n.3 (1982).

4 See Morais, *supra* note 2. Some of the other removed books included *The Naked Ape*, by Desmond Morris; *Down These Mean Streets*, by Piri Thomas; *Best Short Stories of Negro Writers*, edited by Langston Hughes; *Laughing Boy*, by Oliver

LaFarge; *Black Boy*, by Richard Wright; *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But A Sandwich*, by Alice Childress; and *Soul On Ice*, by Eldridge Cleaver, among others. See *Pico*, 457 U.S. at 856 n.3.

5 *Pico*, 457 U.S. at 857.

6 *Id.* at 853.

7 *Id.* at 875–85.

8 See Anthony Aycock, *The Largely Forgotten Book Ban Case That Went up to the Supreme Court*, WASH. POST (May 20, 2023, 6:00 AM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2023/05/20/book-bans-supreme-court-pico/>.

9 *Monitoring State Legislation That Criminalizes Libraries, Schools, and Museums 2023*, EVERYLIBRARY (Apr. 8, 2023), https://www.everylibrary.org/state_obscenity_laws_23-24 [hereinafter *Monitoring State Legislation*].

10 See *id.*

11 See *id.* States that have introduced bills in

number of states attempting to pass similar bills will continue to grow if this issue is left unchecked by state legislatures.¹²

This Note argues that states with laws banning books in public libraries and criminalizing librarians should repeal their current unconstitutional and impractical legislation and, instead, enact new laws to outlaw book bans in order to protect the constitutional rights of library patrons and librarians. Section II of this Note provides a brief background of states that currently have book-banning laws, while Section III lays out the inherent unconstitutionality of these laws pursuant to the First Amendment Freedom of Speech Clause.¹³ Section IV explains how these book-banning laws are impossible to implement and enforce because of issues with library resources and liability shifting.¹⁴ Finally, Section V argues that states can safeguard their citizens' constitutional rights and the United States's core values by enacting new legislation to outlaw book bans.¹⁵

II. THE INSURGENCE OF BOOK-BANNING LEGISLATION

Book bans are a form of censorship that allow states and other institutions to remove literary materials from public access because they disagree with the materials' contents.¹⁶ The most potent example of book censorship in world history is the image of Hitler's regime burning 25,000 books in 1933.¹⁷ With a justification shockingly similar to the school district's "anti-American" reasoning in *Pico*,

2023 aiming to change state obscenity laws to allow for the criminalization of book provides include: Ohio, Kansas, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Georgia, Texas, Maine, Montana, Florida, Indiana, Tennessee, North Dakota, Alabama, Idaho, Missouri, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Texas, Iowa, South Carolina, South Dakota, Wyoming, Mississippi, and West Virginia.

12 See *id.*; e.g., Nichole Chavez, *Book Bans Continue Rising in the US with More Targeting 'Sexual' and 'Inappropriate' Content, Free Speech Group Says*, CNN, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/09/21/us/book-ban-increase-pen-america/index.html> (last updated Sept. 21, 2023, 1:17 PM).

13 See *infra* Sections II–III.

14 See *infra* Section IV.

15 See *infra* Section V.

16 See *Book Burning*, U.S. HOLOCAUST MEM'L MUSEUM, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/book-burning> (last visited Aug. 31, 2024).

17 *Id.*

the Nazis' proclaimed goal was to eliminate books with dissenting viewpoints that the Nazis considered "un-German."¹⁸ In United States history, one of the first examples of book banning occurred in the 1850s and the early 1860s when multiple Southern states outlawed Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and other books for expressing anti-slavery sentiment.¹⁹ Slaveholders publicly burned Stowe's novel, and Sam Green, a black minister from Maryland, was "sentenced to ten years in the state penitentiary for owning a copy of the book."²⁰ Although the United States does not have a recent history with burning books, there are many ways to "burn a book," and state legislatures seem to be "going around with lit matches" in an effort to quash disagreeable viewpoints.²¹

In the past few years, state legislatures have persistently pushed bills that change the criminal code for obscenity laws to make it possible to charge book providers with a crime for furnishing banned books to minors.²² Prior to the insurgence of these laws, almost all states had an affirmative defense for educators, librarians, and other book providers that exempted them from being charged under state obscenity laws.²³ Similarly, government-affiliated book providers have an affirmative defense

18 Bd. of Educ. v. Pico, 457 U.S. 853, 857 (1982); see *Book Burning*, supra note 16.

19 Erin Blakemore, *The History of Book Bans—and Their Changing Targets—in the U.S.*, NAT'L GEOGRAPHIC (Apr. 24, 2023), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/history-of-book-bans-in-the-united-states>.

20 *Id.*

21 RAY BRADBURY, FAHRENHEIT 451, at 169 (Del Ray 1979) (1953) (citing to the coda or afterword) ("There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches."). While Bradbury did not explicitly mention state legislatures, his references to religious and political sectors controlling access to certain literary ideas is, no doubt, applicable to today's legislatures attempting to quell opposing viewpoints. See *id.*

22 Kara Yorio, *As Bills in Multiple States Threaten Librarians with Criminalization, Advocates Are Fighting Back*, SCH. LIBR. J. (Mar. 6, 2023), <https://www.slj.com/story/As-Bills-in-Multiple-States-Threaten-Librarians-with-Criminalization-Advocates-Are-Fighting-Back>.

23 *Id.*

from prosecution through the 1962 Model Penal Code.²⁴ The purpose of these exemption laws was to protect book providers from persecution by those who disagree with the content of the educational materials they necessarily provide as part of their job responsibilities.²⁵

As of 2024, these protections continue to erode as more states pass book ban laws criminalizing book providers.²⁶ The states that explicitly allow for the prosecution of book providers include Tennessee, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, and Indiana.²⁷ For instance, according to Arkansas Act 372, librarians and bookstore owners could face up to one year in prison for distributing materials that are considered "harmful to minors."²⁸ Other states possess new obscenity laws that book providers have implicitly interpreted to apply to book bans.²⁹ Due to a lack of guidance about these unclear obscenity laws, some book providers have erred on the side of caution by proactively removing books containing controversial topics that have not even been challenged or banned.³⁰ One of the most striking instances of preemptive book bans occurred in Collierville, Tennessee, where a school district removed 327 suspect books—primarily those based on gender identity themes—in anticipation of a state law that ultimately did not pass.³¹ In another case, a

24 *Id.*

25 *Id.*

26 See Hannah Natanson, *School Librarians Face a New Penalty in the Banned-Book Wars: Prison*, WASH. POST (May 18, 2023, 6:00 AM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/05/18/school-librarians-jailed-banned-books/>.

27 *Id.*

28 Act of Mar. 30, 2023, No. 372, sec. 1, 2023 Ark. Acts 1913, 1915 (codified at ARK. CODE ANN. § 5-27-212(d)) (describing sentence for distribution of materials considered "harmful" as Class A misdemeanor); see ARK. CODE ANN. § 5-4-401(b) (1) (describing Class A misdemeanors as carrying a sentence of not exceeding one (1) year).

29 Eesha Pendharkar, *State Laws Are Behind Many Book Bans, Even Indirectly, Report Finds*, EDUC. WEEK (May 19, 2023), <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/state-laws-are-behind-many-book-bans-even-indirectly-report-finds/2023/05>.

30 *See id.*

31 *See Removal of 327 Books with LGBTQ+ Themes by TN School District Is "Heartbreaking" Censorship*, PEN AM. (Aug. 25, 2022), <https://>

school district stripped more than 11,000 students in Pulaski County, Arkansas, of online books and other digital educational resources until an undefined time in the future when the statutory guidelines become more clear as to what materials are acceptable for minors.³² The unclear statutory guidelines are further convoluted by the fact that each law takes a different approach to banning books and criminalizing book providers.³³ The book bans may apply to school libraries, school classrooms, public libraries, or bookstores, and they may criminalize school librarians, teachers, public librarians, booksellers, or book publishers.³⁴

Astonishingly, these bills have even made their way to Congress; in August 2023, U.S. Representative Mark Green of Tennessee, introduced the *No Obscene Teaching in Our Schools Act of 2023*, also known as the *NOT in Our Schools Act of 2023*.³⁵ The proponents of the bill seek to punish school administrators who violate their own state's book ban law by prohibiting the disbursement of federal funds to those schools.³⁶ The issue of book bans and the prosecution of book providers do not become moot if this bill fails to pass because similar bills will continue to be introduced.³⁷ Critically, the criminalization of book providers has become a central issue in the United States that state legislatures must address before the constitutional rights of children, readers, patrons, librarians, and

pen.org/press-release/removal-of-327-books-with-lgbtq-themes-by-tn-school-district-is-heartbreaking-censorship/.

32 Tess Vrbin, *Central Arkansas School District Drops Library's Digital Learning Tools, Citing Lack of 'Filter'*, ARK. ADVOC. (Nov. 17, 2023, 4:07 PM), <https://arkansasadvocate.com/2023/11/17/central-arkansas-school-district-drops-librarians-digital-learning-tools-citing-lack-of-filter/>.

33 See Kasey Meehan & Jonathan Friedman, *Banned in the USA: State Laws Supercharge Book Suppression in Schools*, PEN AM. (Apr. 20, 2023), <https://pen.org/report/banned-in-the-usa-state-laws-supercharge-book-suppression-in-schools/>.

34 *See id.*

35 H.R. 5303, 118th Cong. (2023).

36 Press Release, Mark Green, U.S. Rep., Rep. Green Fights to Bar Obscene Material in Classrooms and Libraries (Aug. 31, 2023), <https://markgreen.house.gov/2023/8/rep-green-fights-to-bar-obscene-material-in-classrooms-and-libraries>.

37 *See Monitoring State Legislation, supra* note 9.

others are eroded beyond repair.³⁸

III. STATE BOOK-BANNING LAWS ARE UNCONSTITUTIONAL

Book-banning laws fail to meet constitutional muster under the First Amendment by inhibiting the right to free speech and the right to access ideas.³⁹ Part A explains how state book-banning laws violate the First Amendment because they are vague and overbroad.⁴⁰ Additionally, Part A explains that the most evident constitutional rights affected by these laws are the First Amendment rights of minors.⁴¹ Part B further explains how political decision-makers and organizations take advantage of the broad and vague nature of these book-banning laws to force their political agendas.⁴² In short, book-banning laws are void based on vagueness, overbreadth, and their clear suppression of constitutional rights.

A. First Amendment Violations of Freedom of Speech

The First Amendment prohibits any law that infringes upon an individual's fundamental right to freedom of speech.⁴³ While the First Amendment does not expressly contain protection for an individual's right to access ideas, the United States Supreme Court has consistently held that the right to receive information is a fundamental right as a corollary to the First Amendment's freedom of speech guarantee.⁴⁴ A First Amendment facial challenge asserts that the contested law is unconstitutional on its face and should be struck down, regardless of whether the particular litigant's speech is protected by the First Amendment.⁴⁵ The overbreadth doctrine is an outgrowth of First Amendment facial challenges.⁴⁶ A law is overbroad when "the impermissible applications of the law are substantial when judged in relation to the statute's plainly legitimate sweep."⁴⁷ Likewise, the vagueness

doctrine is a sister concept to the overbreadth doctrine.⁴⁸ The vagueness doctrine stems from due process notice requirements and states that a law is facially invalid if persons of common intelligence must necessarily guess as to the law's meaning and differ as to its application.⁴⁹ As such, state legislatures crafting book ban laws have a duty to make laws that are sufficiently clear and narrow to achieve their intended purpose.⁵⁰

State laws criminalizing librarians for allowing minors to access banned books are void based on vagueness and overbreadth because they apply to all minors generally and make broad content-based decisions about the appropriateness of books.⁵¹ More specifically, book bans are a form of censorship and thus restrict minors from accessing information that they lawfully have a right to obtain under the First Amendment.⁵² The right to access ideas is well established in Supreme Court precedent and is guaranteed to both adults and children.⁵³ However, because minors are "not possessed of that full capacity for individual choice which is the presupposition of First Amendment guarantees,"⁵⁴ the First Amendment rights of minors are not "co-extensive with those of adults."⁵⁵

U.S. at 615).

48 See *Connally v. Gen. Constr. Co.*, 269 U.S. 385, 391 (1926).

49 See *id.* Under the Fourteenth Amendment Due Process Clause, the government must provide a citizen who will be affected by a government decision advance notice of what the government plans to do and how the government's action may deprive the person of life, liberty, or property. See U.S. CONST. amend. XIV, § 1; *City of Chicago v. Morales*, 527 U.S. 41, 58 (1999) (quoting *Lanzetta v. New Jersey*, 306 U.S. 451, 453 (1939)).

50 See *Bd. of Educ. v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853, 864 (1982).

51 See *ShIPLEY, Inc. v. Long*, 454 F. Supp. 2d 819, 831 (E.D. Ark. 2004).

52 See *Bantam Books, Inc. v. Sullivan*, 372 U.S. 58, 71–72 (1963).

53 See *Virginia v. Am. Booksellers Ass'n, Inc.*, 484 U.S. 383, 388–89 (1988); *Pico*, 457 U.S. at 877.

54 *Ginsberg v. New York*, 390 U.S. 629, 649–50 (1968) (Stewart, J., concurring).

55 *Tinker v. Des Moines Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 515 (1969) (Stewart, J., concurring). Because minors do not have the same level of decision-making ability as adults, their First Amendment rights (like freedom of speech and expression) are not co-extensive with those of adults; essentially,

38 See *id.*

39 See *ShIPLEY, Inc. v. Long*, 454 F. Supp. 2d 819, 827–31 (E.D. Ark. 2004).

40 See *infra* Section III.A.

41 See *id.*

42 See *infra* Section III.B.

43 U.S. CONST. amend. I.

44 See *Lamont v. Postmaster Gen.*, 381 U.S. 301, 308 (1965).

45 *Sabri v. United States*, 541 U.S. 600, 609 (2004).

46 See *Broadrick v. Oklahoma*, 413 U.S. 601, 615 (1973).

47 *Snider v. City of Cape Girardeau*, 752 F.3d 1149, 1157 (8th Cir. 2014) (citing *Broadrick*, 413

While neither the Constitution nor common law specifically outline a minor’s capacity for individual choice within the meaning of the First Amendment, the Supreme Court does provide at least one criterion to aid in that determination: “[i]n assessing whether a minor has the requisite capacity for individual choice[,] the age of the minor is a significant factor.”⁵⁶ After all, a seven-year-old’s ability to make individual choices certainly differs from that of a seventeen-year-old.⁵⁷ For example, in a state with these broad book ban laws, if a seventeen-year-old girl needs to access information on sex, pregnancy, or abuse, which are topics generally sheltered from younger children, the girl will likely not be able to obtain these essential materials.⁵⁸ In addition to age, sound judgment should lead legislatures to consider a host of other factors, including a minor’s social, emotional, and cognitive development.⁵⁹ Since most state statutes define a “minor” as anyone under the age of eighteen, state legislatures banning books are making unconstitutional blanket decisions on behalf of everyone under eighteen without considering the individuals themselves and their different aptitudes for maturity.⁶⁰

Even if states were to attempt the impossible and develop an intricate equation for correlating age and developmental factors to a minor’s ability to make independent decisions about books, these laws still fail constitutional muster on other grounds.⁶¹ In addition to their overreaching application to all minors, the laws cannot adequately define what is “appropriate” or “harmful” to minors without encroaching upon constitutional protections.⁶² It remains “impossible to determine what standard should be used in deciding whether a work is appropriate for juveniles of different ages and levels

the law recognizes that children might not always understand the consequences of their actions or choices, therefore limiting their full rights under the First Amendment. *Id.*

⁵⁶ *Erznoznik v. City of Jacksonville*, 422 U.S. 205, 214 n.11 (1975).

⁵⁷ *Fayetteville Pub. Libr. v. Crawford Cty.*, 684 F. Supp. 3d 879, 887 (W.D. Ark. 2023).

⁵⁸ *See id.* at 888.

⁵⁹ *See Virginia v. Am. Booksellers Ass'n, Inc.*, 484 U.S. 383, 389–90 (1988).

⁶⁰ *See Shipley, Inc. v. Long*, 454 F. Supp. 2d 819, 827–28 (E.D. Ark. 2004).

⁶¹ *See id.*

⁶² *See id.* at 827–28, 830.

of maturity.”⁶³ While the Supreme Court has never definitively ruled on the issue of classifying what books are harmful to minors, the Court certified the issue in the 1988 case of *Virginia v. American Booksellers Association*.⁶⁴ Before remanding the case, the Supreme Court indicated that the “broader reading of the statute [which applies to a larger number of books harmful to both younger and older minors] would raise correspondingly greater First Amendment questions” than a narrow interpretation.⁶⁵ On the other hand, the narrow interpretation would only restrict books harmful to the oldest seventeen-year-old minor.⁶⁶

A narrow interpretation has saved several statutes from overbreadth and vagueness in the past.⁶⁷ It has long been a tenet of First Amendment case law for facial challenges that if the statute is “readily susceptible” to a narrowing construction that would make it constitutional, it will be upheld.⁶⁸ However, the statute must be “readily susceptible” to limitation, and the statute’s narrow interpretation cannot be too far-fetched in its application.⁶⁹ In other words, a court will not rewrite a state law to conform it to constitutional requirements.⁷⁰ For example, in *Davis-Kidd Booksellers, Inc. v. McWherter*, the Supreme Court of Tennessee upheld a state book display statute under the First Amendment because the statute was susceptible to a narrowing construction that made it applicable only to materials lacking “serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for a reasonable seventeen-year-old minor.”⁷¹

⁶³ *Virginia v. Am. Booksellers Ass'n, Inc.*, 484 U.S. at 390.

⁶⁴ *See id.* at 398.

⁶⁵ *Id.* at 395.

⁶⁶ *See id.* at 394.

⁶⁷ *See, e.g., Davis-Kidd Booksellers, Inc. v. McWherter*, 866 S.W.2d 520, 528 (Tenn. 1993) (upholding a state book display statute under the First Amendment because the statute was susceptible to a narrowing construction); *Am. Booksellers v. Webb*, 919 F.2d 1493, 1508–09 (11th Cir. 1990) (upholding an obscenity statute banning books with material considered “harmful to minors” because the statute could be narrowly interpreted).

⁶⁸ *See Erznoznik v. City of Jacksonville*, 422 U.S. 205, 216 (1975).

⁶⁹ *Id.*

⁷⁰ *See id.*

⁷¹ *Davis-Kidd Booksellers*, 866 S.W.2d at 528.

Similarly, in *American Booksellers Association v. Webb*, the Eleventh Circuit upheld an obscenity statute banning books with material considered “harmful to minors” because the statute could be narrowly interpreted to ban only material deemed harmful to a reasonable seventeen-year-old minor, thus saving the statute from overbreadth.⁷²

However, a narrow interpretation of these state statutes then becomes redundant as a recitation of the three-pronged obscenity test from *Miller v. California*.⁷³ While the narrow interpretation only applies to the oldest minors, the *Miller* test applies to both adults and minors.⁷⁴ *Miller* provides the Supreme Court’s test for determining whether speech or expression may be labeled obscene, in which case it is not protected by the First Amendment and can be prohibited.⁷⁵ The standard under *Miller* is the practical equivalent of the narrow statutory version of state book ban laws as it considers whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the work taken as a whole appeals to the prurient interest.⁷⁶ Additionally, *Miller* considers whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, and whether the work as a whole lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.⁷⁷ Correspondingly, the narrow interpretation of book bans considers whether the work lacks the same considerations for a reasonable seventeen-year-old minor.⁷⁸ The similarities between the *Miller* test and the narrow statute interpretations are not surprising, given the fact that what is appropriate for a seventeen-year-old minor is likely also appropriate for an eighteen-year-old adult.⁷⁹

Nonetheless, the *Miller* test still does not allow for content-based restrictions on freedom of speech.⁸⁰ When an obscenity statute’s vagueness

72 *Webb*, 919 F.2d at 1508–09.

73 *See Miller v. California*, 413 U.S. 15, 24 (1973).

74 *Id.* at 27.

75 *Id.* at 24–25.

76 *See id.* at 24.

77 *Id.*

78 *See Davis-Kidd Booksellers, Inc. v. McWherter*, 866 S.W.2d 520, 528 (Tenn. 1993).

79 *See id.*

80 *Bd. of Educ. v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853, 877–78 (1982) (Blackmun, J., concurring).

creates a “content-based regulation of speech[,] [t]he vagueness of such a regulation raises special First Amendment concerns because of its obvious chilling effect on free speech.”⁸¹ These state book-banning laws exceed the *Miller* test’s scope as over 40 percent of unique banned titles contain LGBTQ themes, 40 percent contain prominent characters of color, and 21 percent contain titles with issues of race or racism.⁸² Thus, even if these laws were interpreted narrowly, they would still violate a minor’s First Amendment right to access ideas due to these laws’ inability to apply to diverse minors, their inability to define what is “harmful” or “appropriate” for minors, and their content-based application.⁸³

B. Political Weaponization of Book-Banning Legislation

Vague and broad book ban laws afford state decision-makers broad discretion in determining what material is harmful or appropriate for minors.⁸⁴ Through lawmakers’ extensive latitude, the facially neutral laws divert from the states’ proclaimed interest in protecting children from harmful material and become a tool for legislatures to promote their political and religious agendas.⁸⁵ In addition to state decision-makers, the continued proliferation of book bans largely results from political organizations and groups that have formed in recent years with as many as fifty distinct groups operating nationwide.⁸⁶ These groups influenced more than half of the book bans promulgated in the United States in 2021 and 2022.⁸⁷

Notably, state representatives have admitted that book obscenity laws can be manipulated to restrict access to opposing viewpoints altogether.⁸⁸ In

81 *Reno v. ACLU*, 521 U.S. 844, 871–72 (1997).

82 Jonathan Friedman & Nadine Farid Johnson, *Banned in the USA: The Growing Movement to Censor Books in Schools*, PEN AM. (Sept. 19, 2022), <https://pen.org/report/banned-usa-growing-movement-to-censor-books-in-schools/>.

83 *See Shipley, Inc. v. Long*, 454 F. Supp. 2d 819, 827–31 (E.D. Ark. 2004).

84 *See Pico*, 457 U.S. at 863.

85 *See Jonathan Friedman & Nadine Farid Johnson, Banned in the USA: Rising School Book Bans Threaten Free Expression and Students’ First Amendment Rights*, PEN AM. (Apr. 2022), <https://pen.org/banned-in-the-usa/#politics>.

86 *See Friedman & Johnson, supra* note 82.

87 *See id.*

88 *See Douglas Soule, ‘That’s Authoritarianism’: Florida Argues School Libraries Arkansas Libraries, Fall-Winter 2024 21*

several lawsuits filed against Florida school districts, the Florida state and school defendants argued that the state government has a First Amendment right to control the public's access to materials.⁸⁹ Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody defended this authoritarian approach by writing in a legal brief that “[p]ublic-school systems, including their libraries, convey the government’s message.”⁹⁰ When U.S. District Judge Allen Winsor asked a representative of Attorney General Moody’s office a hypothetical question about whether the state believed an official could wholly remove books by Democratic politicians, the representative replied in the affirmative, adding that if Floridians disagreed with the decision, they could subsequently vote the official out of office.⁹¹

State representatives are not the only voices utilizing book obscenity laws against minors’ education to achieve their political objectives. One of the most influential political voices in implementing these book bans is the nonprofit organization, Moms for Liberty, which the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) labels as an “anti-government extremist group.”⁹² An SPLC report includes statements from Moms for Liberty spokespeople that describe the organization’s mission to remove any library materials containing discussions of critical race theory and LGBTQ identities.⁹³ Several political leaders have endorsed Moms for Liberty group

Are for Government Messaging, USA TODAY (Dec. 4, 2023, 5:17 AM), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/12/04/school-libraries-lgbtq-florida-book-ban-government-speech/71801138007/>; Brief of Amicus Curiae the State of Fla. in Support of Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss at 5–6, *Pen Am. Ctr. Inc. et al. v. Escambia Cnty. Sch. Bd.*, No. 3:23-cv-10385-TKW-ZCB (N.D. Fla. Aug. 22, 2023).

89 See Douglas Soule, *Judge Hears Florida’s Argument That School Book Bans Are Protected Government Speech*, TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT (Dec. 7, 2023, 5:31 AM), <https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/politics/2023/12/07/florida-tells-judge-that-removing-books-is-protected-government-speech/71826720007/>.

90 See Soule, *supra* note 88.

91 See Soule, *supra* note 89.

92 *Moms for Liberty*, S. POVERTY LAW CTR., <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/moms-liberty> (last visited Aug. 31, 2024).

93 *Id.*

members for school board candidates, including Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who signed a bill into law that imposed “age-appropriate” restrictions on minors’ access to educational materials.⁹⁴ A complaint opposing the Florida law states that of the books targeted for removal after the law’s enactment, “forty percent have authors who are non-white and/or identify as LGBTQ, while approximately sixty percent address themes relating to race or LGBTQ identity.”⁹⁵ Similarly, the statistics for national book bans indicate that 41 percent of the annual unique banned titles contained LGBTQ themes, while 40 percent contained prominent characters of color.⁹⁶ Concerning content-based restrictions, the statistics for individual state book bans and national book bans are both staggeringly high, which indicate a permeating discrimination problem with book-banning laws.⁹⁷ Foreseeably, political leaders will continue to exploit the vagueness and overbreadth of book bans at the expense of First Amendment protections and children’s education if this issue remains unaddressed.⁹⁸

IV. STATE BOOK-BANNING LAWS ARE IMPOSSIBLE TO IMPLEMENT AND ENFORCE

State book-banning laws criminalizing librarians are impossible to implement and enforce effectively due to insufficient library resources and the impracticalities of shifting liability to librarians.⁹⁹ Part A evaluates one system libraries have used to carry out book bans, which is relocating books deemed inappropriate for minors to an “adults-only” section.¹⁰⁰ This part further illustrates that the practice of creating an adults-only section remains uniformly impossible to implement because libraries do not possess the staff, space, or resources necessary to screen all materials, rearrange entire

94 Jonathan Friedman et al., *Educational Intimidation*, PEN AM. (Aug. 23, 2023), <https://pen.org/report/educational-intimidation/>; H.B. 1557, 2022 Leg., Reg. Sess. (Fla. 2023) (enacted).

95 Amended Complaint at 59, *Pen Am. Ctr. Inc. et al. v. Escambia Cnty. Sch. Bd.*, No. 3:23-cv-10385-TKW-ZCB (N.D. Fla. July 24, 2023).

96 See Friedman & Johnson, *supra* note 82.

97 See *id.*

98 See *Monitoring State Legislation*, *supra* note 9.

99 *Fayetteville Pub. Libr. v. Crawford Cnty.*, 684 F. Supp. 3d 879, 897 (W.D. Ark. 2023).

100 See *infra* Section IV.A.

libraries, and construct a restricted section.¹⁰¹ Part B introduces another method for implementing book bans: requiring age-restricted library cards.¹⁰² Part B further explains that the primary issue with age-restricted library cards is that after parents sign off on their child’s library card, all liability shifts to the librarians to make sure the child does not access restricted materials.¹⁰³ This Section demonstrates that both proposed “solutions” to executing book bans do little, if anything, to protect children from harmful material and lead to more legal questions than answers.¹⁰⁴

A. Lack of Library Resources to Relocate “Adults-Only” Books

One method librarians attempted to avoid criminal prosecution under these book bans is constructing an adults-only library area.¹⁰⁵ However, many public libraries do not possess the requisite resources to create an adults-only library section.¹⁰⁶ A public library is a library that is accessible by the general public and is usually funded by state and municipal resources, such as taxes.¹⁰⁷ Government funds do not cover the operating costs of entire libraries, but they are nevertheless essential for their continued operation.¹⁰⁸ Due to their limited resources, libraries cannot create an entirely separate

section that would be inaccessible to minors.¹⁰⁹ If librarians strictly observed this practice in an effort to avoid criminal penalties, they would need to construct a sectioned-off area with either a librarian “bouncer” at the entrance or some type of security code on the dividing door.¹¹⁰ Both methods would require construction materials, construction workers to build the area, potential staff to guard the area, and staff to evaluate every book currently in circulation and rearrange the library.¹¹¹ Further, more staff would be required to evaluate all incoming books for the sake of avoiding potential criminal liability.¹¹² Additionally, thorough evaluations would require librarians to read every page of every book to glean which materials might be legislatively “harmful” to minors or otherwise preemptively remove some books out of an abundance of caution.¹¹³

While librarians are spending their hard-earned master’s degrees on executing book bans, they are missing out on performing their civil servant duties of maintaining access to vital community resources that might not otherwise be affordable or accessible to community members.¹¹⁴ Not only do these book-ban laws force librarians to divert their time, training, and energy, but they also stretch librarians’ already limited resources.¹¹⁵ In cases where libraries lack the space or resources to construct secluded adults-only areas, their only choice to comply with book-banning laws will be to preemptively remove all material that might be considered harmful to their youngest patrons.¹¹⁶

Even if libraries conquered the resource hurdle of constructing an adults-only area, the existence of this restricted area violates some parents’ First Amendment rights to access ideas.¹¹⁷ Public libraries are designed to be an area accessible to all members of the public: students, researchers,

101 *See id.*

102 *See infra* Section IV.B.

103 *See id.*

104 *See infra* Sections IV.A., IV.B.

105 *Idaho Library Goes “Adults Only” in Response to State Book Banning Law*, AUTHORS GUILD (May, 23, 2024), <https://authorsguild.org/news/idaho-library-goes-adults-only-in-response-to-state-book-banning-law/>; *Libraries, Bookstores and Readers Unite to Fight Arkansas’ Restrictive Censorship Laws*, ACLU ARK. (June 2, 2023), <https://www.acluarkansas.org/en/press-releases/libraries-bookstores-and-readers-unite-fight-arkansas-restrictive-censorship-laws>.

106 *See Barriers to Young Adult Use of the Library*, NAT’L CTR. FOR EDUC. STAT., <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/frss/publications/95357/index.asp?sectionid=13> (last visited Aug. 31, 2024) [hereinafter *Barriers*].

107 *Where Does Public Library Funding Come From?*, EVERYLIBRARY (June 28, 2023), https://action.everylibrary.org/where_does_public_library_funding_come_from [hereinafter *Funding*].

108 *See id.*

109 *Fayetteville Pub. Libr. v. Crawford Cty.*, 684 F. Supp. 3d 879, 897 (W.D. Ark. 2023).

110 *See id.* at 907.

111 *See id.* at 897, 907.

112 *See id.* at 897.

113 *See id.*

114 *See Core Values of Librarianship*, AM. LIBR. ASS’N (July 26, 2006), <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues> [hereinafter *Core Values*].

115 *See Funding*, *supra* note 107.

116 *Fayetteville Pub. Libr.*, 684 F. Supp. 3d at 897.

117 *See id.* at 910.

families, or otherwise.¹¹⁸ In particular, many low-income families visit the library to access wireless internet, technology, and books that their children need to complete their schoolwork and projects.¹¹⁹ The presence of adults-only areas creates challenges for parents with young children who cannot be left unattended. This is because the criminalization of librarians does not consider parental permission, thereby placing the responsibility of supervising children on the librarians.¹²⁰ If a parent with a young child needs or wants to access protected material in the adults-only section, they are unable to do so unless they are willing to leave their toddler, baby in a stroller, or other young children unattended outside of the secluded area.¹²¹ For good reason, most parents do not wish to leave their children unattended, making it nearly impossible for these parents to access the materials they need. Due to this barrier for parents with young children, a restricted area violates some parents' First Amendment rights.¹²²

Moreover, some states have used their power to leverage library funds as a means to force librarians to adhere to state book bans.¹²³ In several instances where the local government does not contribute enough funds to compel library compliance with book bans, municipal leaders have threatened public libraries with evictions from county or city-owned buildings.¹²⁴ For example, in 2021, a group of city residents in Victoria, Texas, brought their concerns about certain LGBTQ books to the County Commissioner.¹²⁵ In response, the Commissioner supported an eviction notice to the city of Victoria, providing them only 90 days either to accede to the group of concerned residents or to move the library somewhere else.¹²⁶ In addition, the Mayor of Victoria

118 See *Core Values*, *supra* note 114.

119 See *Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights*, AM. LIBR. ASS'N (July 30, 2007), <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations> [hereinafter *Interpretations*].

120 See *Fayetteville Pub. Libr.*, 684 F. Supp. 3d at 897.

121 See *id.*

122 See *id.* at 904–05.

123 See Madeleine Carlisle, *Public Libraries Face Threats to Funding and Collections as Book Bans Surge*, TIME (Sept. 7, 2022, 2:44 PM), <https://time.com/6211350/public-libraries-book-bans/>.

124 *Id.*

125 *Id.*

126 *Id.*

said that a portion of the contested books had to be moved to a restricted area of the library or the city council would consider “freezing the library’s budget to purchase any new materials.”¹²⁷ Similar incidents have occurred throughout the country.¹²⁸

In other instances, state authorities have used their hiring and firing authority to force librarians to implement book bans or risk losing their jobs.¹²⁹ One of the current book battlegrounds is in Saline County, Arkansas.¹³⁰ In 2023, the county’s library director was vocal about her opposition to Arkansas’s new book-banning law.¹³¹ After the director’s opinion surfaced, the county quorum court passed an ordinance moving the library’s hiring and firing decisions away from the library board and to the county judge.¹³² Soon thereafter, political leaders placed billboards along the county interstate calling for the director to be fired and for the public to “Stop X-Rated Books in Libraries” by directing them to a website.¹³³ The website encouraged firing the library director, ordered the library to comply with the state book-banning law (regardless of whether its resources permitted it), and supported the county’s supervision of the library’s funds and resources.¹³⁴ A few months later, the library director

127 *Id.*

128 *E.g., id.* (discussing another instance in Jamestown, Michigan, where community members voted to defund their public library after they accused the library of “grooming” children and promoting an “LGBTQ ideology” through providing access to certain reading materials).

129 See Tess Vrbin, *Saline County Judge Fires Library Director After Months of Debate Over Children’s Access to Books*, ARK. ADVOC. (Oct. 9, 2023, 1:43 PM), <https://arkansasadvocate.com/2023/10/09/saline-county-judge-fires-library-director-after-months-of-debate-over-childrens-access-to-books/>.

130 Debra Hale-Shelton, *Update: Saline County Judge Fires Librarian After Months of Controversy Over Censorship*, ARK. TIMES (Oct. 9, 2023, 12:46 PM), <https://arktimes.com/arkansas-blog/2023/10/09/saline-county-judge-fires-librarian-after-months-of-controversy-over-censorship>.

131 *Id.*

132 *Id.*

133 See Vrbin, *Saline*, *supra* note 130.

134 See *Resolution Regarding Saline County Library*, SALINE LIBRARY (July 16, 2023), <https://salinelibrary.com/>.

was fired without cause.¹³⁵ This incident in Saline County is just one of many cases demonstrating that the lack of library resources both prevents libraries from implementing book-banning laws and allows government actors to weaponize library funds and jobs.¹³⁶ In this manner, state book-banning laws are a double-edged sword for librarians without a mechanism for effective enforcement.

B. Liability Shifting in Moderating Age-Restricted Library Cards

A second approach that some librarians have utilized to carry out book bans is requiring age-restricted library cards.¹³⁷ Every parent of a minor would be required to apply for a library card for their child that is outfitted with the child's identity and birthdate.¹³⁸ After the parent signs off on their child's library card, all liability shifts to the librarians to make sure the child does not access material above their age category.¹³⁹ Several blatant effectiveness and legal issues arise when states require age-restricted library cards as a means of enforcing book bans.¹⁴⁰

Foremost, while librarians are deemed civil servants and trained to help the public access resources, a librarian's responsibility is not to monitor children as they explore the library.¹⁴¹ Child observation responsibility should fall to the present parent, and parents should not be allowed to shift all liability for their children to librarians after signing off on a library card.¹⁴² Second, many children visit libraries to read books and not to check them out. Requiring a library card does nothing to prevent children from reading books above their designated age category; library cards only bar children from checking out certain materials.¹⁴³ In order to implement book bans and to avoid criminal liability, librarians would have to monitor the library

continuously and check each child's book.¹⁴⁴

Third, book ban laws remain unclear as to who would be liable when age-restricted library cards fail to prevent children from accessing banned material.¹⁴⁵ Librarians generally perform research in their offices while circulation workers work the front desk and stock library shelves. In that case, what happens when a circulation worker knowingly or recklessly mis-categorizes one of the cards when a child and their legal guardian sign up for one?¹⁴⁶ The unanswered legal question then becomes whether the circulation worker would be liable or if the librarian would be liable on a *respondeat superior* basis.¹⁴⁷ The book-banning laws place liability on librarians without considering library staff.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, many libraries employ teenagers as workers or volunteers.¹⁴⁹ They have not received specialized training like librarians, but even as minors, they would nonetheless be subject to liability under these book ban statutes, which do not make any exceptions for minor library workers.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, traditional general liability insurance would not typically cover such claims because no bodily injury or property damage resulted from specific covered offenses with regard to a book being or not being in a library.¹⁵¹ Due to the considerable unanswered legal liability and feasibility issues, restricted areas and age-restricted library cards are not effective solutions to

135 See Vrbin, *supra* note 130.

136 See Carlisle, *supra* note 124.

137 Kelly Jensen, *Age-Restricted Library Cards Aren't a Solution. They're a Liability: Book Censorship News*, BOOK RIOT (July 28, 2023), <https://bookriot.com/age-restricted-library-cards-arent-a-solution-theyre-a-liability/>.

138 See *id.*

139 *Id.*

140 See *id.*

141 See *id.*

142 See *id.*

143 See Jensen, *supra* note 138.

144 See *id.*

145 See *id.*

146 See Jensen, *supra* note 138.

147 See *id.* *Respondeat superior* is a legal doctrine holding an employer liable for the wrongful acts of an employee if those tortious acts occur within the scope of employment. See Gen. Bldg. Contractors Ass'n v. Pennsylvania, 458 U.S. 375, 392 (1982).

148 See Jensen, *supra* note 138.

149 *Teen Volunteer Program*, FAULKNER-VAN BUREN REG'L LIBR. SYS., <https://fcl.org/departments/teen-volunteer-program/> (last visited Sep. 1, 2024).

150 See, e.g., Act of Mar. 30, 2023, No. 372, sec. 1, 2023 Ark. Acts 1913, 1915 (codified at ARK. CODE ANN. § 5-27-212) (failing to consider minor workers in the criminalization of book providers).

151 Autumn Demberger, *As the Pressure to Ban Books Increases, so Do the EPLI, Property and D&O Exposures*, RISK & INS. (Dec. 2, 2022), <https://riskandinsurance.com/as-the-pressure-to-ban-books-increases-so-do-the-epli-property-and-do-exposures/>.

implementing vague book-ban laws.¹⁵²

V. STATES SHOULD ENACT LEGISLATION OUTLAWING BOOK BANS

The persistent perils of state book-banning laws have left many librarians and patrons without a way to rectify their constitutional deprivations.¹⁵³ In the name of carrying out these laws, states have trampled the constitutional rights of parents and minors.¹⁵⁴ States have leveraged compliance with the laws against library funding and have even retributively removed noncompliant librarians from their positions.¹⁵⁵ In response to this increasing censorship, one state developed a solution to protect its citizens' constitutional rights.¹⁵⁶ Part A introduces Illinois's bill outlawing book bans.¹⁵⁷ Part B explains the contents of legislation outlawing book bans based on guidance from the American Library Association (ALA).¹⁵⁸ Lastly, Part C reinforces the idea that legislation outlawing book bans is consistent with the United States's core values of maintaining access to diverse educational materials and preserving independent parenting decisions.¹⁵⁹

A. Illinois's Novel Approach

In 2023, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker signed into law Illinois House Bill 2789, which made Illinois the first state in the country to outlaw book bans.¹⁶⁰ This law went into effect in January 2024, and as of mid 2024, only one other state, California, has passed a similar bill.¹⁶¹ To the contrary, state laws banning books are persistently being introduced

into state legislatures.¹⁶² To protect the constitutional rights of library patrons and librarians, states should follow Illinois' suit and enact similar legislation.

Like other states, Illinois did not have any protections against book bans prior to enacting this law.¹⁶³ In 2023, the Chicago-based ALA indicated that there were sixty-nine attempts to restrict access to books and 204 titles challenged in Illinois, a number which pales in comparison to the thousands of book bans attempted in other states the same year.¹⁶⁴ According to Illinois State Representative Anne Stava-Murray and other Illinois political leaders, the policy behind the bill is that books in libraries should be chosen by librarians instead of serving as a political tool for extremist politicians to weaponize.¹⁶⁵ Additionally, Governor Pritzker noted that children deserve to see themselves represented in literature and be celebrated for their diversity and uniqueness.¹⁶⁶ Rather than creating a law strictly based on policy, Illinois modeled its law after the ALA Bill of Rights.¹⁶⁷

B. Contents of Legislation Outlawing Book Bans

The ALA is a nonprofit organization that accredits library and information studies programs in institutions of higher learning across the United States.¹⁶⁸ Professional librarians obtain their advanced degrees from institutions accredited by the ALA, and all librarians are trained to follow the ALA's Library Bill of Rights.¹⁶⁹ The ALA Council first adopted its Bill of Rights in 1939 and amended

152 *See id.*

153 *See* Susan L. Webb, *Book Banning*, FREE SPEECH CTR. MIDDLE TENN. STATE UNI. (Aug. 8, 2023), <https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/book-banning/>.

154 *See id.*

155 *See* Carlisle, *supra* note 124; Vrbin, *supra* note 130.

156 *See* Claire Savage, 'First of Its Kind' Illinois Law Will Penalize Libraries That Ban Books, AP NEWS (June 12, 2023, 4:12 PM), <https://apnews.com/article/book-ban-library-lgbtq-illinois-f5516941473e474712eaaafda084de76>.

157 *See infra* Section V.A.

158 *See infra* Section V.B.

159 *See infra* Section V.C.

160 *See* Savage, *supra* note 157; H.B. 2789, 103rd Gen. Assemb., Reg. Sess. (Ill. 2023).

161 H.B. 2789; A.B. 1078, 2023 Leg., Reg. Sess. (Ca. 2023) (enacted).

162 *See Monitoring State Legislation, supra* note 9.

163 Press Release, Gov. Pritzker Signs Bill Making Illinois First State in the Nation to Outlaw Book Bans (June 12, 2023), <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.26575.html> [hereinafter *Gov. Pritzker*].

164 *See Censorship by the Numbers*, AM. LIBR. ASS'N (April 20, 2023), <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/by-the-numbers> (reporting 1,470 titles challenged in Texas and 2,672 titles challenged in Florida in 2023).

165 *See Gov. Pritzker, supra* note 164.

166 *Id.*

167 *Library Bill of Rights*, AM. LIBR. ASS'N (June 30, 2006), <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill> [hereinafter *Library BOR*].

168 *Accredited Programs*, AM. LIBR. ASS'N (July 26, 2006), <https://www.ala.org/educationcareers/accreditedprograms>.

169 *Id.*; *Library BOR, supra* note 168.

it several times throughout the following years.¹⁷⁰ The ALA Bill of Rights is divided into seven sections.¹⁷¹ The sections plainly state basic principles that guide library services; however, for questions that arise regarding the principles' application to current technology and issues, the ALA provides an attached section titled "Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights" divided alphabetically by topic.¹⁷² The first three sections in the Bill of Rights are the most important to incorporate into legislation outlawing book bans because they emphasize the fundamental principles of intellectual freedom, access to information, and the right to free expression.¹⁷³ As such, these three sections are produced in full here:

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.¹⁷⁴

While these sections of the ALA's Bill of Rights do not mention the rights of minors, the fifth section states that a person's right to access libraries and materials should not be abridged based on age.¹⁷⁵ To make this clear, in a 2019 amendment to the accompanying interpretation, the ALA Council states: "[l]ibrary policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources available to other users violate the *Library Bill of Rights*."¹⁷⁶ Additionally, in other amendments, the ALA Council clarifies that all "libraries and librarians have an obligation to resist efforts that systematically exclude materials dealing with any subject matter, including sex, gender

identity, or sexual orientation."¹⁷⁷

The ALA's Bill of Rights is certainly not all-inclusive and cannot be copied verbatim into legislation, partly because the ALA, as a nonprofit organization, does not have the authority to prevent the criminalization of librarians.¹⁷⁸ Unlike the ALA, state legislatures have the means to reverse the current detrimental book ban laws and enact new laws to protect library patrons' and librarians' constitutional rights.¹⁷⁹ States should use the ALA's Bill of Rights as a guidepost to prevent book bans based on partisan or doctrinal disapproval and incorporate protections for librarians and other book providers.¹⁸⁰ At its core, the ALA's policies reflect the First Amendment right to access diverse ideas.¹⁸¹ If states were to put the same effort into opposing book bans as they have placed into enforcing book bans, they could curtail the erosion of constitutional freedoms.

C. Protecting the United States's Core Values

States must act now to outlaw book bans because these laws undermine the United States's emphasis on maintaining access to diverse ideas and preserving independent parenting decisions.¹⁸² The United States was founded partly on the premise that colonists sought personal liberties free from government suppression.¹⁸³ The country has continued to foster this interest by constitutionalizing the right to free speech and the right to access diverse ideas.¹⁸⁴ As such, one of the United States' core values is fostering diversity through education to promote culturally-aware citizens who contribute to

177 *Id.*

178 *See Fight Censorship*, AM. LIBR. ASS'N, <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/fight-censorship> (last visited Aug. 31, 2024).

179 *See Gov. Pritzker*, *supra* note 164.

180 *See Library BOR*, *supra* note 168.

181 *See id.*

182 *See, e.g., Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390, 400 (1923) (holding that a parent has the right to make intellectual development decisions regarding their children without government interference); *Campbell v. St. Tammany Par. Sch. Bd.*, 64 F.3d 184, 190 (5th Cir. 1995) (acknowledging that an individual has the right to access diverse ideas).

183 *See Creating the United States Founded on a Set of Beliefs*, LIBR. CONG., <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/founded-on-a-set-of-beliefs.html> (last visited Aug. 7, 2024).

184 U.S. CONST. amend. I.

170 *Library BOR*, *supra* note 168.

171 *Id.*

172 *See Interpretations*, *supra* note 119.

173 *See Library BOR*, *supra* note 168.

174 *Id.*

175 *See id.*

176 *See Interpretations*, *supra* note 119.

keeping the country a melting pot of unique ideas.¹⁸⁵ A corollary interest to education is preserving a parent's right to make independent decisions about how to raise their children free from government interference.¹⁸⁶ These crucial rights are significantly impaired by the implementation of book bans.

1. *Maintaining Access to Diverse Educational Materials*

The Supreme Court opined in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 that "education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments."¹⁸⁷ In addressing the importance of diversity in education, the Court further stated that "it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment."¹⁸⁸ While *Brown* primarily focused on segregation in school systems, district and circuit courts throughout the United States have recognized that libraries serve as a "marketplace of ideas," allowing their minor patrons to form a sense of self-identity and self-educate themselves through exposure to diverse areas of interest.¹⁸⁹ At their core, "[p]ublic libraries pursue the worthy missions of facilitating learning and cultural enrichment."¹⁹⁰

In a 1995 Fifth Circuit case, a public school district tried to remove a book on the history of voodoo.¹⁹¹ Parents of students in the school district sued, and the district court granted summary judgment in the school's favor.¹⁹² On appeal, the Fifth Circuit found the following:

In light of the special role of the school library as a place where students may freely and voluntarily explore diverse topics, the School Board's non-curricular decision to remove a book well after it had been placed in the public school libraries evokes the

question whether that action might not be an unconstitutional attempt to "strangle the free mind at its source."¹⁹³

In other words, the Fifth Circuit found that libraries play a unique and essential role in allowing minors to explore diverse topics, and government authorities should not stanch minors' freedoms through book removal based on political or doctrinal disapproval.¹⁹⁴

Many historical books used for educational purposes in schools are not considered "politically correct," and thus, are prime targets for book bans.¹⁹⁵ For example, in history courses, the Christian Bible plays a major role in shaping historical events throughout the world and the United States.¹⁹⁶ Without access to the Bible or its relevant Scripture passages, students would be unable to fully understand historical development.¹⁹⁷ In a 1924 California case, petitioners challenged the inclusion of *The King James Version Bible* in a high school library based on a California statute mandating the exclusion of all sectarian, partisan, and denominational materials from school libraries.¹⁹⁸ The California Supreme Court found this argument untenable and stated:

The mere act of purchasing a book to be added to the school library does not carry with it any implication of the adoption of the theory or dogma contained therein, or any approval of the book itself, except as a work of literature fit to be included in a reference library.¹⁹⁹

Although the California Supreme Court did not raise this point, it bears mentioning that the exclusion of all partisan and doctrinal materials would leave bare library shelves. To exclude Christian materials would necessarily mean the exclusion of neutral, secular materials, and vice versa. Book

185 See *Campbell*, 64 F.3d at 190.

186 See *Meyer*, 262 U.S. at 400.

187 *Brown v. Bd. of Educ.*, 347 U.S. 483, 493 (1954).

188 *Id.*

189 See *Right to Read Def. Comm. v. Sch. Comm. of Chelsea*, 454 F. Supp. 703, 715 (D. Mass. 1978) (citing *Minarcini v. Strongsville City Sch. Dist.*, 541 F.2d 577, 582 (6th Cir. 1976)).

190 *United States v. Am. Libr. Ass'n, Inc.*, 539 U.S. 194, 203 (2003).

191 *Campbell v. St. Tammany Par. Sch. Bd.*, 64 F.3d 184, 190 (5th Cir. 1995).

192 *Id.* at 187.

193 *Id.* at 190.

194 See *id.*

195 See JOAN DELFATTORE, *WHAT JOHNNY SHOULDN'T READ: TEXTBOOK CENSORSHIP IN AMERICA* 7 (1992).

196 See Angela E. Kamrath, *The Need and Legal Right to Teach Religious History in Public Schools*, AM. HERITAGE EDUC. FOUND. (Jan. 18, 2017), <https://americanheritage.org/need-legal-right-teach-religious-history-public-schools/>.

197 See *id.*

198 *Evans v. Selma Union High Sch. Dist.*, 193 Cal. 54, 55–56 (1924).

199 *Id.* at 60.

bans also negatively impact students' education because student engagement in reading and learning decreases when they do not see their uniqueness and diversity represented in available literature.²⁰⁰ To preserve the significance of education in the United States, it remains essential to retain access to diverse educational resources.

2. *Preserving Independent Parenting Decisions*

The government's primary argument for enacting laws banning books is to protect children from harmful material, and current legislation criminalizes librarians for allowing children to pick up and read certain books.²⁰¹ This criminalization transfers some of the parenting responsibility to librarians, contrary to our country's emphasis that parents should maintain primary childrearing decisions and responsibilities.²⁰² Some book ban proponents misunderstand book ban laws and assert that their goal is to prevent schools from requiring children to read certain books and be influenced by their content.²⁰³ However, current book ban legislation with criminal penalties only addresses access to literary materials and not curriculum oversight.²⁰⁴ Book ban advocates continuously overlook parents, which is evidenced by the fact that most book ban advocates are political figures and organizations who are not even concerned parents.²⁰⁵ The Supreme Court has held that parents have a fundamental right to raise children as they choose and free from government encroachment.²⁰⁶ In addition, the

200 See First Book Staff, *New First Book Study Tackles National Issue of Banned Books*, FIRST BOOK (Oct. 3, 2023), <https://firstbook.org/blog/2023/10/03/new-first-book-study-tackles-national-issue-of-banned-books/>.

201 See *Legislature Enacts Measures to Protect Children*, ARK. SENATE (Apr. 26, 2023), <https://senate.arkansas.gov/senate-news/posts/2023/april/legislature-enacts-measures-to-protect-children/> [hereinafter *Legislature Enacts*].

202 See *id.*; *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205, 233 (1972).

203 See Webb, *supra* note 154.

204 See *Legislature Enacts*, *supra* note 202.

205 See *Books Are Being Banned by People Who Aren't Even Parents!*, EVERYLIBRARY (Aug. 10, 2023), https://action.everylibrary.org/books_are_being_banned_by_people_who_aren_t_even_parents.

206 *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390, 400–01 (1923); *Pierce v. Soc'y of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510, 534–35 (1925).

Supreme Court has frequently rendered statutes void that permit the government to make incidental decisions on behalf of children.²⁰⁷

For instance, the Court held in the 1972 case *Wisconsin v. Yoder* that Wisconsin's compulsory education law violated an Amish father's right to take his fifteen-year-old child out of school to complete his education in the Amish lifestyle at home.²⁰⁸ In an earlier Nebraska case, the Court found that a statute forbidding the teaching of the German language impermissibly encroached on parents' independent childrearing liberties.²⁰⁹ The Court opined that the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment protects a parent's right to make decisions about how to bring up his or her children free from government interference.²¹⁰ These two cases reflect the Supreme Court's respect for the important role parents play in raising uniquely independent children with their own set of values and beliefs. Book bans in public libraries prohibit children from entering areas with "adult books" or prevent children from checking out "adult books," regardless of what the parent believes is best for his or her children.²¹¹ Even if parents were to give permission to allow their children access to banned materials, librarians would likely be unwilling to allow such access for fear of criminal liability.²¹²

Constitutional rights are no less applicable when the government seeks to control the flow of information to minors.²¹³ Extending equal First Amendment protections to minors comports with a democratic society. For example, since eighteen-year-olds have the right to vote in the United States, "it is obvious that they must be allowed the freedom to form their political views on the basis of uncensored speech *before* they turn eighteen, so that their minds are not a blank" slate when they first exercise the right to vote.²¹⁴ Additionally, an

207 See, e.g., *Yoder*, 406 U.S. at 236; *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57, 74–5 (2000).

208 *Yoder*, 406 U.S. at 236.

209 *Meyer*, 262 U.S. at 403.

210 *Id.* at 399–400.

211 See, e.g., Act of Mar. 30, 2023, No. 372, sec. 1, 2023 Ark. Acts 1913, 1915 (codified at ARK. CODE ANN. § 5-27-212) (failing to consider parental permission in the criminalization of book providers).

212 See Natanson, *supra* note 26.

213 See *Tinker v. Des Moines Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 506 (1969).

214 *Am. Amusement Mach. Ass'n v. Kendrick*, 244 F.3d 572, 577 (7th Cir. 2001).

eighteen-year-old’s right to vote is personal, rather than a right parents may exercise on their child’s behalf, so “the right of parents to enlist the aid of the state to shield their children from ideas of which the parents disapprove cannot be plenary either.”²¹⁵ In sum, minors are “unlikely to become independent-minded adults and responsible citizens if they are raised in an intellectual bubble.”²¹⁶

VI. CONCLUSION

The Constitution and its history are clear that book bans violate the very foundation of the United States’ democracy and educational system. One of the bedrock freedoms underlying the Constitution is that the government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable.²¹⁷ Throughout history, book bans have been associated with tyranny and dictatorship; to allow book bans would be to repeat the world’s dark history and, thereby, strip United States citizens of their First Amendment freedoms.²¹⁸

If legislatures truly desire to protect children from harm, they should focus their efforts on

215 *Id.*

216 *See id.*

217 *Texas v. Johnson*, 491 U.S. 397, 414 (1989).

218 *See supra* Sections II, III.

physical threats to children and leave intellectual development and guidance to their guardians and educators.²¹⁹ Book ban laws in their current broad and vague form are plagued with constitutional deprivations.²²⁰ Even if these laws did not tread on constitutional rights, they are impossible to implement and enforce and lay waste to the United States’ core values in the process.²²¹ The only way forward to protect the constitutional rights of this country’s citizens is for states to follow Illinois and the ALA’s guidance by enacting legislation to outlaw book bans.²²²

Gracie Roper^{223*}

219 *See supra* Section V.C.

220 *See supra* Section III.

221 *See supra* Sections IV, V.

222 *See supra* Sections V.A, V.B.

223 * J.D. Candidate, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, William H. Bowen School of Law, 2025, B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies, Faulkner University, 2019. I would like to give special thanks to Dean Jessie Burchfield for her guidance and encouragement throughout the writing process.

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2025 ArLA Election Results

by Carol Coffey

Chair of the Nominating and Elections Committee/ArLA Past-President

The Arkansas Library Association held elections in September to choose members of the Executive Board of the Association in 2025. Open positions this year included President-Elect (3-year term), Treasurer-Elect (3-year term), Secretary (2-year term), and four Members-at-Large (1-year term). The election was held online and results were originally reported at the Member Meeting at Annual Conference in Hot Springs on October 6.

President-Elect Adam Webb

Adam Webb is the executive director of the Garland County Library. He holds an MLS from the University of North Texas and is a Certified Public Library Administrator. He has been working in libraries for the last 17 years. He currently serves as the President of Advocates for All Arkansas Libraries

and is the Chair of the Arkansas Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee. He’s a lifelong Arkansawyer and lives in Hot Springs with his wife Jamie, his son Atticus, and two dogs. Adam will serve as president-elect and Conference chair in 2025, as president in 2026, and as past-president/ Nominating and Elections chair in 2027.



Webb

Treasurer-Elect Clare Graham

Clare Graham serves as the regional library director for the Mid-Arkansas Regional Library system and the director of the Malvern-Hot Spring County Library. She is involved in several local non-profit organizations including the Rotary Club, Main Street Malvern, and several Friends groups. She established the Hot Spring County Imagination



Graham

Library in 2018, which mails high quality books to children from birth to age five. She has a master’s degree in library science from the University of North Texas and a bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Henderson State University where she minored in Human Diversity. Clare will serve

one year as a nonvoting member of the Executive Board while she learns the job and will then become treasurer with full voting privileges and responsibilities.

Secretary

Melissa Taylor

Melissa is an emerging technologies librarian working to redefine libraries in the digital era. Currently leading the Center for Innovation at the Fayetteville Public Library in Arkansas, she is passionate about leveraging technology's potential to impact communities and break down barriers. With nearly 18 years in the public library world, she has a knack for cultivating strategic partnerships and designing and implementing innovative programming. Her commitment to public service is fueled by the transformative impact of libraries and unbound access to information and resources. Beyond libraries, Melissa enjoys spending time mountain biking and working alongside bike brands and advocacy organizations, fighting for equality and empowerment in the cycling community. Melissa will serve as secretary for two years.



Taylor

Members-at-Large

Britt Anne Murphy

Britt Anne Murphy has spent her professional career at Hendrix College, a small private liberal arts college in Conway, Arkansas. She was hired as a public services librarian there after completing her MLIS at the University of Texas at Austin. She’s currently director, but knows that



Murphy

her staff really run the show. Britt has served the Arkansas library community in a myriad of ways, but is especially proud of being the managing editor of the Arkansas Library Association’s publication, *Arkansas Libraries*. She is currently in her first term as a member-at-large on the ArLA Board. Britt has led the consortium of Arkansas academic libraries, ARKLink, and chairs the Amigos Library Services Board of Directors. She is passionate about connecting undergraduates with the community of scholars and turning on critical thinking skills to benefit their futures. Britt is enthusiastic about a “whole person” approach to librarianship, and as such, never turns down an opportunity to share a good meal, bring a furry companion into the library, or engage in a conversation – especially if it involves humor. In her spare time, Britt sings in her church choir, and lolls about the house with her devoted husband, two kids, and two cats.

Jim Curry

Jim Curry has served as an Arkansas librarian for six years at the Fayetteville Public Library. As a Youth and Teen Librarian, he takes joy in inspiring library users of all ages to utilize collections and services. Jim is a native Arkansan and graduate of the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville.



Curry

He left the Natural State to acquire his MSLS from the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill but returned to begin his professional career back in Arkansas. Jim is a proud graduate of the 3rd cohort of the Arkansas Library Leadership Institute and was the recipient of ArLA’s 2022 Rising Star Award. Jim strives to work through an ever-adapting lens of compassionate, diverse, equitable, and inclusive service for the youth, families, and peoples of Northwest Arkansas. In his spare time, you’ll find him with his dog (Crio), playing tabletop and video games, and enjoying the outdoors of the Ozarks.

Lacy Wolfe

Lacy Wolfe is the branch manager at the North Little Rock Public Library System Laman Library. Prior to working in the public library, Lacy worked for a decade in various roles in academic libraries including electronic resources, reference, instruction, and as an interim director. Lacy served as the Arkansas Chapter Councilor to the American Library Association (ALA) from 2016-2021. She's



Wolfe

served various roles within ArLA and ALA including chairing and membership on several committees. Lacy participated in the inaugural Arkansas Library Leadership Institute (ALL-In) hosted by the State Library and continued working with following cohorts in a mentorship capacity. In 2014, Lacy was chosen to represent ArLA as an Emerging Leader in ALA, and in 2021 Lacy was awarded the Suzanne Spurrier Academic Librarian Award. Lacy is passionate about serving Arkansas libraries and connecting them to the national and international library communities. Lacy's received fellowship and grant support to attend two International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) conferences in the US and Greece. In her spare time, Lacy enjoys reading, sewing, knitting, hiking, and traveling.

Sarah Mallory

Sarah Mallory is the head of information services at the Central Arkansas Library System (CALs) in Little Rock. Before this role, she served as the Assistant Manager in the same department. Prior to joining CALs, Sarah was the Daytime Supervisor at the University of Tennessee Music Library. She holds a BA in Music from Arkansas Tech University and



Mallory

an MS in Information Science from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Sarah was selected for and completed the 2022-2023 Arkansas Library Leadership Institute (ALL-In) through the Arkansas State Library and is currently the Scholarship Committee chair for ArLA.

Britt Anne, Jim, Lacy, and Sarah will each serve a one-year term on the Executive Board.

In addition to these newly elected members, Crystal Gates of the North Little Rock Public Library will continue to serve as ALA Councilor, Ron Russ of ASU-Beebe will serve as Treasurer, and JP Myrick of East Central Arkansas Regional Library System will serve as SELA Representative. Lynn Valetutti will serve as ArLA President in 2025 and Taylor Vanlandingham will serve as Past-President/Nominating and Elections chair.

Bylaws Changes

Four updates to the Association Bylaws were also on the ballot this year. The Bylaws & Handbook Committee received a recommendation from the Membership Committee to adjust the institutional membership dues schedule from fixed based on the calendar year to rolling based on membership anniversary. Both committees believe that this flexibility, allowing institutions to pay dues according to their fiscal year, could encourage more institutions to apply for membership. Three of the four updates reflected this change in various sections of the Bylaws. The fourth update removed a reference to the membership type Supporter, which is not currently a membership option. All four recommended changes were approved by the membership.

2024 Arkansas Library Association Award Winners

by *Judy Calhoun*

Awards Committee Chair

Each year the Arkansas Library Association honors librarians by recognizing outstanding achievements in the library field. On Friday evening, October 4, 2024, librarians from around the state gathered at the Hot Springs Convention Center to present these awards as part of the annual conference's Awards Dinner. Special thanks goes to Awards Committee members Allie Stephens, Lisa Pickett, Ronda Hughes, and Tina Murdock.

The Awards Committee was fortunate to have an excellent slate of nominations to consider this year, and I would like to encourage everyone to

consider nominating your colleagues and co-workers to receive these awards. These awards are a way that we have, as an association and as a profession, to recognize the achievements, dedication, and leadership that our colleagues bring to their jobs every single day.

And the winners are:

Ann Lightsey Children's Librarian Award

The Ann Lightsey Children's Librarian Award is presented to an individual who has contributed to the improvement of children's programs both in their place of work and at the state level by conducting peer training at the state level. This year the Ann Lightsey Children's Librarian Award was given to Brook Fischer of the Garland County Library,

presented by Adam Webb.

Webb commented, “Brook has demonstrated exceptional dedication to her craft, consistently going above and beyond to create a welcoming and engaging environment for young readers. Her passion for literacy and education is evident in every aspect of her work. She has developed a variety of programs tailored to different age groups, ensuring that every child who visits the library finds something that captivates their interest. From interactive storytimes to creative craft sessions, Brook's programs are both educational and entertaining, sparking a lifelong love of reading in countless children. Her tireless efforts have enriched the lives of countless children and have made a lasting positive impact on the community.”



Arkansas Intellectual Freedom Award

Established in 1994, the award is given to a person(s) or group(s) for notable contributions that have furthered the cause of intellectual freedom on behalf of a library in the state of Arkansas. This year's award was given to Patty Hector, former director of the Saline County Public Library System who was fired in by the Saline County judge in 2023 for not relocating materials found offensive to minors to a different part of the library.

The award was presented by Adam Webb, who remarked, “Patty Hector embodies everything that



this intellectual freedom award stands for. She lost her job in the defense of intellectual freedom and there is no better candidate for this prestigious award.”

Arkansiana Award

First awarded in 1979, this award is given to the author(s) of a book or other work which represents a significant contribution to Arkansas heritage and culture. Three categories (adult non-fiction, adult fiction, and juvenile) were established to receive nominations biennially for the Award. The winners for each category are:

- Adult Non-Fiction – Don House and Sabine Schmidt for *Remote Access: Small Public Libraries in Arkansas* (University of Arkansas Press Publicity Manager Meagan Bonnell accepted the award)
- Adult Fiction – Eli Cranor for *Ozark Dogs*
- Juvenile Fiction – Ayana Gray for *Beasts of Prey*

Bessie B. Moore Trustee Award

The Bessie B. Moore award is given to an individual trustee or board of trustees who has made a significant contribution to the development of a library at the local, regional or state level. This year's Bessie B. Moore award was given to Lorri Helberg and presented by Clare Graham. Lorri Helberg joined the Malvern library board in 2017 and has served as board president since 2021.

Graham remarked, “Lorri's love affair with libraries dates back to her childhood as an avid reader. She was a military wife who shared her love of reading and learning with daughter Jessica by visiting every new library they came across when their family moved to a different base. They were able to form connections socially and engage in activities, regardless of their income. Lorri believes that libraries are the true equalizer by providing services and opportunities for people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic status.”

Lorri serves on the Mid-Arkansas Regional



Library board, a partnership of Cleveland, Dallas, Grant, Hot Spring, and Saline County libraries. She was an early advocate for participation in the Arkansas Digital Library Consortium, a move which eventually grew the library e-book collection from 3,500 to more than 100,000 titles. Clare continued, “Lorri has been a huge proponent of the forthcoming Bismarck library branch to expand services throughout Hot Spring County. She championed a building for the Malvern Library Friends, helping to guide its renovation and integration.”

Distinguished Service Award

The Distinguished Service Award is given to recognize a librarian currently employed for distinguished service in librarianship, continuing service to the Arkansas Library Association, and outstanding achievement in the profession. This year’s Distinguished Service Award was given to Clare Graham and presented by Barry Honold. Clare received national recognition from the American Library Association earlier in 2024 as one of the “I Love My Librarian” recipients.

Honold commented, “Clare Graham embodies excellence in library service. She began as the Malvern director assistant in 2013 and was appointed interim director in 2016. She expanded her education and skill set via the University of North Texas online MLS program. Clare adroitly juggled both roles before receiving her degree and becoming director in 2017. This promotion carried the additional responsibility of Mid-Arkansas Regional Library director – coordinating monthly bookmobile stops (schools, nursing homes, etc.) and special event appearances.”

Honold continued, “Clare’s impact and the legacy she’s building touches countless people every day – her professional duties intersect with the myriad causes she champions via volunteerism... she is a librarian whose homeless coalition work provides housing and aid for those without. Her library grant-writing expertise brought in thousands



of dollars for our rural downtown development committee to revive and beautify Main Street. She offers logistical skills and tools learned in the library as a Keep Arkansas Beautiful volunteer coordinator. She chairs a committee actively improving our county with the construction of playgrounds, nature trails, and other outlets.

Frances P. Neal Award

The Frances P. Neal award is given to a recently retired librarian to recognize a career of notable service in librarianship within the state of Arkansas. Lavis Martin was presented the Frances P. Neal award for her service and achievements in the state of Arkansas. Shenise McGhee presented the award.

Martin served as the director of technical services at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff’s John Brown Watson Memorial Library. This role afforded her opportunities to write, manage, and administer multiple library grants and budgets. According to McGhee, “Ms. Martin is a knowledgeable, innovative, technically skilled professional librarian with more than 25 years of progressively responsible experience in the academic library and public school environments. She was committed to promoting information and computer literacy for the university by supporting academic programs and other education initiatives. She has a broad knowledge of technology, research databases, cataloging, circulation, acquisition, and other aspects of library management and services.”

McGhee continued, “Ms. Martin implemented large-scale technology projects including... circulating laptops, stationary and mobile digital video conferencing centers, a cloud-based integrated and discovery system (ExLbris & Alma)...and developed research and resource guides for the library and university program accreditation. At UA Pine Bluff she received the Chancellor Custom Service Award and status as Associate Library Faculty Emeritus.”



Shenise McGhee and Lavis Martin.

Lorrie Shuff Paraprofessional Award

The Lorrie Shuff Paraprofessional award is given to recognize distinguished paraprofessional library service in Arkansas libraries. This year's paraprofessional award was presented to Tina Bell, library services manager at the Malvern-Hot Spring County Library. Barry Honold presented the award.



Tina began work at the Malvern-Hot Spring County Library in 2016. Honold remarked, "Her performance supported the efforts of the library and our director so well that she was promoted to Library Services Manager. Her precision with details, ability to anticipate others' needs, calming demeanor, and thorough knowledge of library materials make her ideal for training all new staff. She co-pilots Malvern library's largest events: Halloween at the Courthouse and Pictures with Santa, helping us give out thousands of books annually. She handles all aspects of our programming and consistently seeks innovation: 2023-24 featured Super Mario Week, a Barbie movie cosplay, and a Taylor Swift craft night. She purchased a Bluey costume for staff to use as a recurring character at kid's events."

Honold continued, "Tina eagerly pursues professional development opportunities – her most recent was the Arkansas Library Paraprofessional InfoBits program in May. She is a past participant of the Hot Spring County Leadership Forum. She utilizes skills acquired through these workshops with her innate talent for the benefit of the library and our community. She is a quintessential professional – treating all with compassion and respect."

Retta Patrick Award

The Retta Patrick Award recognizes an individual member of the Arkansas library profession who has made an outstanding state or national contribution to school librarianship and school library development. This year's recipient was Katie Dolan, presented by Emily Cook.



Katie Dolan was chosen for her outstanding dedication and creative contributions to the Don Tyson School of Innovation Library and Maker Studio. Cook remarked, "Mrs. Dolan has worked tirelessly to create a vibrant library environment that serves the school community and inspires creativity in its students. She has pioneered a diverse array of programs that reflect her inclusive, curious, and generous nature. She is passionate about collaborating with other faculty members to promote literacy. During the 2023-2024 school year, she worked with the English as a Second Language instructor to build a section of books for ESL students and scheduled time to read aloud to them. She engages struggling readers by meeting them where they are, providing books with quick-paced action, cliffhangers, and illustrative storytelling."

Cook continued, "Katie Dolan has successfully cultivated a space where students can learn their value as readers, artists, and individuals capable of making a difference in their communities. Her compassionate teaching style, innovative programs, and dedication to her students make her a truly deserving nominee."

Rising Star Award

The Rising Star Award was first awarded in 2017 and is to recognize a library worker who has worked in libraries less than five years and provided exceptional service for their library community. This year's Rising Star Award was presented to Julia Watkins, director of the Mountainburg Public Library, presented by Sarah Munguia.

Munguia commented, "Julia began her library



career just three years ago as a substitute library assistant for the Crawford County Library System. The following year, in 2022, the library director position opened in her hometown of Mountainburg. Without hesitation, Julia applied and got the job. In two short years, she has transformed the library into an energetic hub, where members of the community and other communities want to be. Julia has written and been awarded grants for the library, and she continues to seek out opportunities for improvement. In 2023, after her first full year of being director, the library saw a 30% increase in library visits and a 151% increase in program attendance.”

Munguia continued, “Julia Watkins is the perfect example of passion trumping experience. In only two years, she has revitalized a small-town library and made it the community’s pride and joy. She truly is a library rising star, and this is just the beginning of the impact she will make.”

Suzanne Spurrier Academic Librarian Award

The award is presented annually to a currently employed academic librarian who exemplifies Suzanne Spurrier’s attributes of: a spirit of outstanding service and dedication professionalism to all library patrons; an attitude of devotion to the library profession and fellow colleagues; and consistent in state, regional or national library associations. This year’s winner is Shenise McGhee, librarian at University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff’s John Brown Watson Memorial Library. The award was presented by Laquita Dedmon.

Dedmon commented, “Ms. Shenise McGhee works tirelessly to ensure that students are on the right track in school and with classes. Ms. McGhee implemented the Library Study Hall Program to enhance student's study and information literacy

skill to promote student success. She also facilitates the “Back to School Supplies Giveaway” to help students have school supply needed to be successful in their course assignment. She has served on and chaired local, state and national committees. She was appointed to the American Library Association’s Joint Digital Content Working Group which advises the Association on efforts to increase public awareness and understanding of issues related to access to digital content and the challenges to/role of libraries in providing equitable access to digital resources.”

President’s Award

This award may be given by the president at the annual conference as means of recognizing the contribution of a person who has provided extensive service to the association president or the organization. This year’s recipient, Kacy Spears, was recognized for stepping up to chair the Marketing Committee, promoting ArLA’s brand through social media and other marketing strategies, helping out with the ArLA 2025 calendar project, and for being the Association’s photographer for the conference and other events.



Past President's Award

A special award presented by Crystal Gates went to Past ArLA President Carol Coffey for her guidance leading the Association during the lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of Act 372, as well as her hard work recruiting nominees for ArLA leadership. Carol was consistent, communicative, and stood strong for intellectual freedom on behalf of the Arkansas Library Association and the patrons of Arkansas during the last few challenging years.

Judy Calhoun chairs the Awards Committee and is regional director of the Southeast Arkansas Regional Library System, which is headquartered in Monticello, Arkansas.



Crystal Gates and Carol Coffey.

ArLA Scholarship Winner

by Sarah Mallory

ArLA Scholarship Committee Chair

Kirsten Seidel is the winner of the 2024 Arkansas Library Association’s Annual Scholarship. Kirsten is enrolled in the Library and Information Science Master’s program at Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia, and she expects to graduate in May of 2025.



Seidel

Kirsten has been employed at the Lonoke County Library System since 2016. She started as the children’s librarian assistant at the Cabot branch, was promoted to YA and Adult Services librarian in 2017, and was promoted again in 2022 to Youth Services manager, where she coordinates services for patrons ages 0-18 at all four branches of the Lonoke County Library System.

Kirsten is passionate about public service and youth librarianship and takes every opportunity she can to further her career and share her passion. One reference for Kirsten said she is “an innovator in reaching young adults” through library services and

programs such as job prep programs, discord groups, and getting the teens involved in leading during youth events. Kirsten received the Ann Lightsey Children’s Librarian Award in 2021, was invited to be a session presenter at the *School Library Journal* teen virtual conference in 2022, and she is currently a member of the Arkansas Teen Book Award steering committee. Kirsten will continue to do excellent work for Arkansas libraries and her local community. Congratulations to Kirsten!

Sarah Mallory is the Information Services Department manager at the Central Arkansas Library System in Little Rock, Arkansas.



The ArLA Conference: The Perspective of a New Attendee

by *Carri Baker*

ArLA Conference Scholarship Winner

I am new to the academic library, but not new to librarianship. The last four years, I have worked in an elementary school library in Arkansas and before that, a middle school library in Central Florida. I love the library! Any and all libraries are my favorite. When I accepted the position as a public services librarian in an academic library, I knew it would be different, but I knew I would love it. When you are new to a field, I think it is only natural to want to soak up all the information possible so that you are best prepared for the challenges you will face. We discussed organizations such as the Arkansas Library Association in my interview, but since I was a recent hire, I missed the deadline for signing up to attend the ArLA Conference...that is, until an email arrived in my inbox about a scholarship available for first time attendees! When I sent in my application for the scholarship, I had been an academic librarian for only three weeks.

Attending ArLA for the first time, I was very excited to immerse myself in a wealth of library knowledge from colleagues across the state, not only academic librarians, but public, school and special collection librarians as well. And I learned a lot! The sessions on Artificial Intelligence were eye opening, and I left these sessions with a determination to embrace AI and a feeling of empowerment to overcome the challenges we are facing and will face in the near future. Another great experience, and maybe one of the biggest surprises, was getting to hear about and experience some of the fun programs happening in all types of libraries throughout our state. What a great time to learn, think, and grow in the profession we all love!

One of the words that really stood out to me that I heard consistently throughout the weekend was the word "siloes." As a school librarian, I was most definitely a silo. I taught myself how to use Destiny, how to order books, how to be a school librarian. Whenever possible, I attended AAIM (Arkansas Association of Instructional Media) to gain a feeling of community. By attending the ArLA conference, we are working toward tearing down our silos.



Baker

At this juncture in our state, it is more important than ever to feel like we are a community and not a silo. We do that by attending conferences like ArLA. We need to make sure that we are building a community and connecting all types of libraries while working together for the good of the people we serve. The very best outcome of attending ArLA was that I made connections. I formed a community, a community that will hopefully grow over time. I have people to call, to follow on social media, and to ask questions. After years as a silo, this new community of librarians is priceless!

Another aspect I really found helpful at the annual conference was the committees and communities of interest found within ArLA. I was able to attend a CULAR (College and University Librarians of Arkansas) meeting and that is where I found my people! The ones who are doing exactly what I am doing and facing the same challenges I am facing. I have since attended another CULAR meeting and continue to add points of contact that are important in my field. As a new member, I cannot encourage you enough to join these communities. Maybe you don't need the professional connections at this point in your career, but I can assure you that us newbies need you to help us along. Otherwise, our profession and our mission have a risk of failing and that is something we can't let happen.

The key to making the ArLA conference better, is YOU! I would like to challenge all of us to submit a breakout session next year. Throughout the weekend, I heard (and overheard) lots of amazing ideas in conversations, and I thought, "that would have made a great session!" You are all doing really great things in your library. Your people are doing really great things in your library, so encourage each other. When you hear of an interesting program or see something awesome in a library, tell them that it would make a great ArLA session.

Overall, this experience was well worth my time. I grew as a librarian. I learned, I questioned, and I came home a better librarian than when I left. If you are on the fence about attending the next conference, I would encourage you to attend. Make it a priority! And those of us who are no longer newbies will commit to making it the best possible conference for you.

Carri Baker is public services librarian and instructor at Harding University's Brackett Library in Searcy, Arkansas.



First Time Attendee Carri Baker (third from left) enjoys Trivia Night at the ArLA Conference with Harding library and alum crowd.

ARKANSAS BOOKS & AUTHORS

by *Jasmine Jobe & Beth Stewart*

Arkansas and the Freedom Libraries

Selby, Mike. *Freedom Libraries: The Untold Story of Libraries for African Americans in the South*. Lanham:

Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

ISBN: 9781538115534

\$45.00 193 p.

Freedom Libraries focuses on the development of library resources for African Americans during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Like many other community resources, libraries were segregated, and there were no equal facilities for African Americans to access in their communities. Mike Selby, librarian and author, examines libraries that developed during the Civil Rights era and the role they played in supporting the struggle against white supremacy. While only one chapter of the book focuses on Arkansas, the context of why and how freedom libraries developed is an important part of history when discussing the Jim Crow South during the twentieth century.

Selby begins the book by examining the Civil Rights Movement and its relationship with American



Stewart

public libraries. The public library movement of the late eighteenth century to educate the populace didn't include access for minorities. In the South, few libraries existed that allowed access to African Americans, and those that did often housed secondhand books and were run by untrained staff. The summer of 1964, often referred to as Freedom Summer, saw the arrival of young white people to the state of Mississippi. They were there to fight segregation and help African American communities improve voting rights, health and legal services, and education.

The Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee (SNCC) played an important role in fighting for these services and many members met with violence trying to improve African American communities. SNCC helped create freedom libraries starting in Mississippi by putting out a call for book donations that would be housed in SNCC offices or homes of SNCC members. Once books started to arrive in African American communities in Mississippi, the freedom libraries that housed them became popular gathering places for students and community members. People were eager to read books that they had been denied access to through segregation. SNCC members who facilitated the libraries created lists of Black authors and tried to obtain their books for the library. Those who ran the library but had no library training reached out to state library commissions and the American Library Association

(ALA) for library supplies and information about how to catalog and circulate materials.

Establishing freedom libraries was a dangerous enterprise in the Jim Crow South. In July 1964 the McComb Freedom House that served as the library was bombed in Mississippi. Three SNCC volunteers outside of Meridian, Mississippi were arrested and later murdered by members of the Ku Klux Klan in late June. Volunteers were continuously harassed by the police and the Klan through threats, physical violence, bombings and anonymous gunfire. Those dedicated to the cause continued their work in Mississippi and branched out to other states. The threats and violence followed volunteers to Alabama. The Selma Free Library in Selma, Alabama was established in the summer of 1965. It became one of the largest public libraries in Alabama with a large collection of books about African American History and by Black authors. The Hayneville Freedom Library was also established in the summer of 1965 in Alabama. By the end of the year both Alabama freedom libraries would be shut down. Volunteers in Selma turned over the library and its resources to local Black libraries when they left Alabama. Hayneville Freedom Library closed after the family's home it was housed in was riddled with gunfire one night while they slept. Although no one was hurt, the mother decided to burn the books to protect the lives of her 10 children.

Three freedom libraries were established in Arkansas in the summer of 1965 in Gould, Helena, and Forrest City. There is no record of library activity or list of books in the Helena Freedom House. The SNCC office, in operation since 1964 in Helena, was threatened nightly by white supremacists. Homes that housed the SNCC workers were shot up and firebombed. Forrest City's Freedom Library was housed in an old funeral home. It was raided by the Arkansas State Troopers, and SNCC workers hid in coffins for safety. Millard Lowe, a SNCC volunteer from Texas, taught African history, Caribbean history, and African American history in the freedom library. Lowe was arrested along with African American students boycotting the limited integration of the Forrest City School District. He was charged and transferred to a Mississippi prison where he was brutally beaten.

Gould was the most successful of the freedom libraries in Arkansas. Laura Foner, a white Brandeis student from New York, moved to Gould as a SNCC volunteer in the summer of 1965. To reduce animosity with the white population, Foner worked in the freedom house and not in the field. According to the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, freedom houses

were living quarters, administrative workspaces, and community meeting spaces for SNCC volunteers and others. Freedom centers included freedom libraries and freedom school spaces. One room of the Gould Freedom Center was dedicated as a library, and Foner and other volunteers unpacked and organized 1,500 donated books about African American history. The children in Gould were excited about the library as many had never seen a new book or a book written by a Black author or about African American history. The library offered not only books and classes to students but also recreational activities such as board games and basketball games. Even though death threats from the Klan and local police were a regular occurrence for freedom house volunteers, they continued to grow in Arkansas. Freedom centers were set up in Pine Bluff and West Helena.

Changes in SNCC leadership and philosophy at the national level helped end the freedom libraries. Nonviolent protests and white membership were no longer welcome. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 guaranteed rights to everyone, but when non-violent means didn't work to enforce those rights, people turned to new methods to secure them. Without SNCC support, freedom libraries disappeared almost as quickly as they developed. Selby concludes the book by identifying the ways that freedom libraries had a profound impact on their communities. They left a legacy. They taught African American children that they could do more than what white society dictated for them. Freedom libraries proved that a library is not just a building with books, but a community of people who come together to provide services. They taught people how to make do with less, and that a trained librarian makes all the difference. Freedom libraries were beacons of hope and taught people that libraries are for everyone.

Beth Stewart is the special collections librarian at the University of Arkansas at Monticello.

Kai Coggin (1980–)

Kai Coggin is a queer, Filipina American poet, author, educator, activist, and Certified Arkansas Master Naturalist. She is the inaugural poet laureate of Hot Springs (Garland County) and the community leader in charge of hosting the longest-running consecutive weekly open mic series in the nation, Wednesday Night Poetry (WNP). By 2024, she had published five full-length

books of poetry. She also teaches writing in a variety of venues, with students ranging from 8 to 88 years old.

Kai Coggin was born Kimberly Katherine Coggin on January 1, 1980, in Bangkok, Thailand. Coggin's mother, Ester Delacruz Coggin (b. 1947), was one of ten siblings who grew up as a rice farmer in the



Jobe

small village of Calibungan, Victoria, Tarlac, but also traveled throughout her native Philippines reading poetry. Coggin's mother left the farm at 27, becoming an au pair for a diplomat family in Hong Kong, where she met her future husband. Coggin's father, Daniel Hungerford Coggin (1935–2011), of Atlanta, Georgia, was a United States Marine Corps combat reporter in the Vietnam War and a journalist for the *Associated Press*. He wrote for *Time* magazine, and was the only foreign correspondent to report on the 1971 atrocities in Bangladesh, sneaking back into the country on motorcycle and camel to enter the territory, after all journalists were expelled. He met Ester in a post office in Hong Kong while on assignment with the CIA, and accepted a job in Bangkok to become a speechwriter for the Executive Secretary General of ESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific). Ester and Dan moved to Bangkok and were married for ten years; they chose to divorce in 1987.

After her parents' divorce, Coggin emigrated, at age seven, with her mother and younger sister Diana to Texas. Her mother wanted a better life for her and her sister – a chance at the American dream. Coggin grew up in the southwestern Houston suburb of Alief, Texas, helping care for her younger sister while their single mother worked multiple minimum-wage jobs to support them.

With a strong affinity for writing and literature as a means of expression and survival, Coggin went through the Alief Independent School District; Hearn Elementary, O'Donnell Middle School, and graduated in the top ten percent of her class at Alief Elsik High School. In seventh grade, Language Arts Teacher Tonia Sloan told her that she had something special, that she could be a writer one day, and that stuck with Coggin through many difficult moments. She was drum-line captain in the Elsik marching band from her sophomore through her senior year; the youngest drum captain in the school's history.

Coggin entered Texas A&M University in College Station as a pre-med major studying

biomedical science in 1998. She was a member of the student military organization Corps of Cadets and a drummer in the corps' Aggie marching band; during this time, she experienced extensive hazing as the only female drummer cadet. A huge annual bonfire on campus collapsed in 1999, killing twelve students and injuring an additional twenty-seven. Members of Coggin's outfit were on the stack that night. Earlier sources stated that Coggin resigned from the Corps of Cadets her junior year; a more recent candid interview reveals Coggin was reported to the "Bulls" (Generals) and expelled from the Corps of Cadets for violating the "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy, when she fell in love with another female cadet, though fraternization was commonplace within the organization. She was forced to do marching tours around the Corps of Cadets dormitory quadrangle in her full winter dress uniform, and "made an example." Through the trauma of that situation, Coggin still remained at the university, changing her major to English, Poetry and Creative Writing. She was mentored by Dr. Chuck Taylor, a beat poet from the days of Allen Ginsberg, who took her under his wing. She earned her BA in English, poetry, and creative writing in 2003.

Unsure how to make a career out of poetry, Coggin earned an emergency teaching certification and started as a ninth- and tenth-grade English teacher at Alief Taylor High School, in the same school district where she was raised. She bought a house with her mother, to finally get her out of the apartment complex she lived in since 1987. After only five years of teaching (2003–2008), Coggin was recognized as Teacher of the Year and District Secondary Teacher of the Year, and she was a top-five finalist for Regional Teacher of the Year out of 85,000 teachers. When a poetry lesson evolved into meaningful engagement and expression, then culminated in a visit for herself and her students with internationally famous writer Sandra Cisneros, Coggin had reminded herself of the incredible power of poetry. With her students cheering her on, she retired from teaching to chase her dream of becoming a full-time poet.

In 2008, Coggin met the woman who would become her wife – retired esoteric teacher, lecturer, visual artist, and master naturalist Joann Saraydarian. Coggin chose the new name Kai as part of a spiritual rebirth, a way to heal. In 2012, Coggin and her partner moved with their Fu dogs, Genghis and Layla, from Houston to Arkansas. An old photo caption reads, "Coggin...ended up moving to Hot Springs after she took a trip to nearby Mount Ida with her best friend, Joann." Coggin had mostly set

aside her own writing while teaching but the urge to find her way back to poetry returned after the death of her father in 2011. She picked up the pen again to write a tribute to her father, which she sent to the heads of *TIME* magazine.

Coggin started attending Wednesday Night Poetry in 2013, and Bud Kenny, WNP's founder, became a poetic father figure to her. This community anchored Coggin's writing, and the platform to share work weekly was a catalyst for her writing, and sustained her drive as a poet. For her first feature at WNP in 2013, she self-published a print-at-home chapbook called *In Other Words, In Other Worlds*; she had her first poem published in a literary magazine in 2013. Her publications and career as an author only grew exponentially from this point.

From 2014 to 2018, Coggin led a low-cost "Words and Wine" night at the local arts nonprofit Emergent Arts to teach adults how to write poetry in a fun, informal environment. Together, they would read contemporary poets that Coggin would gather around a certain theme, and the participants would discuss and connect with the work, then write poems of their own in a supportive generative experience.

Coggin is Teaching Artist of creative writing and an Instructional Specialist in poetry curriculum on the Arts in Education Roster for the Arkansas Arts Council and Arkansas Learning for the Arts. She has been active in this role since 2015, reaching thousands of K-12 students across the state with poetry residencies in schools.

On February 6, 2019, WNP's thirtieth anniversary, Bud Kenny got down on one knee with the open mic clipboard in his hands, and asked Coggin if she would, "take WNP into the future" and become the new official host of the series. She accepted the role, and vowed to keep the streak going week after week. Kenny passed away on October 2, 2019. Said Coggin, "Of course, it was a Wednesday."

In an interview about taking Wednesday Night Poetry online, Coggin explains: "When the pandemic hit in the second week of March 2020, we couldn't meet...because of the lockdown, so I put out a call on Facebook for poets to send me videos of them reading a poem from their home." Coggin collected the recordings of individual poets reading their work, added her own, and compiled them into a single upload; she posted it online at 6:30 p.m., the same time the group would have met in person. "We didn't miss a week...and it created this sense of togetherness when we were all forced to be apart," Coggin said. Coggin opened the poetry night to locals as well as inviting poets from

around the nation and world. "It grew and grew each week. More and more people sent in videos each week, from California to New York City, even poets internationally got word. The *New York Times* caught wind of it, PBS, Medium. Word spread. Our legacy continued." One fellow poet recalls the moment Coggin first started placing her hand on the screen each Wednesday night, where anyone could reach out and press their own to hers: "I cannot tell you what a moment of awe it was," describing it as vulnerable and transformative. More than 5,000 videos were uploaded over the span that Coggin held the virtual space.

WNP is back at Kollektive Coffee + Tea now every Wednesday, still never having missed a single week. Of the reading Coggin said, "It's like this little thimble of a reading grew into an ocean, and now that we are back in person, the whole ocean is held within the thimble. WNP is now a bucket list spot for nationally touring poets to feature in person."

Coggin's work has been published in a variety of print and online journals, as well as various anthologies: *About Place Journal*; *Academy of American Poets*; *Amethyst Review*; *ANIMA*; *Anti-Hero Chic*; *Arkana*; *Assaracus*; *Bellevue Literary Review*; *Best of the Net*; *Blue Heron Review*; *BROAD!*; *Calamus Journal*; *Catching Calliope*; *Cliterature*; *Crab Fat Magazine*; *Cultural Weekly*; *Cutthroat, A Journal for the Arts*; *Dragon Poet Review*; *Drunk Monkeys*; *Elephant Journal*; *Elk Review*; *[empath]*; *Entropy*; *Gwarlingo*; anthology *How to Love the World: Poems of Gratitude and Hope*; anthology *Journey to the Heart*; *Lavender Review*; *The Literary Librarian*; *Luna Luna*; *Madness Muse Press*; *The Manila Envelope*; *NELLE*; *The Night Heron Barks*; *POETRY*; *The Poetry Salon*; *Prairie Schooner*; *Radar Productions | Glow*; *Setu Mag*; *Sinister Wisdom*; *Snapdragon*; *SOLSTICE*; *Split This Rock*; *SunStruck Magazine*; *SWWIM*; *TAB*; *The Tattooed Buddha*; anthology *The Wonder of Small Things: Poems of Peace and Renewal*; *Tell, Tell Poetry*; *Terrain*; *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*; *Tupelo Press*; *Vox Populi*; *West Trestle Review*; *Women's Spiritual Poetry*; *Yellow Chair Review*; *Yes, Poetry* and elsewhere.

Coggin's publications include five books of poetry and one poetry album: *Periscope Heart* (Swimming with Elephants Publications, 2014); *Wingspan* (Golden Dragonfly Press, 2016); debut spoken-word album *Silhouette* (self-produced in GarageBand, 2017); *Incandescent*, published with Little Rock (Pulaski County) LGBTQ+ publisher Sibling Rivalry Press (2019); *Mining for Stardust* (FlowerSong Press, 2021); and *Mother of Other*

Kingdoms (Harbor Editions, 2024). Two of Coggin's five books were released to coincide with that year's Earth Day, and another was released on November 11. Except for the NASA photograph of the Pillars of Creation taken by the Hubble Space Telescope (featured on the cover of her fourth book), all of Coggin's book covers were painted by her wife. Of the fourth book's cover, Coggin said, "The Universe painted that one."

Of her first book Coggin states, "The poems in *Periscope Heart* deal with love, body image, spiritual striving, [and] metaphysics." Of her second collection Coggin says, "*Wingspan*... contains poems that reflect 'fight' or 'flight' themes reflected in many different personal, community, global, and sociopolitical realms." Her third book, *Incandescent*, includes works that are "revolutionary spears of poetic vibrations against the Trump regime's policies that assaulted Black and Brown people, LGBTQ+ people, women's bodies, the borders, the land, the glaciers, damn near everything." Her fourth book, *Mining for Stardust*, "sifts light from the darkness of the pandemic and political chaos" and contains work "alluding to racial strife, political turmoil, and the pandemic." Her fifth and most recent book, *Mother of Other Kingdoms*, is a collection of eco-poems that explore non-traditional motherhood "amidst the chaos and destruction of human life on earth."

Themes in Coggin's work include activism, politics, spirituality, and her various intersectional identities. Her work is characteristically full of love, light, hope, beauty, and nature. As she has stated, "Humanity is suffering right now, and it is the responsibility of the poets and the artists to acknowledge that suffering, but also to provide a beacon of hope." Several online interviews describe Coggin as a queer woman of color who believes that Black Lives Matter. She has also been called a Warrior Poet and refers to "speaking truth to power." She views her role as host of WNP as a sacred responsibility, holding space for "voices of color and queer voices and indigenous voices."

Coggin was twice named Best Poet in Arkansas by the *Arkansas Times* (2020, 2023), was nominated for poet laureate of Arkansas by outgoing poet laureate Jo McDougall (2022), and was nominated for Hot Springs Woman of the Year (2022). Coggin's work was also nominated for Bettering American Poetry 2015 and Best of the Net 2016, 2018, and 2021. Coggin was awarded the 2021 Governor's Arts Award for Arts in Education for her work in bringing poetry to more than 3,500 K-12 students a year around the state. "I get to...show students that they can actually have a career as an artist...[and that]

poetry is a safe place for your feelings." Coggin's poetry was awarded Best of the Net in 2022, and three of her poems from her newest collection were nominated for Best of the Net again in 2024. She was awarded the 2023 Don Munro Leadership in the Arts Award for Visionary Service, a \$10,000 prize. Coggin's poetry has been nominated for The Pushcart Prize six times. Ten of Coggin's poems were chosen to go to the moon with the Lunar Codex project.

On February 1, 2023, at the 34th anniversary of Wednesday Night Poetry, Pat McCabe, mayor of Hot Springs, appointed Coggin the inaugural poet laureate for the City of Hot Springs. Her first official act as Poet Laureate was to kick off April's National Poetry Month at WNP with a featured reading from internationally-acclaimed poet and Chancellor Emerita of the Academy of American Poets, Jane Hirshfield. Hirshfield and Coggin had become close friends over the pandemic after Coggin hosted a virtual "Earth Mothers" WNP feature on the 50th anniversary of Earth Day in 2020. Hirshfield, alongside United States Poet Laureate Joy Harjo, and Young People's Poet Laureate Naomi Shihab Nye, sent in feature-length video readings from their lockdown locations for the celebration, which garnered tens of thousands of views on Facebook, and catapulted the virtual reading series into international view. Having Hirshfield come to Hot Springs in person was a major celebration, standing room only in the coffeeshop.

Coggin is a 2023 CATALYZE Grant Fellow and a 2024 INTERCHANGE Socially Engaged Practice Grant Fellow, awarded by the Mid-America Arts Alliance and the Mellon Foundation. She has judged poetry contests for the CALS Six Bridges Book Festival and taught advanced poetry writing master classes through the CALS Writing Circle. She also teaches adult creative writing classes online with national writing organizations. Coggin is editor at large at *SWWIM* and *Terrain(.)org* and associate editor at the *Rise Up Review*. She has served on the board of directors of the Hot Springs Area Cultural Alliance, the International Women's Writing Guild, and currently the Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival.

In 2024, Coggin was awarded a \$50,000 Poet Laureate Fellowship from the Academy of American Poets for her civic project called Sharing Tree Space, aimed at connecting four cohorts of marginalized teenagers with the natural world by taking them on poetry hikes within Hot Springs National Park. In August 2024, she performed at the National Book Festival in Washington DC and spoke at the Library

of Congress and National Endowment for the Arts. In October 2024, she was a headlining poet at the Dodge Poetry Festival in New Jersey.

Coggin lives with her wife and their dogs in the Ouachita National Forest of Hot Springs National Park.

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Jasmine Jobe obtained her BFA from Knox College and her MFA in Writing from the University of Central Arkansas. She is an editorial assistant for the Encyclopedia of Arkansas and a programmer for the CALS Writing Circle at the Bobby L. Roberts Library of Arkansas History & Art. Jobe's favorite colors are rainbow and sunshine and her favorite meals are coffee and dessert. One of her favorite books is *The Geek's Guide to The Writing Life* by Stephanie Vanderslice.

TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

Good in a Crisis

by *Shawna Thorup*

Northwest Arkansas Community College

When disaster strikes, libraries can emerge as unexpected lifelines. This article recounts how our library rose to the challenge during two significant campus crises: a devastating tornado and a crippling cyberattack. By serving as both team players and leaders, our library staff not only provided essential support to the campus community but also enhanced the library's reputation and solidified its role as an indispensable resource. This narrative celebrates their dedication and highlights the invaluable contributions of academic libraries in times of crisis.



Thorup

The Tornado

A devastating tornado struck our region on Memorial Day weekend, leaving the campus in disarray. The library opened its doors to support the community, providing essential services such as air conditioning, internet access, and technology lending. Staff members went above and beyond, offering food from their own pantries, comfort, and assistance to those affected by the storm. By acting as a beacon of support, the library strengthened its relationship with the campus community and solidified its reputation as a reliable resource.

The Cyberattack

A significant cyberattack crippled our campus during the summer term finals, disrupting critical systems and services. Most of the college community was locked out of essential tools like Microsoft 365, Canvas, and Workday, hindering operations from HR to student enrollment and final exams. Most employees could not even unlock their college-issued computer.

The library, however, remained operational through personal smartphones. By leveraging its integrated library system (ILS) and the Springshare platform, library staff maintained access to essential contact information and communication channels. They pulled faculty and staff records from the ILS and manually recorded phone numbers, providing the only method for the college to attempt communication. Additionally, they assisted the IT

team in securing campus devices and helped faculty, staff, and students reset passwords both in person and by staffing the IT call center. They later helped launch multi-factor authentication. Since the library is open more hours than the IT Help Desk, this extra help provided support evenings and Saturdays.

To alleviate the overwhelming number of unanswered text messages in the enrollment office, library staff were trained to provide support, significantly reducing the backlog. These efforts, along with prioritizing the library for computing services restoration, ensured essential services continued and minimized disruptions. Enrollment increased even though the college was forced to delay its semester start by one week. The library's proactive approach and willingness to go the extra mile enhanced its reputation and solidified its position as a valuable asset to the campus community.

Despite initial reservations and concerns about stepping outside their traditional roles, library staff rose to the challenge. They understood that supporting the campus community during the crisis was essential to the library's long-term success. While it was demanding and emotionally taxing to assist stressed and anxious individuals, the library staff demonstrated a strong sense of duty and commitment. By prioritizing the needs of the campus community, the library solidified its position as an indispensable resource.

Lessons Learned

- **Teamwork is Essential**
The crises underscored the power of collective effort. Library staff stepped up to take on crucial roles, demonstrating that collaborative work can overcome even the most daunting challenges.
- **Leadership Matters**
Effective leadership involves more than decision-making. It requires presence, support, and a proactive approach. The library staff exemplified these qualities, guiding the campus through the crises and setting a positive example.
- **Embrace the Challenge**
While staff may initially resist taking on non-traditional roles, it's essential to communicate the broader impact of their efforts. Helping during crises strengthens the library's mission and secures its future.
- **Service as a Core Value**
The library staff's willingness to help, despite the challenges, is rooted in a strong sense of duty. This commitment to service can inspire other institutions to prioritize community support.

- **Building Stronger Relationships**
The library's proactive and supportive actions during the crises strengthened relationships within the campus community, especially with the IT team and student services staff. By demonstrating its value as a reliable resource, the library has secured its position as a key player in future initiatives.

Our experiences of responding to these crises demonstrate the critical role that libraries can play in times of crisis. By stepping up as team players and leaders, our library not only provided essential support during these emergencies but also significantly elevated its profile and reputation

within the campus community. Other libraries can learn from these experiences. Even when a task isn't explicitly part of someone's job description, taking initiative can lead to significant benefits and be considered "other duties as assigned." Libraries have unique resources and capabilities that can be crucial in emergencies. By embracing these opportunities, libraries can position themselves as indispensable assets to their communities.

Shawna Thorup is library director at Northwest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville, Arkansas.

SPECIAL LIBRARIES

The Library of Congress Center for the Book Affiliates Network

by *Karen O'Connell*, Coordinator of the Arkansas Center for the Book

Many readers may not know the history of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. It was established in 1977 – within the context of the 1976 bicentennial and the significant national collection that the Library of Congress had become – by Public Law 95-129 in the 95th Congress, which states in Section 1, 6-7:



O'Connell

(6) that the book and the printed word have had the most profound influence on American civilization and learning and have been the very foundation on which our democratic principles have survived through our two hundred-year history;

(7) that in the year 1977, the Congress of the United States assembled hereby declares its reaffirmation of the importance of the printed word and the book and recognizes the importance of a Center for the Book to the continued study and development of written record as central to our understanding of ourselves and our world. It is therefore the purpose of this Act to establish a Center for the Book in the Library of Congress to provide a program for the investigation of the transmission of human knowledge and to heighten public interest in the role of books and

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

CENTER FOR THE BOOK

ARKANSAS AFFILIATE

printing in the diffusion of this knowledge.

Upon its formation, early discussions on Center activities ranged from the practical to the philosophical: the reading of books; the creating of books; the selling of books; the study of books. What has emerged over the years is the current mission of promoting reading, libraries, and literacy, as well as this fundamental founding idea: that literature has been and will be a part of the story of the United States.

Although there was no initial plan for establishing affiliated centers, a proposal from Broward County, Florida in 1984 inspired nationwide activity to use the resources and the prestige of the national Center for the Book, as well as the Library of Congress, to promote books and reading at the state level, and especially an appreciation of local literary heritage. Also in 1984, Pennsylvania became an affiliated Center. Soon after, Michigan, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Wisconsin increased numbers, and by the early 1990s, there were 26 Centers, and momentum continued through the decade to form affiliated Centers across the United States. The Arkansas Center for the Book was established in 2000 in the same year as the District of Columbia and Massachusetts; and by 2003, there were 51 Centers. The U.S. Virgin Islands formed its Center in 2009, Puerto Rico in 2018; and American Samoa, Guam, and Northern Marianas in 2020. Today, the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress is a community of 56 Affiliated Centers that work to fulfill the Center's mission nationwide.

State Centers find their home institutions in

various places, with the majority in statewide humanities councils, state libraries, and academic institutions. Sharing ideas has been crucial to the development of the affiliated Centers, and many of us offer similar programs, such as statewide reads. Over the past few years, we have been strengthening our regional alignments and collaboration, especially with activities supporting the National Book Festival, such as the Great Reads from Great Places initiative. The Center affiliates help extend the reach and scope of Library of Congress programming beyond its physical spaces in Washington, DC. Recently, the

Centers have been working on strategic planning to align us within the Library of Congress FY2024 – 2028 Strategic Plan: *A Library for All*. We are determining what it means to be a Center for the Book Affiliates Network and, at our core, what our local literary heritage can mean to the nation.

Karen O'Connell is the coordinator of the Arkansas Center for the Book at the Arkansas State Library in Little Rock, Arkansas.

YOUTH SERVICES New Column Introduction

by *Allie Stevens, Calhoun County Library*

Hello colleagues! This new youth services-focused column hopes to keep you updated with news you need about upcoming Youth Services Community of Interest events and happenings, along with programming and/or collection development ideas. To the first point, the ArLA Youth Services CI is



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creating a Discord so that librarians across the state who are serving young patrons can stay connected and informed. If you have used Discord already, you know how robust it can be for keeping up with multiple conversations, and if you haven't yet, don't worry – it is a user-friendly platform. The CI is also planning a spring workshop; the details of this are still being worked out, but it is definitely going to be something to watch for and keep on your radar for April 2025.

A recent article in *American Libraries* crossed my radar right around the same time my teen volunteers were beginning to make a repeated, odd request. To understand, it helps to know that my library building houses a county museum upstairs; in fact, it's a 100+-year-old Masonic Lodge that's listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Our security system has been known to register movement in places there can't possibly be any at night in the museum, and so the teenagers, here late on a stormy day, were adamant – they wanted to go ghost-hunting upstairs, to see if they could experience any strange phenomena that might “prove” the existence of our mysterious museum visitor. Nothing was recorded that day on their

phones, and unfortunately for them, I had not yet implemented the ideas found in that article, “Spirit in the Stacks” written by Anne Ford, which outlines the rising popularity of ghost hunting kits among patrons in Ohio, Oregon, and Rhode Island. These kits feature items such as an electromagnetic field meter, audio recorders, flashlights, and more, available for check-out, allowing patrons to explore their own potentially haunted houses or venture out to a graveyard or other location. Not something they'd be able to afford on their own or likely want to use more than a handful of times; perfect for a Library of Things addition (though Ford's article does mention that at least one library only checks these out to adult patrons).

This is not the first time I've experienced my teen volunteers' interests and imaginations dovetailing in a strangely coincidental way with things my library colleagues are working on. That's part of the job, after all – picking up on and responding to these shifts in cultural interests. Ford's article notes statistics from Gallup and Ipsos (Ford, 2024) indicating that the number of ghost-believers has more than doubled over the past few decades, to say nothing of the incredibly numerous podcast and YouTube channels devoted to hunting ghosts. And of course, YA literature featuring ghosts or other paranormal/supernatural happenings is extremely popular. But from a youth services perspective, and in addition to tapping into this part of the zeitgeist, ghost-hunting kits can bring kids in contact with electronic equipment and technology they may not otherwise have had a chance to explore. Learning how to use an electromagnetic frequency meter, take and understand readings for temperature, humidity, pressure, etc., or use night-vision goggles, for example, are hands-on applications that will benefit them in more ways than just entertainment value. These kits are sure to be popular during the month of October, but for most of my teenage patrons, Halloween is a year-round state of mind.

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Allie Stevens Gosselink is director at Calhoun County Library and a member of the YALSA Board of Directors.

Bentonville Public Library Welcomes Over 600 Attendees to Ribbon Cutting Event

by *Tara Cloud Clark*

Bentonville Public Library

After more than four years of planning, designing, securing funds, and construction, Bentonville Public Library celebrated the opening of its new 22,000 square-foot expansion featuring a new Youth Library with dedicated spaces for children and teens; Walmart Foundation Community Room with capacity for 250 people; and Makerspace and Digital Lab. The Ribbon Cutting was scheduled on October 30, 2024 to celebrate exactly 18 years to the day that the original building was dedicated. After the dedication, BPL welcomed over 600 patrons into the new event space to meet 17 community partners who helped make the expansion possible.

Attendees were greeted with book totes featuring BPL's new logo, a commemorative coin, bookmarks created in the new Makerspace, charcuterie boxes from the Bentonville Library Foundation, and other goodies from many of their community partners who were there. Patrons were also able to walk through

a progression of the project's timeline, talking to architects and designers from MSR Design and Hight Jackson, Flintco contractors, and even Illinois River Watershed Partnership, the organization that helped fund stormwater gardens. Staff was stationed throughout the space to welcome patrons and provide context and details.

Visitors from the Library world came from around the area, throughout Arkansas, and even across the nation to celebrate the beautiful new space!

The expansion/renovation project is slated to be complete early 2025, and the former Children's Library is currently being converted into a Community Hub and Business Center which will feature workspaces, meeting and study rooms, and a Book Club Lounge. Staff areas are being refreshed, as well, with breakroom upgrades and a new staff restroom, complete with a shower.

For more information regarding the details of the expansion, please visit <https://bentonvillelibrary.org/media/expansionrenovation-2024-master-facts>.



More than 600 people attended BPL's Ribbon Cutting and Welcome Celebration on October 30, 2024. City officials, library and city staff, community partners, foundation donors, local leaders, and library patrons filled the outdoor space as they eagerly waited to enter the library's newly expanded facility. Remarks were shared by Tara Cloud Clark, Hadi Dudley, Mayor Stephanie Orman and Library Foundation representatives. Photograph by Payton McCormick, City of Bentonville Communications Manager.



Library staff from Donald W. Reynolds Library serving Baxter County visited Bentonville Public Library in November. The group toured the new facility, renovated spaces, and work areas while talking with BPL staff about spaces, collections, programs, and services. Photograph by Tara Cloud Clark, BPL Library Marketing Specialist.



Bentonville Public Library staff thoroughly enjoyed a magical moment with Barbara Stripling when she visited for a VIP tour of the library. She was ever-so gracious and intentional about sharing her appreciation for all library workers' dedication and heartfelt services to communities across the country. Retired from her position as Senior Associate Dean at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies, Stripling is a current board member of the Freedom to Read Foundation and past president of the following organizations: American Library Association, American Association of School Librarians, Freedom to Read Foundation, and New York Library Association. Honored for her efforts to educate, lead, and serve our library community, Stripling has received several accolades during her tenure, including three different awards from the Arkansas Library Association: President's Award (2014), Arkansas School Library Media Specialist of the Year (1990), and Retta Patrick Award (1989). Photograph by Tanner Martin, City of Bentonville Systems Technician I.

AROUND ARKANSAS:

by *Heather Hays, Associate Editor*

Sarah Jane Thompson Ernst of Charleston, Arkansas, died Sunday, August 4, 2024, at Circle of Life Hospice in Bentonville, Arkansas. She was 88 years old.

Many in the library community fondly remember Sarah for her support and advocacy on behalf of Arkansas public libraries. She traveled to the Capitol at Little Rock, attended Arkansas Library Association and American Library Association conferences, and played a key role during National Library Legislative events in Washington, D.C. She was ready and willing to talk with anyone, especially legislators, about the importance of her local library. Sarah will be missed dearly by all those who knew her.

Rachel Shankles' husband, Joseph Conrad (Bud) Shankles, age 85, of Bismarck, took his first breath in Heaven on August 5, 2024. Rachel has been a leader for the Arkansas library community in school libraries, and has served as president of ArLA. Please be thinking of her and her family in the coming months.

The GLSEN Rainbow Library sends free LGBTQ+ texts to schools upon their request. Any full-time staff member at participating K-12 schools can ask for these materials. Arkansas does participate in this program; those interested can visit rainbowlibrary.org for more information.

Retired law librarian Jada Aitchison passed away in a fire at her Little Rock home.

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock Bowen School of Law Library had a brief memorial service for Jada in the first floor reading room on Saturday, February 1st. Jada worked at the law library from 1980 until her retirement in late 2021. She enjoyed collection development and reader's advisory – she always had a good book to recommend for any given situation. Outside of work, her passion was animal rescue focused on cats. She will be missed.

The American Library Association has announced its 2025 class of Emerging Leaders, and UAM is delighted to see the talents, enthusiasm, and leadership skills of LaShonda Campbell

recognized by her selection to this group. After twenty-five years as an attorney, LaShonda joined UAM as a Collection Development Librarian in November 2023, upon getting her degree from the University of Denver, which included an internship at EveryLibrary.

Congratulations, LaShonda!

Searcy, Arkansas celebrated the opening of the Janett and Larry Crain Memorial Library in September of 2024. The building, the former Searcy Athletic club, was purchased for the library in 2020. Library Director Darla Ino states "I just love seeing the reactions of the people. They've all been astounded at how beautiful it is, so it's a great day for Searcy and White County." The library has expanded spaces such as large meeting rooms, study rooms, a teen library, and a computer lab. A feature they kept from the athletic club is the walking track which encircles the old basketball courts-turned-stacks below. A monthly local art display encircles the track for exercisers to enjoy.

Congratulations on the new facility!

Arkansas Travelers Baseball Club will kick off their Library Nights for 2025 starting on June 10th and ending when most reading programs finish up the week of August 5th Travs games. Pricing will start at .25 cents per ticket, and all students will have an opportunity to earn up to 4 tickets for their family to come out to a game.

The ticket breakdowns are 1,500; 3,000 or 4,500 tickets per Library Night at the park. Their goal is to increase community involvement while supporting local youth reading programs. Contact Montag Genser, Director of Tickets, Group Sales at 501-664-1555 x1008 for more information.

Cora Ruth White, age 85, of Dierks, Arkansas, passed away on Thursday, December 26, 2024. Ruth White served the Dierks Public Library- Howard County, Tri-County Regional Library System for over 40 years. Her replacement is Marilyn Keith. Our condolences to her family and friends.

Venita WyVonne Chewning, 82, dedicated librarian, passed away on February 1, 2025. After her daughters were grown, she served as the librarian at Winthrop for 25 years, a job she loved, where she connected with many patrons and touched countless

lives. Her replacement is Susan Hess Lansdell, who served for 10 years at the Winthrop Public Library.

Marilyn Archer, TCRLS Director married Don Addington on November 7, 2024 in De Queen. She is beginning her eleventh year as director of the Tri-County Regional Library System. Congratulations!

Congratulations to Arkansas' own Janine Miller who has been elected to the Executive Board of the Association for Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL)! ARSL is fortunate to have her on the board and as a member of the Arkansas library community.

Sierra Laddusaw, formerly at University of Arkansas at Fort Smith Boreham Library, has taken a new position as Curator of Maps & Graphics for the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan.

Beth Stewart, formerly the UA Monticello archivist, has taken a position at the Clinton Presidential Library as an archivist.

We are sad to report that the Tollette Branch Library in Mineral Springs, Howard County is closed due to termite and bee damage of both the room and collection.

A number of library workers demonstrated for libraries in a show of support on February 14, 2025 at the Arkansas State Library before their quarterly Board Meeting. The Board room was full of love that day as several library leaders across the state spoke for keeping the Arkansas State Library Board as an independent board, and against proposed legislation eliminating the State Library Board, as well as a bill lowering the requirement of an ALA MLS to "work experience" for both regional public library directors and the State Librarian.

A reminder to Arkansas librarians: please submit news items to me for the next *Arkansas Libraries* issue! Births, deaths, new hires, retirements, funding, new buildings, and news that affects Arkansas libraries would be perfect fits for this column. Just jot me an email at hhays@bentonvillear.com, and you'll most likely see it published in our journal.

Heather Hays is senior librarian at the Bentonville Public Library.



Photos from Around the ArLA



First time ArLA Conference attendee Carri Baker (second from left) with her Harding colleagues (see article on page 38).



Craig O'Neill addresses ArLA Conference attendees (please see article on page 12).



ArLA Membership Award winner Lacy Wolfe (please see article on page 12).



Merry Christmas from the Franklin County Library Book Club.



Arkansas Library Association



Trick or Treat at Saline County Library.



Saline County Library Thanksgiving story time.

**Arkansas Library Association
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Christmas at Cross County Library.

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