

ARKANSAS LIBRARIES

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Arkansas Library Association

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ARLA FALL CONFERENCE PREVIEW

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2025 EXECUTIVE BOARD CANDIDATES

•

PROPOSED BYLAWS CHANGES

Arkansas Library Association, 2024

Executive Board

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Taylor Vanlandingham
John Brown University
president@arlib.org

President-Elect

Lynn Valetutti
National Park College
president-elect@arlib.org

Past-President

Carol Coffey
Central Arkansas Library System
past-president@arlib.org

Treasurer

Ron Russ
Arkansas State University-Beebe
treasurer4arla@gmail.com

Secretary

Jessica Riedmueller
University of Central Arkansas
secretary@arlib.org

ALA Councilor

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

SELA State Rep

J.P. Myrick
East Central Arkansas Regional Library
jpaul@ecarls.org

Member-at-Large

Britt Murphy
murphyb@hendrix.edu

Member-at-Large

Lacy Wolfe
lacy.wolfe@lamanlibrary.org

Member-at-Large

John McGraw
john@fcl.org

Member-at-Large

Amy DeVooght
devooght@hendrix.edu

Parliamentarian (non-voting)

Amber Wilson
University of Central Arkansas
amberc@uca.edu

Committee Chairs

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Intellectual Freedom - Adam Webb

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Making Arkansas Libraries Accessible

Jessica Riedmueller

Mental and Emotional Lives of Library Workers

Amanda Moore

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Jessica Kirk

Social Media & Marketing

Lynn Valetutti

Two Year Colleges Community of Interest

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

Managing Editor:

Britt Anne Murphy

Associate Editors:

Robin Campbell

Heather Hays

April Sheppard

Darby Wallace

Copy Editors:

Leigh Espey

Janice Weddle

Indexer:

Joanna Warren

Webmaster:

DeAnna Dillon

Column Editors:

Vanessa Adams

Joe Askins

Brandy Carlisle

Jennifer Chilcoat

Carol Coffey

Kristen Cooke

Amy DeVooght

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Dominique Hallett

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Nakeli Hendrix

Jasmine Jobe

Chrissy Karafit

Karen O'Connell

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Kay Strahan

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Arkansas Libraries is the official journal of the Arkansas Library Association. It contains articles of current interest, historical significance or literary value, concerning all aspects of librarianship, particularly items pertinent to Arkansas. It also includes official statements of and information provided by the Arkansas Library Association.

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Submit articles to:

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

Arkansas Libraries

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FROM THE ArLA PRESIDENT: On to the Next Chapter

by Taylor Vanlandingham, ArLA President

As librarians, we often find ourselves the subject of misconceptions. We've all heard the uninformed comments, "I would love to be a librarian when I retire," or "You must get to read all day long" (if only they could see the "to-be-read" pile taking up our nightstands!) and the ever hurtful "I can find this on the Internet



Vanlandingham

– why do we need librarians?" These ongoing misunderstandings about the good faith work we put into our communities have made us the scapegoat for "what's wrong with today's society." But let's not forget, our work is vital to the fabric of society. It's time we turn the page, move on to the next chapter, and start writing our story in *our* voice, showcasing our resilience and dedication.

It might be because library workers are naturally quiet, but we do not boast enough of the many things we provide our communities. How often have we heard, "I did not know the library did that?" Over the next year, ArLA will build a public relations campaign showing all the great endeavors taken by Arkansas libraries. This is not just about showcasing our libraries but about highlighting the collective impact of all Arkansas libraries, making each of us feel part of a larger, impactful community. The goal is to show what Arkansas libraries are – that our institutions are more than our collections, and that libraries are vital to our communities. The only way we can do this is with your help. Please submit photos showing how your library serves your community in unique ways, whether that's with children's programming, literacy initiatives, food drives, gardens, recording studios, seed collections, genealogy services, maker spaces, tai chi or yoga, therapy animal interactions, or more! Follow this link to submit photos: https://astate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0Mvm8hqms6e76mi. These photos will be highlighted in a calendar and poster campaign across the state in 2025. We plan to have calendars and posters available by the October ArLA conference.

At this year's conference, we seek to learn from one another. No matter the type of library each of us works in, we all aim to serve our patrons. Many programs and initiatives can be adapted for different



audiences. A preschool dance party can become a mini pre-finals disco, a microwave cooking program for teens can become a STEM food science program for tweens, and a money management program for adults can be brought down to a preschooler level with a "save, spend, share" piggy bank craft program. By learning from one another and highlighting our excellent work, we can advocate for each other with concrete examples.

Please plan to join us this October 4-6 at the Hot Springs Convention Center. Early Bird Registration starts June 15th. As you plan to attend the yearly conference, look at the many professional development opportunities available through our Communities of Interest. I implore each of you to seek involvement in ArLA. If we work together, there is no limit to the good we can do in our state.

Libraries will not be out of the woods for the foreseeable future. It is unlikely that book challenges and legislative challenges will cease. We are fighting a battle against ignorance. We all wish to provide access to the vastness of the human story, not to discriminate. As Mary Jo Godwin (the final editor of the *Wilson Library Bulletin*) once said, "A truly great library contains something in it to offend everyone." Our differences as humans make this world a beautifully diverse place. In this next chapter, I encourage Arkansas libraries to seek out and tell the stories of community impact: the single mother who used our computers to find a job; the high school student who received a full scholarship because she spent every spare moment studying in the library; the small child who grew up to be an author because of a librarian's influence; the entrepreneur who gained their start at a library program. By fighting the negative stories with tales of hope and resilience found in the libraries in our state, we flip the narrative, moving from the stories they tell about us to the stories we tell ourselves.

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

FROM THE EDITOR: Tell Your Story

by *Britt Anne Murphy*

Library Director, Hendrix College

Several years ago, Felton Thomas, Jr., the CEO and executive director of the Cleveland Public Library, was the keynote speaker for an ArLA conference. His message was about storytelling, and one of the exercises he had the audience do was to turn to a neighbor and tell the story of how each of us first became involved in libraries. Felton's own story centered around his early teen years, and how the public library became a refuge for a teen at risk. The library staff of the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District provided support, direction, and a purpose for him; they "saved" him. Our personal library "origin" stories are perhaps not so dramatic, but just as valuable. All of us have a story to relate about early experiences with libraries, and why we each decided to follow a path that took us towards serving others. Many library workers I know mark a point in their lives where a library staff member listened to them, perhaps when other adults or peers wouldn't or couldn't hear them.

In these times of political division and culture wars, libraries have become an easy target of those being fed a narrative of fear and control, with "fixes" that seem easy (just get rid of the books, or defund the library, or reallocate money in the school), but can devastate communities. Libraries are often so much a part of the fabric of communities that those threads holding everything together aren't seen or valued. Our services are often part of the infrastructure that *works* in communities, but once that infrastructure is unsupported, the local community itself can unravel and deteriorate. Young people don't have a safe place to congregate, senior citizens become isolated, and those without resources have nowhere to turn – if Felton's library had been defunded, or if he had been turned away because of his zip code or the color of his skin, we can imagine how the ripples would devastate families and communities.

So how do we relay the message of our importance to a university, town, school, or hospital?



Murphy

We have to become the best storytellers of our age, and tell our stories to anyone who will listen. While our tendency is to provide seamless access to resources, programming, and services, we are going to have to toot our own horns. In many cases this might be as simple as making our stakeholders be as vocal about libraries' value as those who would like to devalue libraries. ArLA is supporting a PR campaign this fall to provide posters and calendars filled with everyday, positive images of what goes on in Arkansas libraries. In addition, an ArLA mentoring program will soon be rolled out which will facilitate storytelling between newer and more experienced ArLA members – good practice for us all.

This issue of *Arkansas Libraries* is heavy on storytelling. From Library Media Specialist Emily Cason to the work of Harding librarians orienting freshmen – from telling the stories of fictional Arkansans to telling stories of actual Arkansans through UCA's human library event – from stories of librarians and authors and award winners to look forward to at this October's conference – you'll find stories of Arkansas libraries and library workers spread throughout. Cindy Phillips relates the story of a storyteller, and relays hope that we can all become storytellers, but that it takes practice, time, and passion. While there are those in our state who might never listen to our stories, as Cindy's 3rd grader remarked, most people are "NOT a tough audience!" So, turn to the person next to you on the plane, or take five minutes with your freshmen orientation class, or your Sunday school class, or the person in line at the grocery, and tell *your* library origin story.

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



InfoBits 2024 (see article on page 33).

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The Next Chapter: Fall Conference Preview

by Lynn Valetutti

President-Elect and Conference Chair

As we stand on the brink of the next chapter in libraries, we must acknowledge the trials of our past chapters. Although some moments may have seemed unbelievable, we have persevered and now stand ready to embrace the future. Our primary goal is to create a healthy library environment, foster strong collaborations, and reinforce our collective resilience for the challenges that lie ahead. Esteemed keynote speakers, authors, and presenters, along with planned events, are poised to equip us for the future of librarianship. This forms the cornerstone of our conference – to distill the knowledge gained from our individual and collective journeys, and to prepare for what lies ahead. Despite inevitable obstacles, we draw strength from the knowledge that we are not alone in facing them. Furthermore, there will be moments of triumph to celebrate with the colleagues we have connected with, across professional boundaries to provide unwavering support and encouragement. Here's to the next chapter! Let's embrace it with unwavering determination and confidence.

Chapter 1: Preconference

Knowledge Advocates: Libraries and the Public Policy Center. Misty Hawkins. Arkansas River Valley Regional Library System.

The presentation, "Knowledge Advocates: Libraries and the Public Policy Center" will highlight the various resources and services available through the Arkansas Public Policy Center, including specific examples of previous library partnerships and activities related to voter resources.

This presentation fits perfectly as it gives examples of previous and existing collaborative projects but also specific details on how libraries can promote civic engagement within their local communities. As indicated by "The Next Chapter," the conference theme and this presentation encourage advocacy, awareness, and public action.

Yukon Do It: Student Community Engagement presented by Jennifer Johnson, Springdale Public Library.

Libraries are now entering into a new chapter of services, through programming and outreach. Importantly, libraries are a safe space for persons of all ages to get their literacy and daily needs met. Volunteer programs are not much different from story times or book clubs. The new LEARNS Act require teens to have volunteer experience as a requirement for graduation. Libraries are a perfect location to help teens acquire those adulthood skills and needed hours. In January 2022, Jennifer reimagined how the library can provide a safe space for teens while

also meeting their needs. She doubled the number of volunteers and hours earned, and at the same time, enhanced literacy skills and accountability for teens.

Librarians Are Not Babysitters: Enacting Legislation to Curtail Unconstitutional Book Bans. Gracie Roper, UALR William H. Bowen School of Law

Gracie Roper, a J.D. candidate at the Bowen School of Law, will discuss recent trends of censorship in libraries, the constitutional problems belying book bans, and a response from some state legislatures, which is to enact legislation banning book bans.

By the end of the session, participants will learn about recent legislation enacted by state legislatures that threaten First Amendment rights of the U.S. Constitution and become familiar with the precedent and history of legislation around censorship. Gracie will then offer a potential path forward through enacting legislation that bans book bans.

This program explores the "next chapter" of laws that support First Amendment rights, as well as reviews previous chapters of what has already been well established in American law.

Clare Graham – Recipient of the 2024 I Love My Librarian Award from the American Library Association

Clare will open the afternoon events after the preconference on Friday, October 4, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. She has been described as always being an intelligent, loving, strategic, compassionate, resourceful, caring, wise, joyful, focused, and giving leader for her staff, town, county, region, and community as a whole," one nominator wrote. "Above and beyond" is her default state."

Graham was selected from nearly 1,400 nominations from library users nationwide for the 2024 award. As part of her award, she will receive a \$5,000 cash prize as well as complimentary registration and a travel stipend to attend ALA's LibLearnX event in Baltimore.

The I Love My Librarian Award is sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, with additional support from the New York Public Library, and is administered by the American Library Association. Since 2008, library users have shared more than 24,000 nominations detailing how librarians have gone above and beyond to promote literacy, expand access to technology, and support diversity and inclusion in their communities.



Graham

Kent Oliver – ALA Public Policy and Advocacy Senior Policy Advisor



Oliver

Kent will follow Ms. Graham and give us an official update and recommendations from the American Library Association. The American Library Association (ALA) has tapped Kent Oliver as senior policy fellow for the Public Policy and Advocacy office to strengthen the Association’s involvement in policy discussions related to First Amendment freedoms and intellectual property.

Kent Oliver mentors, coordinates, and partners with members of the ALA Policy Corps to advance ALA’s advocacy on fighting book bans and to strengthen ALA’s Unite Against Book Bans campaign. Additionally, he will work with senior staff of ALA’s Public Policy and Advocacy (PPA) office, Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF), Communications and Marketing Office (CMO) and other units to speak out against book banning and censorship. Oliver recently retired after a decade as director of Nashville Public Library, where he launched the nationally recognized I Read Banned Books campaign. A three-time president of the Freedom to Read Foundation, Oliver is a nationally and internationally known speaker on library issues and challenges, including literacy and the freedom to read. His writings on intellectual freedom and defense of the First Amendment have appeared in publications such as *Forbes* and *The Tennessean*. Prior to his tenure at Nashville Public Library, Oliver also managed libraries in Kansas, Missouri, and Ohio, where he was awarded the Ohio Bar Association’s Liberty Bell Award for Defense of the First Amendment. Oliver hails from Topeka, Kansas, and has an MLIS from Emporia State University.

Chapter 2: Book Lovers Unite!

The ArLA Membership Committee welcomes all new and prospective ArLA members to meet Friday evening from 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. at the Embassy Suites Lounge for some networking and fun. Gather with librarian colleagues at the Embassy Suites complimentary nightly reception (or Membership will buy you a drink if you’re staying elsewhere) and join in for some fun socializing, prizes, and connections for the rest of the conference, including dine-arounds and Trivia, both of which occur directly following the reception.

Chapter 3: Trivia Night

Trivia night has become a core event at conference. Don’t miss out on this lively event – you know it’s a must to form your team early and bring

your best game for a night of food, fun, and laughs! This year, Trivia Night will raise money for LEAF (Library Education & Aid Fund), an ArLA fund which supports libraries undergoing emergencies (such as recent tornadoes), as well as educational initiatives and advocacy efforts. University of Central Arkansas’ dynamic librarian duo Amber and Jessica lead the way, so we are confident this will be a night to remember. The happening info: Friday, October 4th starting at 7:00 p.m. Location TBD.

Chapter 4: Kick Off Keynote



O’Neill

We are featuring author Craig O’Neill, broadcasting bendg, to open the conference on Saturday morning, October 5, 2024.

Randy Hankins was born in 1950, and grew up in Warren, AR. Going by his stage name, Craig O’Neill, he has spent 50 years in the broadcast business, with the last 24 of those being at Little Rock, Arkansas’s THV11. O’Neill officially signed off for the last time as the news anchor on December 29, 2023.

Before TV, Craig had a successful radio career on KKYK and then B98.5, where he was famous for his prank phone calls. Eventually, O’Neill transitioned from a fun-loving radio personality to a respected TV news anchor. Craig has since interviewed Presidents and music icon Dolly Parton alike. He has danced on the Ellen DeGeneres show, announced Razorback football games, and emceed more than 9,000 charity events helping raise over 40 million dollars in Arkansas.

His passion project, and probably his retirement career, is reading to grade school children through AR Kids Read. He hopes to ignite some lifetime readers using his acting skills, infectious personality, and unforgettable voice.

Chapter 5: Authors Lunch

We have three over-the-top Arkansan authors joining us during lunch who will share their literary experiences.

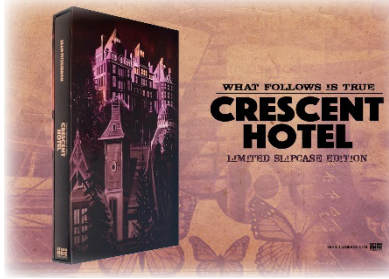
Sean Fitzgibbon, Author, Artist, & Graphic Novelist

Artist/author Sean Fitzgibbon explores unusual, real places and events through his work. He has an MFA in art and a passion for making art and visual storytelling.

Fitzgibbon is a 2021 Artists 360 recipient and a 2022 recipient of the Arkansas Arts Council Individual Artist



Fitzgibbon



Fellowship Award for his Kirkus-starred, graphic nonfiction book *What Follows Is True: Crescent Hotel*. He has exhibited

work throughout the U.S. He also illustrates books and recently completed writing and illustrating a documentary-style graphic nonfiction book that explores the Crescent Hotel's strange two years as the Baker Hospital, one of the most controversial legends in the town of Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

Fitzgibbon is now developing and producing art for a new graphic nonfiction book about the history, folklore, and science surrounding Plum Bayou Mounds – an archeological site located in Arkansas.

Bitty Martin, Author

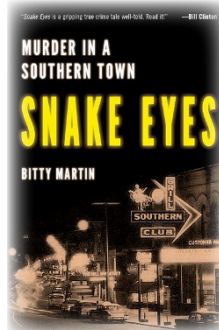
Bitty earned a BSBA in marketing from



Martin

Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas and served as executive director of the Hot Springs YWCA after beginning her career at Arkansas State Parks and Tourism, Research Division. She later went into marketing at a Hot Springs bank and then an advertising agency. After moving to Little Rock, she worked as

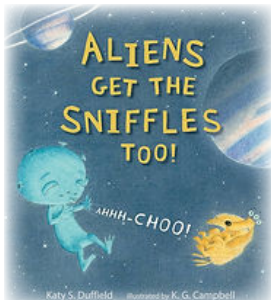
a sales and marketing account executive with *Arkansas Times* magazine, KATV-Channel 7/ABC affiliate and the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*. Bitty returned to college to earn a nursing degree (RN) at UALR and began working at UAMS and then in hospital operating rooms across the country. Throughout her varied career and travels, she never forgot her junior high school friend, Cathie



Ward, whose tragic death had always been a mystery.

Katy S. Duffield, Children's Author

Katy was born in Little Rock, Arkansas in (I'll let you guess the year... be kind!), and lived most of her life in Arkansas. She spends time walking, biking, camping, reading



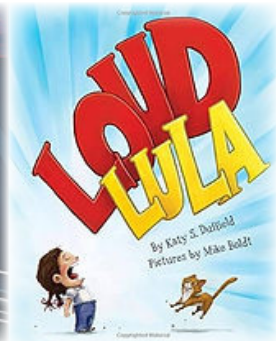
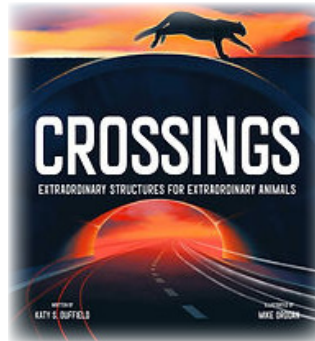
and writing, and playing with her pup Jo Jo. Katy always loved to read. When she was in second grade, she decided that she would read every single book in the school library. Do you think Katy succeeded? Well, no. But in her defense, there were LOTS of books in that library! Her love of reading transitioned into a love for writing. Her first published works appeared in children's magazines. As a kid, she loved reading quirky stories that included little-known facts. Katy wrote fiction, too, but the love of weirdness led her down the nonfiction path. Katy wrote about sugar gliders, jellyfish, an albino gorilla, the history of the golf ball, and many other topics.



Duffield

Chapter 6: ALA Cindy Hohl, ALA President

Cindy Hohl, director of policy analysis and



operational support at Kansas City (Mo.) Public Library, is the current 2024-2025 American Library Association (ALA) President. During her presidency Hohl's primary intention has been to lobby against library defunding and book bans. Hohl is the second Native American to be elected president of ALA; she is a member of the Santee Sioux Nation of Nebraska.



Hohl

Hohl is past president of the American Indian Library Association and an active member of other ALA affiliates, including the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association, Black Caucus of the ALA, Chinese American Librarians Association, and Reforma: the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking. As a member of the Public Library Association (PLA), a division of ALA, she currently cochairs the Membership Advisory Group and was a member

of the PLA Strategic Plan Review Team. Hohl is a member of several round tables, including the Intellectual Freedom Round Table, Library Research Round Table, and Social Responsibilities Round Table.

Wikipedia contributors. (2024, May 3). Cindy Hohl. In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 15:20, June 20, 2024, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cindy_Hohl&oldid=1222114006

Chapter 7: Poster Session Display

An array of posters will be on display in the Exhibit Hall throughout the conference. The poster creators will gladly interact with you on Saturday from 2:00 p.m.– 4:00 p.m.

Chapter 8: Bookmobile Petting Zoo

Come see an array of bookmobiles; a librarian’s dream come true. They will be in the parking lot before and after the Awards dinner.

Chapter 9: Scholarships & Awards!

Each year the Arkansas Library Association invites applications for its annual scholarship for graduate study in librarianship. The Arkansas Library Association will select one scholarship recipient each year from a pool of eligible applicants. Criteria for selection include 1) the applicant’s interest in librarianship as a profession, 2) academic record, and 3) compliance with application requirements. Awards are made without regard to race, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnic background. The Scholarship Committee encourages a higher standard of professional education for libraries in Arkansas by awarding scholarships and soliciting contributions to the scholarship fund. For more information and to apply, visit <https://arlib.org/Scholarship-Committee>. Please contact Lacy Wolfe, lacy.wolfe@lamanlibrary.org, chair, for more information. The application deadline is **September 1, 2024**, and the scholarship recipient will be announced at the Awards Dinner during the conference.

The Awards dinner takes place on Saturday, October 5, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at the Convention Center. Guest tickets will be available for purchase on the website. Awards Chair Judy Calhoun, Southeast Arkansas Regional Library System, will emcee the ceremony.

We will then recognize and celebrate our community of librarians with presentations of the following awards:

- **Arkansiana Award** – recognizes an author of a book or other work that represents a significant contribution to Arkansas heritage and culture with three categories including adult non-fiction, adult fiction, and juvenile works
- **Frances P. Neal Award** – recognizes a career of notable service in librarianship within the state of Arkansas, and is presented to a recent retiree
- **Distinguished Service Award** – recognizes

distinguished service in librarianship such as continuing service to ArLA, outstanding achievement in the field of librarianship, active participation in the field of librarianship, notable published professional writing, etc.

- **Bessie D. Moore Trustee Award** – recognizes an individual trustee or board who/which has made a significant contribution to the development of a library at the local, regional, or state level
- **Lorrie Shuff Paraprofessional Award** – recognizes distinguished paraprofessional library service in Arkansas libraries
- **Suzanne Spurrier Academic Librarian Award** – recognizes an outstanding academic librarian within the state of Arkansas
- **Rising Star Award** – recognizes a librarian or paraprofessional who has worked in libraries for less than five years, is a member of ArLA, and has provided exceptional service for their library community
- **President’s Award** – recognizes the contribution of a person(s) who does not fit into any other award category or who has provided extensive assistance to the President or the Association during the association year

Information about ArLA awards, including past winners, criteria, committee members, and other information may be found at www.arlib.org/membership/awards or Judy Calhoun at director@searlibrary.org.

Chapter 10: Basket Auction Fundraisers

The basket auction will begin on Saturday and will close the conference in the afternoon on Sunday.

We need donations – be creative and deliver a basket on a theme close to your heart! Please drop it off as early as possible. There are many possibilities and themes for making great baskets.

In line with the conference theme, many libraries will be eager to get their hands on books this year, think LGBTQ books, graphic novels, or baskets that take advantage of book themes! Email Britt Anne Murphy for more information or basket ideas: murphyb@hendrix.edu.



Chapter 11: Vendors

Don’t miss the opportunity to interact with our vendors on Saturday and Sunday this year. You’ll see

a return of our essential companies and services that keep our libraries humming, as well as a few new ones, especially from the local area. ArLA is always looking for ways to include vendors, so mention how meaningful it would be to see their participation in person at the ArLA conference! Plus you'll no doubt have chances to enter your name for door prizes, purchase books and other items, and pick up the latest and greatest swag.

Chapter 12: Yoga

Marybeth Donahoe

E-RYT Yoga Instructor/Transformational Mentor/Healer/Retreat Leader will be offering Yoga sessions and relaxation techniques throughout the conference. Make sure that you leave time in your schedule for self-healing. Location TBD.



Chapter 13: Hot Springs Visitor Highlights

Hot Springs is located in the Ouachita Mountains and is known for its naturally heated springs. Hot Springs has a vibrant downtown community filled

with bathhouses, galleries, shopping, museums, and great dining. During your downtime, experience excitement at every twist and turn at Magic Springs Water and Theme Park, or check out heart-pounding action at Oaklawn Racing and Gaming. If you are looking for more sedate entertainment, a thriving arts community includes the Josephine Tussaud Wax Museum, East Grand Antiques and Treasures, and the Hot Springs Bathhouse Dinner Theatre.

Another must-see is the acclaimed Garvan Woodland Garden (www.garvangardens.org), a 210-acre botanical garden located just a short drive from the conference center and hotel. The garden opens daily at 9 a.m. and features dynamic architecture and majestic botanical landscapes. Be sure to check out the Sunrise Bridge and other overlooks.

Hot Springs also abounds with a variety of great restaurants, bakeries, and breweries. For breakfast options, try Café Amor, Ambrosia Bakery, or Best Café and Bar. For those staying at Embassy Suites, our conference hotel, a full breakfast and a complimentary nightly reception are included with your room. There are a variety of great restaurants that are reasonably priced and are in downtown Hot Springs for lunch or dinner on Friday such as DeLuca, Pizzeria, Sqzbx Brewery and Pizza, Ouachita Bar and Grill, Colorado Grill, Diablos Tacos, or Rolando's.

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.

2025 ArLA Executive Board Candidates for Office

by Carol Coffey

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

The Arkansas Library Association will hold elections in September to choose who will serve on the Executive Board of the association in 2025. Open positions this year include President-Elect (3-year term), Treasurer-Elect (3-year term), Secretary (2-year term), and four Members-at-Large (1-year term). The election will be held online and only those association members whose membership is current at the time of the election

may vote. All those with an individual membership may vote once in the election. Institutions with an institutional membership also get one vote, which will be cast by the primary contact/voting member for the institution. The election results will be announced in the association business meeting at the Annual Conference in Hot Springs.

The Nominating and Elections Committee (Carol Coffey, April Sheppard, Jenn Wann, and John Boone) submits the following candidates for office:

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 (AAAL) 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.



Webb

**Treasurer-Elect
Clare Graham**



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 Library in 2018, which mails high quality books to children from birth to five years old. 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.

John McGraw



McGraw

John McGraw has been director of the Faulkner-Van Buren Regional Library System since 2015. Prior to that he did hard time as a student supervisor in the University of New Mexico Zimmerman Library, as well as branch manager of the Sid McMath library and the

manager of Reference Services in Little Rock. He received his bachelor's degree from Hendrix College and his Master of Library and Information Studies degree from the University of Alabama. In 2021, he had the dual honors of being elected to a Member-At-Large position with ArLA, as well as receiving

the Intellectual Freedom Award for stirring up good trouble. John recently spoke at ALPs' InfoBits conference and is active on the Records Management and Intellectual Freedom committees.

**Secretary
Dan Boice**

Dan Boice has served in academic libraries since getting his MLS from Michigan in 1982, and became the director of the UA-Monticello library in 2015. Lacking discernable administrative skills, he attributes any successes entirely to hiring outstanding faculty and staff, a number of whom have used his negative example to launch their own storied careers as library directors. Boice has worked on strategic planning and been secretary for a number of civic and academic organizations, most of which survived his well-intentioned efforts.



Boice

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.



Taylor

**Members-at-Large
Ashley J. Cooksey**

Ashley J. Cooksey is an assistant professor and the program director for the Instructional Technology - Library Media Specialist Master's program at Arkansas Tech University in Russellville, Arkansas. She is a past president of the Arkansas Association of



Cooksey

Instructional Media (AAIM) and served on the ArLA Scholarship Committee from 2015-2018. She currently is on the AASL National School Library Standards Review Committee. Ashley was the AASL Knowledge Quest Content Expert for the January/February issue and published the issue's feature

article "School Librarians As Digital Citizenship Leaders." Ashley has been recognized by many organizations, including by ArLA in 2014 and 2018, when she received the Retta Patrick Award. She is a passionate advocate for school library media services, Universal Design for Learning, technology-enhanced learning, and student voice. Ashley is a Ph.D. candidate, and her dissertation will focus on school librarian leadership. Ashley is a 200-hour registered yoga teacher and often infuses mindfulness practices into her classes and presentations.

Britt Anne Murphy



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 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



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.

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.

John Boone

John Boone serves as the Health Sciences and Graduate Studies librarian at Harding University. He is responsible for instruction sessions, individual research consultations, and collection development for the Harding Center for Health Sciences, graduate education programs, and the College of Business



Boone

Administration. John has worked at Harding for 24 years and at Brackett Library for five years. His educational background includes a bachelor's degree in Economics, a Master of Business Administration, and a master's degree in Education all from Harding University, and a Master of Science in Information Science from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. John currently serves on the ArLA Membership Committee and the Nominating and Elections Committee. In his free time he enjoys vacationing in the Great Lakes states with his wife, Katherine.

Jordan Ford

Jordan Ford (she/her) is an Outreach Services librarian and instructor at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. Prior to stepping into her role as an academic librarian, she worked



Ford

in Arkansas libraries as a shelver, library assistant, and youth programmer. She also has four years of volunteer experience in school (K-12) libraries. Her educational background includes a bachelor's degree in education from Ouachita Baptist University and a master's degree in Library and Information Science from Louisiana State University. Jordan currently serves on ALA's Committee on Professional Ethics.

Lacy Wolfe



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 served various roles within ArLA and ALA including chairing and membership in 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 U.S. and Greece. In her spare time, Lacy enjoys reading, sewing, knitting, hiking, and traveling.

Rachel Shankles

Rachel is a retired school librarian who has been president of ArLA and on many committees over the years. This year she is co-chair of COSLLE, the school



Shankles

librarians community of interest. She is also active in AAIM where she was awarded Life Membership. She presents at conferences and serves on this year's conference committee. She lives in Bismarck and writes children's books about the farm in her spare time.

Sarah Mallory



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 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.

Shawna Thorup

Shawna Thorup has enjoyed ArLA membership for several years as both a public and an academic librarian. She has assisted in planning more than one ArLA conference, served on the awards and nominating committees, and actively participated in what is currently known as RISci, the Reference and Instructional Services Community of Interest. Currently, she edits the Two-Year Colleges column in *Arkansas Libraries*. Her areas of interest include academic and intellectual freedom, staff/professional development, assessment, information literacy, customer service, and generative AI. Shawna earned a BA in English from the University of California, Berkeley, and an MLIS from UCLA. Since 2016, she has helped Northwest Arkansas Community College students succeed by serving in a number of roles, including adjunct faculty of English. She was recently named NWACC's library director. With her strong background in reference services and having worked her way up in libraries by starting as a



Thorup

shelver, Shawna would advocate for and represent all types of libraries and library workers if elected as a Member-at-Large.

Vanessa Adams

Vanessa Adams is a Jonesboro native and Jonesboro High School graduate. She attended Arkansas State University where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in English, and a Master of Arts in English. She then earned a master's in Information Science and Learning Technologies at the iSchool at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Her first library job after finishing her library degree was in rural South Georgia, where she worked for two years in adult programming. She then returned to Arkansas and worked as the Independence County Librarian in Batesville, creating children's and adult programming. She later became the library director and oversaw the renovation of the 100-year-old Barnett Building on Main Street and created a modern, state-of-the-art library for the citizens of Independence County. In February 14, 2022, Vanessa became the director of the Crowley's Ridge Regional Library System, which consists of eight libraries in Craighead and Poinsett Counties. She was very happy to return to her hometown and loves serving the people of Jonesboro, Craighead County and Poinsett County. She currently serves on ArLA's



Adams

Intellectual Freedom Committee and the Budget and Finance Committee. Vanessa has a cat, of course, which she believes is a requirement to be a librarian. She loves to travel and would rather go to London than anywhere in the world, but plans to do more traveling in Europe and the U.S.



Storytelling at Ouachita Baptist University (see article on page 34).

PUBLIC & REFERENCE SERVICES: A Virtual Escape Room and a Round Robin: Creating Meaningful Engagement for Hundreds of Freshmen (On Short Notice)

by *Amelia Baker & Whitney Hammes,*
Harding University

As each semester begins, librarians have an opportunity to integrate themselves into the academic life of incoming students. Our university currently does not offer a freshman seminar class, which we have always felt limited our ability to connect with incoming students. When the Brackett



Baker

librarians heard that the university's new first year experience (FYE) team was seeking to add more academic components to their events, we saw an opening and quickly volunteered to offer support and expertise. Ultimately, we became involved in this year's FYE in two ways. First, we helped the FYE team create a digital escape room to introduce new students to the campus online platform, the learning management system, and the library website. Later in the semester, we hosted activity-driven library orientation sessions to inform students of library services, to walk them through the layout of the building, and to build their confidence in using Library of Congress classification.



Hammes

Like many librarians, we found ourselves fielding students' frequently asked questions at the beginning of each semester, so we felt we were in an ideal position to assist in orientation. The campus celebrated Harding's 100th year this past academic year, so the theme of our escape room was built on a campus urban legend, the campus ghost Gertie. We included questions such as locating class schedules and campus telephone numbers, adding and dropping classes, and identifying campus buildings. We added questions about the library website that focused on hours and services. One service we were eager to highlight for freshmen was individual research consultations. Students worked in groups to solve problems in a limited period of time. Several students commented that they learned useful information by participating in the escape room.

Our next opportunity occurred over the course of several weeks in the fall semester and resulted in one of the biggest undertakings our library has attempted. We knew that this was a chance to reach students who might not otherwise set foot in the library. But how would we use our time with them in this co-curricular, voluntary-attendance setting? We could give no class assignments; there would be no grades. We knew that the sessions would have to be engaging, but this seemed impossible at first, because the freshman class of Fall 2023 numbered more than 850 students. While the library technically seats over 300, our library begins to feel crowded when the count reaches 225 or so. We were presented with the opportunity to speak to all 850 freshmen at once in the campus auditorium, but with some trepidation, we decided that we wanted to get the students in the library for an active learning experience.

Thankfully, the FYE team worked with us to combine the freshman class into groups of 60-120 students, creating seven "smaller" groups who came to the library when the students normally would have attended a daily required chapel program. Attendance was hard to predict. One of the challenges we quickly discovered was that we had to be prepared to host anywhere from 60 to 120 students in our building at the same time, while still providing services to other patrons not involved in a daily chapel gathering. We took a deep breath and were grateful for the opportunity to show students that Brackett librarians were here to assist them with their information needs.

Our immediate concern was to keep the students moving and learning. We created 5 stations and further divided the large groups into 5 color-coded teams of about 25 students each, with each group beginning at a different station. Students spent a maximum of seven minutes at each station before proceeding to the next to avoid colliding with another group. The stations were:

1. The Library Lab (our classroom space): a

brief introduction to academic libraries and expectations for college-level research.

2. Find a Book: an overview of the structure of LC call numbers and practice finding a book from the general collection.
3. Map the Upstairs: locating different collections and amenities on the second floor of the library.
4. Map the Downstairs: locating different collections and amenities on the first floor of the library.
5. Survey of High School Library Experiences: a short survey allowing them to self-report their experiences with academic research and with their high school libraries.

Even our largest group of 103 calmly finished each activity well within the seven-minute time frame for each station. While students may have had a stress-free experience, the hour proved to be frenetic for library staff. Despite our successful crowd control, we surmised that providing a meaningful, active learning opportunity for that many students per session—times seven—fatigued our available library staff, some of whom did not normally interact with students.

The first few sessions were well attended. As the semester progressed, however, word got around that the sessions were not mandatory and lasted longer than the required daily chapel time. In the final few sessions, not enough students attended to form five full groups; nevertheless, we always had to plan for a minimum of 95 students per session. Expected attendance versus actual attendance always remained a challenge. A total of 491 students participated out of a possible 872.

Overall, we felt that we met our two main goals of actively engaging the students and introducing ourselves and services. Some of the students who participated expressed that they learned something new that would help them when they came into the library for class assignments. On several occasions, when we asked students if they needed any assistance in finding a particular book, such students confidently replied, "No, I went to Library Day."

Because approximately 56% of the freshman class attended and completed our survey, we received an unprecedented snapshot of the incoming students' research experiences at the secondary level. Librarians have long noticed a knowledge gap between the faculty's perceptions of their students' high school library experiences and what students actually bring with them to post-secondary education. In our own experience, this knowledge gap impedes the effectiveness of the already limited one-shot instruction that professors typically request. We anticipate sharing these important findings from our survey with the faculty.

This serendipitous opportunity to work with a

new FYE team resulted in stronger relationships between the library staff and those who help freshmen adjust to college life and prepare incoming students for academic success. The FYE library sessions also laid the groundwork for connections between students and librarians. The Instruction and Outreach Librarian sensed that freshmen seemed to be more prepared to listen and less disoriented when they came to the library for one-shot instruction.

For many universities, the disconnect between academic libraries and student orientations can seem an insurmountable obstacle. When Brackett librarians observed an interest in adding an academic component to First Year Experience, we saw our moment. We summoned our courage, asserted ourselves, and did not wait to be approached first. By working as a team with more unified goals, FYE and the librarians communicated to the students the importance of the academic library in student success. Based on this year’s experiences, we learned that we could connect with students without waiting

for an idealized, hypothetical freshman seminar class. Even the smallest opportunity led to something good enough—without waiting for so-called perfection.

Amelia Baker looks forward to her fourth year as a librarian at Harding University’s Brackett Library in Searcy, Arkansas. Previously, she worked and volunteered in secondary education and youth organizations for over twenty years.

Whitney Hammes has completed her tenth year as a librarian and her third year as instruction and outreach librarian at Harding University’s Brackett Library. She will begin a new position as the theological librarian in the summer of 2024.

2024 ArLA Bylaws Proposed Changes Summary

by *Jessica Riedmueller*

ArLA Secretary and Chair, Bylaws & Handbook Committee

At its June 14th meeting, the ArLA Executive Board reviewed and approved changes to the Association’s bylaws, as recommended by the Bylaws & Handbook Committee. Those recommended revisions are now being distributed to all members of the Association and will be voted on as part of the Association’s annual election cycle in 2024.

The proposed changes include:

- Article V. Membership – After being reviewed by the Membership Committee, and with input from the Budget and Finance Committee, the following changes were made based on the recommendations:
 - V.1.A.5 – Removed.
 - V.1.B Institutional – Changed dues from “fixed fiscal” to “rolling” schedule.
 - V.1.C Affiliate – Changed dues from “fixed fiscal” to “rolling” schedule.
- Article VI. Finances – Revised several sections to reflect the removal of fixed dues schedules.
 - VI.2 Dues – Removed “—rolling or fixed—”
 - VI.2.A – Removed “Rolling.”
 - VI.2.B – Removed.
 - VI.3 Reinstatement



- VI.3.A – Removed “Rolling.”
- VI.3.B – Removed.
 - VI.3.B.a – Removed.

A full mark-up copy of the Association’s bylaws can be found in the pages following. The font color of edited sections has no meaning beyond marking a change in that section.

Explanation of the revisions:

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.

Bylaws & Handbook Committee Chair Jessica Riedmueller met with the Budget and Finance Committee to discuss the potential impact to ArLA’s finances. The Budget and Finance Committee unanimously voted to change the dues schedule from fixed to rolling, agreeing with the Membership and Bylaws & Handbook Committee that a flexible schedule will benefit more institutions.

Bylaws of the Arkansas Library Association

Article I. Name

The name of this Association shall be the Arkansas Library Association, hereinafter sometimes referred to as ArLA or the Association.

Article II. Purpose

The purpose of the Association shall be to promote library service and the profession of librarianship in the State of Arkansas.

Article III. Articles of Organization

The Association shall devote a major part of its activities to further its purpose, within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986. Its assets shall be distributed solely for the furtherance of the purpose of this Association. In the event of the dissolution of the Association, its assets shall be distributed for one or more of the exempt purposes specified in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

Article IV. Affiliation with Other Organizations

The Association shall hold a chapter membership in the American Library Association (ALA) and shall be represented by a Councilor or Councilors elected to the American Library Association Council in accordance with provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws of the American Library Association.

The Association shall hold a chapter membership in the Southeastern Library Association (SELA) and shall be represented by a State Representative elected to the Southeastern Library Association Board in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Southeastern Library Association. In the event ArLA's Bylaws and Handbook conflict with the Southeastern Library Association's Constitution and Bylaws, ArLA's governance reigns.

The Association may choose to join other library-related associations as deemed necessary.

Article V. Membership

Section 1. Types

ArLA shall have five types of members: Individual, Institutional, Affiliate, Life, and Honorary.

- A. Individual. A person in good standing with the Association entitled to full rights and benefits of the Arkansas Library Association. Only Individual members may serve as members of the Executive Board or may chair standing committees, or serve as leaders of Communities of Interest, or other recognized groups within the Association. The membership dues shall follow a rolling schedule. The categories for individual memberships are defined as follows and may include specific limitations:
 1. Library employees: those individuals who are employed full-time or part-time by any library or library-related institution.

2. Friends & Trustees: those individuals who hold membership in an organized Friends of the Library group or who are appointed as members of the Board of Trustees for any library.
3. Retired: any individual who has retired from library employment.
4. Students: any student enrolled full-time in a program leading to a degree in Library Science or to certification as a school library media specialist or school librarian. This category of membership shall be limited to a maximum of three years.

~~5. Supporter: any citizen who has an interest in libraries.~~

- B. Institutional. Libraries and other institutions may become members by complying with prescribed conditions regarding total library income as specified on the Institutional Membership Application. The membership dues shall follow a ~~rollingfixed fiscal~~ schedule. Institutional membership includes one vote and each Institutional Member must designate an Institutional voting representative.
- C. Affiliate. Organizations and businesses who support libraries and library staff may become members by complying with prescribed conditions regarding total library income as specified on the Affiliate Membership Applications. The membership dues shall follow a ~~rollingfixed fiscal~~ schedule. Affiliate membership includes one vote and each Affiliate Member must designate an Affiliate voting representative. Affiliate membership also includes the privilege of sending one representative to an ArLA-sponsored event at the member rate.
- D. Life. A person in good standing with the Association who qualifies as an Individual Member may become a Life Member of ArLA by a one-time payment of dues at the rate in effect at the time of their application for Life membership. This membership shall include all rights and privileges of regular Individual membership in the Association.
- E. Honorary. In recognition of outstanding library service in Arkansas, Honorary membership may be conferred upon any individual by a majority vote of the members of the Association present at an Annual Business Meeting, upon recommendation by the Executive Board. This membership shall include all rights and privileges of regular Life membership in the Association without the payment of dues.

Section 2. Requirements

The requirements for each of the various types of memberships shall be the payment of dues as defined in the ArLA Handbook. Membership in the Association shall not be denied or abridged on account of race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or lifestyle.

Section 3. Good Standing

A member in good standing is one whose current dues are paid and whose membership is not suspended.

Section 4. Censure, One-Year Suspension, or Expulsion

Any member may be censured or suspended by a majority vote of the Executive Board for cause if according to its findings, violations of any provision or obligation of the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, or Handbook, has occurred. Any member may be expelled by a two-thirds vote of the Executive Board for cause if according to its findings, a violation of any provision or obligation of the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, or Handbook, has occurred. Conduct unbecoming a member, conduct detrimental to the welfare of ArLA, and indebtedness to ArLA shall also be causes for disciplinary action. Complete procedures are included in the Handbook.

Article VI Finances

Section 1. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Association shall be the calendar year.

Section 2. Dues

The amount and timing—~~rolling or fixed~~—of dues for each category of membership shall be set in an amount approved by the Executive Board, subject to a majority vote of the membership at the Annual Business Meeting.

- A. ~~Rolling Dues.~~ The membership year shall be a rolling year according to the date the member's payment was processed by the Association.

~~B.—Fixed Dues. The membership year shall be the calendar year.~~

Section 3. Reinstatement

Individual and institutional members whose dues have lapsed shall be considered non-renewed and no longer in good standing.

- A. ~~Rolling Dues.~~ A non-renewed member or former member may apply for membership upon full payment of annual Association dues.

~~B.—Fixed Dues. Members whose dues have not been postmarked by March 15 shall be considered non-renewed. A non-renewed member may apply for membership upon full payment of annual Association dues.~~

~~a.—Dues received after the Annual Business Meeting or October 15, whichever is later, of a given year shall be recorded as payment of membership for the following calendar year.~~

Section 4. Special Dues

The Executive Board shall have the authority to adopt or suspend special membership dues for limited promotional purposes only.

Section 5. Conference Finances

Conference budget and registration dues should be presented to the Budget and Finance Committee prior to final approval by the Executive Board.

Section 6. Annual Audit

There shall be an annual audit or official financial review of the Association's accounts by an Auditor or CPA. The Executive Board may vote to have an official financial review instead of an audit. The Association must have an audit at least every three years. The President, with the recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee and the approval of the Executive Board, shall engage the services of an Auditor or CPA following the end of the fiscal year.

Section 7. Bonding

The President, Treasurer, and Treasurer-Elect shall be bonded for an amount to be determined by the Executive Board. The bonding agent shall be identified in the annual report.

Article VII. Communities of Interest (CI)

Section 1. Formation

Communities of Interest (CI) may be formed by members of the Association to pursue any activity that supports the purpose and goals of the Association. Members may form a Community of Interest by submitting a form to the Executive Board, which states the name of the Community of Interest, a contact person, and function; 15 ArLA members in good standing are needed to support the formation of a Community of Interest.

Section 2. Statement of Purpose

Each Community of Interest must provide a brief description of planned activities for the next fiscal year, including any requests for financial support from the Association.

Section 3. Community of Interest Representation

The membership of each Community of Interest must elect or appoint one (1) or more Individual members in good standing as leader(s) of the Community of Interest. Leaders serve as the contact for the group, are responsible for the submission of an annual report, and submit financial requests for the Community of Interest. Additional leaders may be elected or appointed as deemed appropriate by the Community of Interest membership.

Section 4. Annual Report

Each active Community of Interest must submit an annual report to perpetuate the group. The report must contain a summary of activities, and appropriate budgetary information if funds were received through ArLA. The annual report shall be published through appropriate Association publication.

Section 5. Review

The Executive Board will review the annual report of each Community of Interest, placing Communities of Interest that have not filed an annual report in abeyance.

Section 6. Community of Interest Bylaws

Communities of Interest may define further bylaws as desired or needed by the group. These bylaws may not conflict with the Arkansas Library Association's Bylaws and Handbook. Community of Interest

bylaws must be reviewed and approved by the Executive Board, filed with ArLA, and made public through appropriate Association publication.

Section 7. Financial Support

Communities of Interest in good standing are eligible to request appropriate financial support from the Association.

Section 8. Abeyance

Communities of Interest that have not filed an annual report with the Executive Board by December 31st of each year will be placed in abeyance for one year, or until their annual report is received. Communities of Interest in abeyance are not eligible to receive financial support from the Association.

Section 9. Dissolution

Communities of Interest will be dissolved by the Executive Board if no annual report has been filed, and the Community of Interest has been in abeyance for one year.

Article VIII. Officers

Section 1. Elected Officers

The elected officers of the Association shall be a President, President-Elect, Past-President, Secretary, Treasurer, ALA Councilor, SELA State Representative, and four Members-At-Large. The officers shall be elected by ballot in advance of the Annual Business Meeting. They will be announced electronically to the membership following notification of the candidates. An announcement will also be made at the Annual Business Meeting.

The terms of all elected begin at the beginning of the calendar year following their election, except the ALA Councilor whose term begins at the conclusion of the summer ALA Conference following their election. President-Elect succeeds to the President. The President will succeed to the Past-President.

Section 2. Terms

The President-Elect will succeed to the President following their one-year term as President-Elect. The President serves for one year, followed by one year as Immediate Past-President (serving three years or until their successors are elected). The Secretary will serve a two (2) year term or until their successor is elected. The Treasurer will serve a three (3) year term or until their successor is elected. The four Members-At-Large will serve one-year terms or until their successors are elected. The ALA Councilor will serve a three (3) year term as set by ALA guidelines. The SELA State Representative will serve a two (2) year term.

Section 3. Vacancies

Vacancies on the Executive Board, except for Past President, are filled by special election. A vacancy in the office of Past President shall be appointed by the President from the pool of Past Presidents, with the approval of the Executive Board.

Section 4. Removal from Office

Any officer may be removed from office for cause by a two-thirds vote of all the voting members of the Board, at any regular or special meeting. Cause shall include a violation of any provision or obligation of the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, or Handbook, has occurred. Conduct unbecoming an officer, conduct detrimental to the welfare of ArLA, and indebtedness to ArLA shall also be causes for disciplinary action. Complete procedures are included in the Handbook.

Section 5. Duties of Officers

The officers shall perform their duties as outlined in these Bylaws and the Association's Handbook.

- A. **President.** The President shall be the chief executive officer of the Association and shall, subject to the control of the Executive Board, have general supervision, direction, and control of the business and officers of the Association. The President shall preside at all meetings of the members and the Executive Board. The President shall have the general powers and duties of management of the office of President of a corporation. The President shall succeed to the Past-President following their term as President.
- B. **President-Elect.** In the absence or inability of the President, the President-Elect shall perform the duties of the President and shall assume the office of the Presidency if the President is unable to serve. The President-Elect shall succeed to the President following their term as President-Elect. The President-Elect shall serve as the Conference Chair. The President-Elect shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as from time to time may be prescribed by the Executive Board or these Bylaws.
- C. **Past-President.** The Past-President shall serve in an advisory role to the President and President-Elect and serve as chair of the Nominating & Elections Committee.
- D. **Secretary.** The Secretary shall be responsible for the records of the Association; keep a record of all meetings of the Executive Board and of the general membership; process correspondence as directed by the Executive Board or the President; and have such other powers and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Executive Board or these Bylaws.
- E. **Treasurer.** The Treasurer shall be the chief financial officer of the Association. The Treasurer prepares the annual budget, makes a financial report at all Executive Board Meetings and the Annual Business Meeting, advises the Board regarding other financial matters affecting the Association, has general powers and duties of the office of Treasurer and performs such other duties as may be prescribed by the Executive Board or these Bylaws.
- F. **Treasurer-Elect.** The Treasurer-Elect assists the Treasurer with duties of the office of Treasurer and any other duties as prescribed by the Executive Board or these Bylaws. In the absence or inability of the Treasurer, the Treasurer-Elect shall perform the duties of the Treasurer and shall assume the duties of the Treasurer if the Treasurer is unable to serve. The Treasurer-Elect shall succeed to the Treasurer following his/her term as Treasurer-Elect. The Treasurer-Elect shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Executive Board or the Association's Bylaws. The Treasurer-Elect is a non-voting member.

- G. ALA Councilor. The ALA Councilor represents the Arkansas Library Association (ArLA) and the American Library Association (ALA) members in Arkansas in accordance with ALA guidelines.
- H. SELA State Representative. The SELA State Representative represents the Arkansas Library Association (ArLA) and the Southeastern Library Association (SELA) members in Arkansas in accordance with SELA guidelines.
- I. Members-At-Large. Members-At-Large are elected to represent the entire Arkansas Library Association membership.

Section 6. Eligibility

Full-rate, individual members are eligible to serve on the ArLA Board. Employees of firms that provide goods or services directly to ArLA are excluded from serving on the ArLA Board.

Article IX. Nominations and Elections

Section 1. Nominations

The Nominating & Elections Committee shall annually present a slate of at least one or more nominees for President-Elect, and no fewer than four nominees for Member-at-Large positions to the Executive Board. The Nominating & Elections Committee shall present a slate of at least one or more nominees for a Treasurer-Elect and an American Library Association Councilor every three years. The Nominating & Elections Committee shall present a slate of at least one or more nominees for a Secretary and a Southeastern Library Association State Representative every two years. All nominees must be members in good standing when nominated and during their tenure as an elected officer. Additionally, each nominee must either live in Arkansas or work in or be retired from an Arkansas library.

The Nominating & Elections Committee shall present its slate of nominees to the Board for approval at least 90 days prior to the opening date for elections. Names of nominees submitted by the Nominating & Elections Committee shall be communicated to the membership at least 60 days prior to the opening date for elections.

Section 2. Additional Nominees

Additional candidates may be added to the slate of nominees by self-nomination or nomination by any current ArLA member. A nomination by an ArLA member must include a statement by the nominee agreeing to be a candidate. The names of additional candidates must be submitted to the Board at least 30 days prior to the opening date for elections.

Section 3. Elections

Ballots and statements of professional concern shall be distributed to all voting members in a timely manner to permit notification of the winners at least 14 days prior to the beginning of the Annual Business Meeting. Only current ArLA members may vote in ArLA elections. To be eligible to vote, members must be current in their membership at the start of the election. Only ballots received by the designated deadline shall be counted. A committee of two selected by the Executive Board shall count all ballots prior to the Annual Business Meeting. In the event of a disagreement, an Executive Board member may be appointed by the President to act as a third committee member. Election results will be formally recognized at the Annual Business meeting, normally held during the Annual Conference. A

plurality vote shall elect. In the event of a tie vote, those eligible members present at the Annual Business Meeting shall vote to determine the outcome.

Article X. Membership Meetings

Section 1. Annual Business Meeting

The Annual Business Meeting is traditionally held at the Annual Conference of the Association.

Section 2. Voting Body

The meeting(s) shall be open to all members of the Association. The privilege of making motions, debating, and voting shall be limited to Individual Members and Affiliate and Institutional Member representatives.

Section 3. Quorum

The quorum shall consist of thirty members or ten percent of the total Association membership, whichever is less.

Section 4. Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by physical or electronic means by the President upon a majority vote of the Executive Board or by petition from thirty members or ten percent of the total Association membership, whichever is less. All members shall be notified of any special meeting.

Section 5. Postponement or Cancellation

In the event of an emergency, the President, with a majority vote of the Executive Board, may postpone or cancel any meeting.

Section 6. Voting

- A. Any Individual, Affiliate or Institutional Member in good standing has a one vote privilege.
- B. An Institutional or Affiliate Member shall designate one voting representative.
- C. Voting may be conducted in writing, electronically, by voice, or by show of hands.
- D. For a vote to be valid, a majority of the votes cast is needed for approval unless otherwise provided in these bylaws.
- E. An institutional or affiliate member representative may designate a proxy voter by notifying the Board President in writing prior to a vote.
- F. Prior notification of not less than 30 days is required for any items requiring a vote of the membership.

Article XI. Executive Board

Section 1. Composition

The Executive Board shall be composed of the President, President-Elect, Past-President, Secretary, Treasurer, ALA Councilor, SELA State Representative, and four Members-At-Large, all of which have voting privileges. The Treasurer-Elect shall be a non-voting member.

Section 2. Powers

The Executive Board shall have all power and authority over the affairs of the Association during the interim between meetings of the Association, excepting that of modifying any action taken by the Association. Without prejudice to such general powers, but subject to the limitations of the Articles of Incorporation and of these Bylaws, the Executive Board shall have the following powers:

- A. To conduct, manage, and control the affairs and business of the Association, and to make such rules and regulations therefore not inconsistent with the law or with the Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws, as they may deem best.
- B. To delegate to committees any of the powers and authority of the Executive Board in management of the business and affairs of the Association.
- C. To adopt rules of procedure for the transaction of business by the Executive Board and a handbook for committees provided they do not conflict with these bylaws.
- D. To approve the Budget and all fees other than membership.
- E. To remove any officer, agent, or employee of the Association, prescribe such powers and duties for officers, agents, and employees of the Association as may not be inconsistent with the law or with the Articles of Incorporation of the Bylaws, fix their compensation, and require from them security for faithful service.

Section 3. Meetings

The meetings of the Executive Board may be held before and after the Annual Business Meeting. The Executive Board shall meet, physically or by electronic means, a minimum of five times throughout the year, the place and date to be fixed by the President. There shall be a Board meeting in November to adopt the budget. The agenda of all regular meetings of the Executive Board shall be determined by the President and must include all items submitted by members of the Executive Board.

Section 4. Special Meetings

Special meetings of the Executive Board may be called by the President. If the President is absent or unable or refuses to act, any other officer may call a special meeting upon the request of five members of the board.

Section 5. Annual Report

The Executive Board shall make an annual report of its activities to the Association.

Section 6. Quorum

A simple majority of the Board shall constitute the quorum.

Section 7. Action without a Meeting

Any action that may be required or permitted to be taken at a meeting of the Executive Board may be taken without a meeting if a two-thirds majority of the Executive Board consent to the action in writing. The action shall be reported in the written consents filed with the minutes of the next regular or special meeting of the Executive Board.

Article XII. Committees

Section 1. Committees

There shall be standing and ad hoc committees.

Section 2. Composition

The composition and requirements of standing and ad hoc committees shall be as set out in the ArLA Handbook. Plan of work shall be approved by the Executive Board prior to action by the committees.

Article XIII. Parliamentary Authority

The rules contained in the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern the Association in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these Bylaws and any special rules of order the Association may adopt.

Article XIV. Amendment of Bylaws

Proposed amendments may be approved by one of the following methods:

- A. By sending proposed changes to all members in good standing at the time of the ballot at least 30 days in advance of the annual or a special meeting. Approval must be by a majority vote of total ballots returned at the annual or special meeting.
- B. By sending proposed changes and an electronic or paper ballot to all members in good standing at least 30 days in advance of the voting period. Approval must be by a majority vote of total electronic and paper ballots returned. The voting period shall be no less than 14 days.

Approved by the ArLA Membership __2019_____

Amended __2020, 2022, 2023_____

Bentonville Library Expansion Update

by Hadi Dudley

Bentonville Public Library

Bentonville Public Library staff toured the library expansion site this spring! We are so excited about the new space and amenities this project will provide our community. Special thanks to Flintco for facilitating a special tour for our library team.

Bentonville Public Library's expansion is

comprised of a 22,975 square-foot addition, with renovation of existing spaces and outdoor amenities planned. The project budget is \$16.75MM and is being funded through a \$4.5MM City bond extension and private fundraising efforts. The library will celebrate its grand opening in September.

Hadi Dudley is director of the Bentonville Public Library in Bentonville, Arkansas.



The Benton Public Library staff tours expansion site in preparation of September grand opening.

What's in a (Library) Name?

Dan Boice, library director at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, is the author of the recently published *Naming Arkansas: Curious Place Names from Greasy Corner to Sock City* (Historical Press, 2024, available at many bookshops and, if necessary, from Amazon). Since March, he has been regularly heard on the Little Rock National Public radio station KUAR (89.1 FM or streaming at <http://kuar.org/>) with short



Boice

tales taken from his book. And now he is turning his attention to professional nomenclature.

Many of our libraries, especially academic and public, have distinctive names. Some are named for community leaders, some for financial donors, and some are named for heroes. There are libraries named for literary figures and libraries named for school administrators. And some are even named for librarians!

If your library is named for someone or something, please write up a sentence (or two! Or five!) explaining what it means, and send it to Dan (boice@uamont.edu) so we can begin a series of articles in *Arkansas Libraries* celebrating those interesting, unexpected, and often fun names.

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WHAT IS...THE LIBRARY?

Using Jeopardy in the Library First Year Experience Course: How Gaming Helped Cement the Library as a Necessary Guest Lecturer

by *Chelsea Young, University of Arkansas at Little Rock*

The Ottenheimer Library has been a guest lecturer for the First Year Experience course, PEAW (Personal Awareness), for many years. Since Fall 2020, a Jeopardy game has replaced a traditional scavenger hunt during its library orientation as a way to increase student engagement to this vital and introductory course. The game was created to help showcase Ottenheimer Library's resources and services while helping students build connections with each other as well as library staff. It was also developed as an online alternative to the in-person scavenger hunts that had been the norm since our campus was virtual during the Fall 2020/Spring 2021 academic year.



Young

Library scavenger hunts for the First Year Experience were ways to physically explore the library and have a small guided online database/catalog search with picture opportunities, a photo station, and bonus points for students. The students and PEAW faculty found this to be fun and very beneficial for the students, but it placed a strain on the library in providing the manpower to help guide students through the library during the beginning of the semester.

COVID-19 was a transformational time. With the shift to online, the scavenger hunt was not an option. Jeopardy became an option to assess students while also making things fun, and it was an immediate success. Students enjoyed the game and were very competitive, which helped to create a stronger sense of community between the students, a goal of the PEAW instructors. There was a small rough patch making sure the instructors were aware of the game beforehand and getting group dynamics established. It has since become a necessity of the library orientation session for the PEAW courses.

For the Fall 2022 semester, in which the sessions were going to be hybrid, the library chose to change up the activity and presented a new idea to the



PEAW instructors. They didn't mind the new idea, but heavily emphasized how well the Jeopardy game helped to build the student community that they were building on and how well it worked for students. The library decided to stick with the Jeopardy format and, in conjunction with the PEAW instructors, adapted to a hybrid format.

After a year of the hybrid format, classes went back to an in-person format. The Jeopardy game was again mentioned to the library as a must-have. The library has also been selected as one of three guest lecturers to the PEAW course. Previously, there had been more guest lecturers, but it became difficult to meet competing needs. PEAW rigorously looked at what was best for their course and their students. The library, along with Public Safety and the PEAW instructor's financial session, were chosen as the only guest lecturers for the courses. This was a huge boost in confidence for the library!

For fall 2023, we were back in person. When there were multiple classes at a time, we had each class play as a team against other classes to increase competitiveness. It worked so well! The classes were spirited and eager to share answers with each other.

Every year, the library works to ensure students will receive a prize of some sort, and we prioritize PEAW instructor requests and suggestions. The work the library does with the PEAW course helps to introduce the library to the students and showcase that we are a place to utilize and not just a study space or a boring, quiet space. Both the library and the PEAW instructors believe our session with students, and the resources we offer them, help to set students up for success. As we develop this activity, we plan to make adjustments in how we prepare students for the game, as well as tweaking the delivery of information, which we believe will add to the competitiveness of the game, and how well they retain the information afterwards.

Chelsea Young is the instruction and engagement librarian at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

ADVOCACY ARKANSAS:

Libraries Have the Power of Place

by *Vanessa Adams*, *Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library*

Recently a question was asked of readers on the public platform Quora.com about libraries and how they are changing. The question was: “What are some ways in which libraries can adapt to changing times?” The number one reply to the question was to embrace digital resources, and



Adams

most of us can attest to the importance of digital resources after experiencing the Covid-19 shutdown. Electronic books and audiobooks kept a lot of us “in business” during that time of self-isolation. Digital checkouts continue to grow, and in many areas of the U.S., they have surpassed physical checkouts. Now, however, libraries may be experiencing a sense of placelessness since many of their patrons have not returned to their libraries, even though they enjoy our services digitally. Libraries today need to refocus their efforts on the power of place and reestablish the physical connection with their patrons so that libraries are seen once more as community hubs.

Library events, such as financial programs, book discussions, and plant swaps help sustain the library as a place of exploration or a place that promotes human interaction and social development. People were isolated due to the pandemic during the early 2020s, and many are now yearning for a place to go to be entertained, intellectually stimulated, and encouraged to pursue their interests. Libraries are at the top of the list of places that welcome diversity and community, and most importantly for many,

there is no financial expectation associated with libraries. People can come to their libraries and access technology and connectivity, find a quiet place to study or work, or let their toddlers play in a safe zone for no cost. Libraries are uniquely equipped to offer these services, and that is their power of place that is unavailable anywhere else.

Of course, the most valuable asset libraries have are their people. Library staff are the ones who had to solve the problem of how to keep libraries relevant and in use during the pandemic. Now, they are having to switch paradigms and come up with ways to get people to return to their libraries. Librarians need to emphasize programs and services that are only available in the libraries or on the libraries’ grounds and market them as “the place to be.” They are having to emphasize the power of place, where they did not necessarily have to advertise this idea ten years ago.

Library staff are also having to deal with the narrow idea that is being communicated among their opponents that libraries should get “back to basics,” meaning libraries should only be a place to check out books. Libraries are not book museums, and librarians should ignore the protests and continue to offer exciting and informative programs that stimulate minds through education and social interaction. Library marketing staff, or those who promote their libraries, should take advantage of social media and post photos of the public participating in their libraries’ programs to show doubters that libraries are not only relevant, but are community hubs. Show everyone how important the physical locations of their libraries are. Show them that libraries are anchors in their communities. Show them the power of place.

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

ALA COUNCILOR’S REPORT:

Issues & Advocacy

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

The ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom released a statement on June 24, 2024, regarding plans by Midwest Tape / Hoopla to implement a content ratings system. Based on information provided to OIF, the vendors will utilize a system that allows librarians and library workers to filter content based on vendor employees’ beliefs that

the item may contain content some consider questionable or controversial for certain audiences. According to the press release, the vendors are providing this update to address requests they have received from libraries for a tool to allow filtering options to assist them in complying with state legislation.

OIF shared its stance on censorship and its belief that such content-based



Gates

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restrictions may violate First Amendment rights, regardless of age.

Libraries have seen increased threats of violence to their facilities and their staff, resulting in forced closures, evacuations, and added stress. ALA and PLA have compiled a list of resources and knowledge to help you and your patrons stay safe and prepared. You can find more information at <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/resource-guide-library-safety-and-preparedness>.

LibLearnX

LibLearnX 2024 was held January 19-22, 2024, with 2,006 attendees. On Friday, attendees attended the ALA Governance Institute to learn more about ALA and its inner workings. Based on feedback, ALA will continue to offer special events at conference to help attendees navigate ALA.

LibLearnX 2025 is scheduled for January 24-27, 2025, in Phoenix, Arizona. This is the last planned LibLearnX as ALA continues to streamline and utilize technology to increase member access and engagement.

ALA 2024 Annual @ San Diego, CA

It is an exciting time to be attending ALA Annual. The opening General Session features Trevor Noah with other notable speakers including Kwame Alexander, Anika Noni Rose, and Maggie

Nichols. United for Libraries has a two-part preconference titled Engaging Friends, Foundations, Trustees, and the Community: Collaborating for Impact. They will also host a President's Program featuring Connie Chung. The Arkansas member dinner is scheduled for June 30, 2024, at Lou & Mickey's.

Other News

I recently helped the Chapter Relations Office by presenting during a Chapter Councilors Orientation. This orientation is for new and incoming Chapter Councilors and is also a great opportunity to network and share with our peers. I will be attending the Chapter Leaders' Forum at Annual, and I look forward to bringing back useful information for our state association.

On June 14, 2024, ALA announced that recently-elected Ray Pun will not assume the role of ALA President in 2025-2026 due to health reasons. Pun was elected with 67% of the vote. The Executive Board now looks to fill the vacancy, subject to approval by Council, with a planned vote this July.

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

TRAINING: TIPS, TOPICS & TECHNIQUES: Bear Biographies: Sharing Lived Experiences and Encouraging Open Dialogue

by Chrissy Karafit, Joanna Warren and Amber Wilson,

University of Central Arkansas

Is your library looking for a program to help promote healthy dialogue between individuals during this increasingly divisive time? The University of Central Arkansas' Bear Biographies event offered an opportunity for participants to check out a "human book" for a 20-minute conversation about the book's experiences with prejudice. Each volunteer book represented a stigmatized group in the community, drawing from identity categories such as religion or ideology, ethnicity or race, nationality,



Karafit



Warren

gender, sexual orientation, health or disability status, occupation or lifestyle, social or economic status, etc. The UCA Library scheduled this year's event during National Library Week on April 11, 2024. By connecting the event to National Library Week, the planning team sought to highlight the critical role of libraries in opposing censorship and preserving and sharing the diverse perspectives and experiences that make up our community history.

UCA developed several avenues for promoting the event. The LibGuide for Bear Biographies (<https://uca.libguides.com/BearBiographies>) provides information for potential volunteers and participants and helps to answer frequently asked questions. The Overview tab explains



Wilson

what a human book is and offers a video explanation of the event, with comments from past volunteers and readers. The Volunteer tab links to the registration form for recruitment, and the Books tab offers tips for serving as a book and examples of past books. The Catalog tab includes the current and past event catalogs of book titles and descriptions, which can help future participants understand the kinds of topics that are discussed during book interviews. A tab is also included to provide accessibility information and a contact point for anyone who may need accommodations to participate.

To recruit volunteer books, the planning committee reached out to UCA faculty, staff, and students. Many books have enjoyed the event so much that they have volunteered in this role for multiple years. In January, the planning team began recruitment by sending a “Save the Date” email to human books from previous events. The email included a link to a Google form to collect book volunteer details including name, contact information, t-shirt size, book title and description, accessibility needs, and hours of availability on the event date. The email also provided a link to our campus’ GivePulse app, inviting those who wish to volunteer as “librarians” rather than books during the event. In addition to the event LibGuide, the Torreyson Library social media channels and campus newsletters also provide avenues for recruiting volunteer books and librarians.

As we received responses to the book registration survey, the planning team considered the balance of each subject within the collection. The survey asks, “what aspects of your identity are you interested in sharing,” so that books can categorize their topic as religion/ideology, ethnicity/race, gender, sexual orientation, health/disability status, occupation/lifestyle, social/economic status, etc. Many volunteers have intersecting aspects of their identity that they are open to sharing and are willing to discuss multiple subjects. The planning team

coordinated with books to highlight unique topics, seeking to fill gaps in the collection and work toward a wide and varied array of identity subjects.

We sent another email to book volunteers in March with details about the event day, including parking and accessibility information. This email included the date and time for the book orientation session outlining event procedures. In addition to snacks and bottled water, each volunteer book received a meal ticket and t-shirt on the event day as a token of appreciation for their time. We also mentioned that a photographer and videographer would be present at the event so that books could choose to opt out of photos and video. Lastly, we included a draft of the event catalog to ensure all books were satisfied with their title and description and solicit any last changes.

Education and Outreach Librarian Amber Wilson provided the book orientation session on Tuesday, April 2nd, via Zoom, which was recorded and then emailed to all books who volunteered for this year’s event. This strategy ensured that everyone received all of the critical details even if they were unable to attend the live training. The training included instructions such as asking volunteers to arrive 15 minutes early to ensure receipt of their t-shirt and meal ticket. We noted that the event space included an assigned table for each book with signage displaying their book titles. Readers checked out each book for up to 20 minutes, and timers were available at each table to help participants track the time. The training also offered conversation tips to encourage discussion and tips to ease communication with readers who are not yet fluent in English. We provided some language to help books explain if there were experiences they did not wish to talk about, such as “that chapter hasn’t been published yet.” In the event that a conversation became uncomfortable, books were instructed to place the timer face down on the table to signal the need for assistance. As conversations concluded, we asked



books to remind their readers to complete the survey to collect feedback about the event.

Besides collection building, volunteer training, and marketing, planning the logistics of human book circulation is critical. The event “catalog” and book check-out procedures have changed a lot since we first held this event back in 2019. Each year we have developed a print version of our catalog that lists the titles of the human books along with a brief description supplied by the authors. This serves as a handy resource for readers trying to decide which book(s) they would like to talk to at the event. The first year that we held the event, our “Circulation Desk” included a whiteboard with typed book titles attached to it alongside hand-drawn “in” and “out” columns to indicate which books were available for checkout. However, the massive popularity of the event made maintaining the board extremely difficult, and we did not have a good way to track “holds” for books that had multiple simultaneous reader requests. Figuring out a smooth circulation system proved to be challenging, but this year we tested Springshare’s LibCal software, which we currently use for scheduling study rooms and research appointments.

We created each book table as a separate space within LibCal that could be scheduled for 20 minutes. Readers could either reserve a session on their phones by scanning a QR code, or a volunteer could manually reserve a session for them. We also set up the system to automatically send the readers a follow-up Google Form survey one hour after the event to collect feedback. Overall, this system proved much easier and more efficient for everyone on the day of the event. LibCal also greatly improved our ability to collect event statistics, as the system tracks the total participants, transactions per participant, and total minutes spent reading each book.

Putting on any event requires a variety of important volunteer roles. For Bear Biographies,



these include a welcome/reader check-in desk, a book check-in desk, a reference desk, runners/bookkeepers, and what we refer to as the “hype squad.” These volunteers orient the books and readers to the event, help readers schedule their times with the books, monitor the books’ tables in case they need a break or a bottle of water, and stand outside the venue to encourage passersby to attend the event. All of these individuals work together to make the event a positive and smooth experience for all participants. Over the years, our planning team and volunteers have represented a variety of campus departments in addition to the library, including Service Learning, Diversity and Community, Student Affairs, and Career Services. Having representation from around campus has been extremely beneficial as it has enabled the planning team to tap into greater networking possibilities for recruiting potential books and volunteers. This cross-campus collaboration has also expanded access to resources such as marketing contacts and technology such as poster printers that we do not have in the library.

Collaboration was a huge part of our event. We are fortunate to have such a cooperative campus community that is always open to working together to see our students succeed. The Intensive English Program (IEP) students are a group we always target for tours, library instruction, and other outreach events, such as Bear Biographies. We have cultivated relationships with their faculty, and they are always excited to partner with us on student activities. Since language and culture are key components of the IEP Program, Bear Biographies is a great way for students to meet new people, practice their conversation skills, and learn about people’s identities and cultures.

Since we do not want to overwhelm IEP students with numerous new concepts all at once, our work with them begins far in advance of the Bear Biographies event. We visited their class twice to introduce the concept of the event and answer any



questions they may have about the books and the purpose of the event. On the day of the event, we divided them into three groups that each spoke with a book who volunteered to work specifically with IEP students. Each group had an IEP faculty member who wrote any unfamiliar words that came up in the discussion on a big tablet for all of the students to see.

The conversations lasted about 45 minutes, and when they were done, all of the groups wanted to take a picture with their book, which was awesome! In their class the next day, the faculty asked students to complete a written reflection, as well as answer some survey questions about their experience with the event. The faculty feedback was all positive, and the student feedback was almost all positive, with some neutral responses. We were very pleased that there were no negative responses and consider this to be a very successful collaboration.

Bear Biographies has been an extremely positive

and beneficial program for our campus community. We encourage other libraries who may be interested in putting on a similar program to take advantage of existing collaborations and form new ones to share the unique stories of your own communities. Be sure to seek out funding opportunities from your institution to cover necessary expenses (university grants have been vital for us as we have gradually expanded this event over the years). In-kind donations from community partners can also help to offset costs. Open communication is needed now more than ever, and we have found that events like Bear Biographies are a great way to get these conversations started.

Chrissy Karafit, Joanna Warren, and Amber Wilson are librarians at the University of Central Arkansas' Torreyson Library in Conway, Arkansas.

FACES OF ARKANSAS LIBRARIES: Bringing Fun to the Library: Emily Cason by Nakeli Hendrix, Bentonville Public Library

Upon entering the Elm Tree Elementary School (ETE) library, young students are greeted by an open and inviting space with comfortable chairs and reading nooks in which to curl up with a good book. Library Media Specialist



Emily Cason describes it as a “coffee shop vibe” and wants the school library to be a warm, welcoming space where all kids can find a book they love.

“We don’t feel it has to be like an old library where everyone has to be silent,” she said. She encourages discussion and enthusiasm although she says it “can be crazy” at times.

Located in Bentonville, ETE teaches students from kindergarten through fourth grade before they move on to the adjacent middle school. Emily shares her library with the middle school although the books for each school are separated.

Emily grew up in Van Buren and had a typical, happy childhood. She was in dance and piano and visited the library often with her mom. Her mom was a teacher who went back to school to earn her degree when Emily was in kindergarten, which inspired Emily to pursue teaching as well. She wanted to be a teacher since second grade, and, after earning her degree, taught elementary school before staying home with two young children. Then she started to evaluate whether she wanted to go back to the classroom. She loved teaching, but she wanted to see if there was something else she could do with that passion. That led her to pursue a master’s in Library Media Instructional Specialist at Southern Arkansas University and her eventual position at Elm Tree.

During a typical school day, Emily sees five classes for 30 minutes each. She teaches them library skills, such as how to research or find books on certain topics. After spending about 20 minutes with the students, she gives them 10 minutes to browse and read. She also works with teachers to cater

her lessons to what the classes are learning. As the media specialist, Emily is responsible for non-library things as well, such as the yearbook, technology, social media, and photography for the school. She's a fixture at all the school's events, and students are used to seeing her with a phone in her hand taking photos and being part of the fun.

Emily is also part of bringing fun to students. She was instrumental in securing a book vending machine for Elm Tree. Students can earn gold coins for good behavior and use them at the machine. Emily loves to see them burst into the library with a paper slip from their teacher to exchange for a coin. "It's so cool to see them excited about it," she said.

Emily also spearheads the school's Celebration Books program. Family and friends of an ETE student can donate a flat fee to the library, and Emily will select a book that matches the student's interests. She bookplates it with the student's name and a special message. Then the student is recognized at a school assembly and granted the honor of being the first to check it out.

Emily likes to think of herself as a book salesperson whose main job is getting kids excited about books. She loves the challenge of helping a student who says they hate reading find something they love by learning about their interests and what gets them excited. "Not all kids like reading, but there is something for everyone," she said.

Emily has faced challenges in her role as an elementary school librarian. The negativity and controversy surrounding school libraries in the

current political climate can be distracting from her ultimate goal of helping kids love reading.

"Never before have I been so aware of every book that comes in," she said. It can also be challenging to collaborate with teachers and match up her lessons with what is being taught in the classroom.

When asked to describe her vision of the future of libraries, Emily was adamant that physical books can never be replaced no matter how popular digital reading becomes. But she also believes technology can be a great tool in an elementary school library. For example, she would like to see student-created content such as book talks. She imagines students could make a video about their favorite book and create a QR code that links to the video. Students could use their Chromebooks to scan the code and view the video in the library. She would also love to see students write and publish their own books for the library so that other students can check them out.

In her free time, Emily likes to stay active. She loves being outside and started biking with her family. She also trained for and completed the Bentonville Marathon.

She likes to read psychological thrillers but has recently ventured into fantasy, which is not a typical genre for her. "I can tell students I picked something I don't usually read, and enjoyed it!" she said.

Nakeli Hendrix is library specialist at the Bentonville Public Library in Bentonville, Arkansas.

Prize-Winning Youth Books Announced

by Cassandra Barnett,

Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

The Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Arkansas State Library are pleased to announce the results of this year's voting for the Arkansas Diamond Primary Book Award and the Charlie May Simon Book Award.

37,970 kindergarten through third grade students voted for their favorite nominee from the 2023-2024 Diamond list. This year's winner is *Norman Didn't Do It! (Yes, he did.)* written and illustrated by Ryan T. Higgins, and the Honor book is *Poultrygeist* written by Eric Geron and illustrated by Pete Oswald. Congratulations to the following schools who had 100% participation of students voting:

- Crawford Elementary
- East Side Elementary
- Faulk Elementary
- Fordyce Elementary
- Jonesboro Leadership Magnet
- Magazine Elementary
- Marmaduke Elementary
- Mountain Home Kindergarten
- Morrilton Elementary
- Paris Elementary
- Pea Ridge Primary
- Pulaski Academy
- Russell D. Jones Elementary
- St. John's Catholic School
- Sugar Creek Elementary
- Trice Renaissance Elementary
- Vera Kilpatrick Elementary

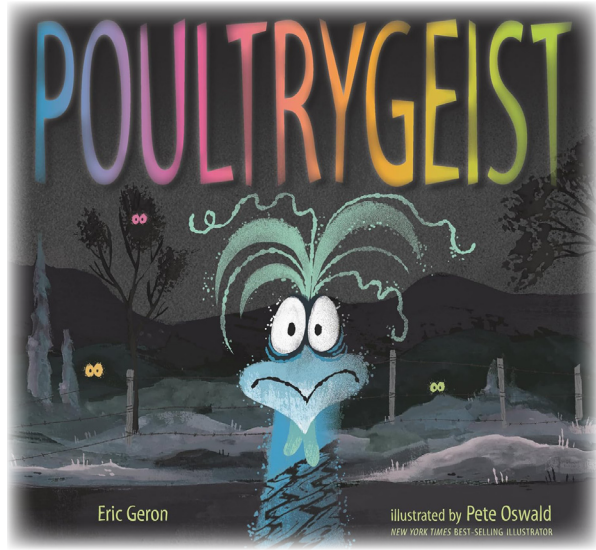
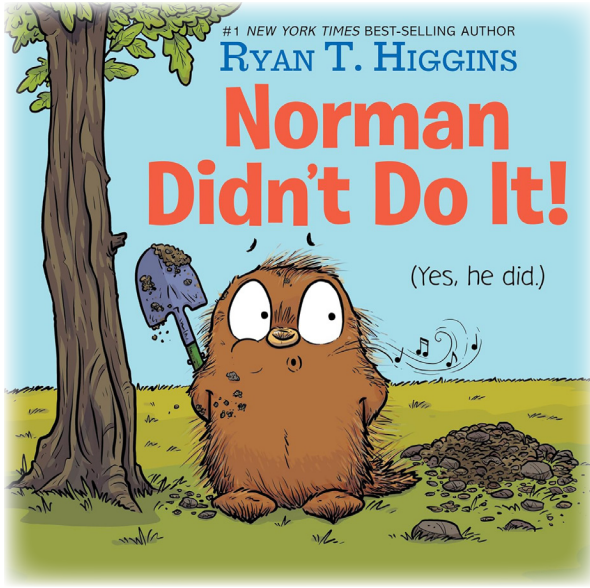
6,345 fourth through sixth grade students

voted for their favorite nominee from the 2023-2024 Charlie May Simon list. This year's winner is *Allergic* written by Megan Wagner Lloyd and illustrated by Michelle Mee Nutter, and the Honor book *Wild River* written by Rodman Philbrick. Congratulations to the following schools who had

100% participation of students voting:

- Jonesboro Leadership Magnet
- Ouachita Elementary
- Pinkston Middle

For more information contact Cassandra Barnett, Program Advisor for School Libraries, Cassandra.barnett@ade.arkansas.gov.



ALPs AT WORK:

InfoBits 2024

by Amy DeVooght, Hendrix College

May is the time for paraprofessionals to gear up for the Arkansas Library Paraprofessionals' (ALPs) day-long professional development day, InfoBits. This year, the event was held on Friday, May 17th. We moved into a new space this year, the Hillary Rodham Clinton Children's Library and Learning Center in Little Rock after having outgrown our previous location. (Special shout-out to Shya Washington, director, for letting ALPs use the library's spaces!)



DeVooght

We had a fun meet-and-greet the night before at Zaza's (dinner) and at The Painted Pig Studio (painting pottery), both in Little Rock. It was an evening of networking and relaxing. Dinner saw more attendees, while the painting session (pictured below) was a smaller, more intimate group.

We were delighted to host over forty members of ALPs this year at InfoBits! Most of our attendees

were from public libraries across Arkansas, but we had library workers from special libraries and academic libraries come to InfoBits as well. The event earned \$228 through registrations and our silent basket auction. Last year, we broke even, so this was a special surprise! All proceeds from the registration and auction were funneled back into ArLA.

This year's theme, "Adventure Begins in Your Library," certainly brought out the various adventures faced in our libraries as well as the adventures that await. John McGraw (Faulkner-



L-R: Felipe Pruneda, Karen Pruneda, Shanti J. Mitchel, and J. Jobe.

Van Buren County Library) and Clare Graham (Malvern-Hot Springs County Library) were our keynote speakers this year. They discussed Act 372 as it currently pertains to libraries around the state. McGraw and Graham also discussed the current state of the lawsuit to make changes to the existing act (which will be addressed in October of this year).

April Sheppard of Arkansas State University reprised her discussion topic from the 2023 ArLA Conference, *Adventures in Artificial Intelligence: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. This year InfoBits had two sessions on book clubs, one with the Bookworm Babes Book Club (a public book club operating out of Little Rock and active on Facebook), as well as one on book club programming for libraries with Jill Wheeler of North Little Rock's Laman Library.

Additional sessions included how to navigate health information resources with Jordan Ford from



L-R: John McGraw, Clare Graham, and Amy DeVooght.



the UAMS medical library, professional development opportunities with Janine Jamison-Miller (Arkansas State Library), as well as an LGBTQ+ presentation (just in time for Pride Month!) with J. Jobe of the Central Arkansas Library System.

The feedback for InfoBits has been positive, with people also offering suggestions on how to make next year's event even better. ALPs thanks ArLA for the opportunity to host InfoBits as a way for paraprofessionals and other library workers to network and learn from their peers.

Amy DeVooght is the circulation manager at Hendrix College's Bailey Library. She is the current chair of the ALPs Community of Interest.

The Story of a Storyteller

by *Cindy King Phillips*,
Ouachita Baptist University

When I was eight years old my younger sister, an early and voracious reader, borrowed a book of French-Canadian folktales from the school library at McCrory Elementary. She was so delighted by those tales that she immediately told them to me with great enthusiasm. We were sitting on the black and white shag carpet in our old living room when I heard the tale of "Scurvyhead" for the first time, not read, but spoken in my sister's own words. The spell was cast, and it settled into my bones. I've been craving stories ever since. My need for stories led to a love of reading. But every time I had an opportunity to listen to a storyteller, the feeling of enchantment returned. It took three decades before it occurred to me that I could be a story *teller*, as well as a story listener. It was guilt that gave me the final nudge.

Halloween parties were a big deal at our house when my children were young. Orange and black construction paper pennants swayed above the living room. Our table held up green slime punch and bat-shaped brownies. String lights and paper lanterns lit the backyard for boisterous games. And of course there had to be a spooky story or two, told around a campfire! I asked my English-professor friend, a natural raconteuse, to tell us scary tales. She showed up, in costume, and performed stories which she'd altered to be more fun and participatory than the originals. I knew enough about storytelling back then to realize how much time and effort she'd put into it. It was amazing and wonderful, but it was also too much to ask of my friend mid-semester when she had *so many papers* to grade. For the future I resolved to find and learn spooky stories that I could tell.

I was at this time working toward an MLIS degree through Florida State University, and I took a class on storytelling with Dr. Christie Koontz.

Although we did talk about traditional storytelling, the course covered the topic more broadly. Seeking more in-depth practical instruction, I turned to books. Enter the wonderful and generous storyteller-writer-librarian Margaret Read MacDonald, who writes the most accessible books for beginning storytellers, including but not limited to *The Storyteller's Start-Up Book: Finding, Learning, Performing and Using Folktales*. Like her many other helpful collections, this title holds twenty tried-and-true tales in a tellable format with detailed source notes and excellent bibliographies. Ms. MacDonald encourages aspiring storytellers with practical, digestible advice, which boils down to this: Just go do it; there is no substitute for experience, and you WILL get better. This turned out to be true! But first I had to find some listeners on which to practice regularly. Halloween doesn't happen nearly often enough.

The teachers who taught my own children in early elementary school welcomed me back into their classrooms to try telling stories. At first I told one story each month. I have never felt like a "natural" storyteller. I spent a lot of time learning and practicing stories. Not everything worked as I expected. There were flops and mis-steps, and sometimes the humor didn't land, but most of the time the stories were happily received. As one third-grader said to me recently through his smiling applause, "We are NOT a tough audience!" Many of the listeners, even in the beginning, seemed to get pulled into the stories just as I had been all those years ago when my sister shared tales of Petit Jean. So I kept trying, slowly adding to my repertoire, believing that experience would make me a better

storyteller, if never a professional one. Eventually, I felt ready to share stories every two weeks. And now, after ten years, I tell stories every week, in as many classrooms as will open their doors.

But, you might well ask, Why? Why spend so much time and effort when there are thousands of beautiful books to read aloud, when there are excellent films and other high-quality recorded media conveying wonderful stories at our fingertips? Why volunteer hours and hours at something for which there has been no request, no expressed need? Why *am* I always talking about storytelling, looking for new stories and working at learning to tell them? Because it is absolutely joyful. And there is a need for storytelling, we've just forgotten about it. It is currently overshadowed by the dazzling convenience of mass media, but storytelling has been with us for a long, long time. Probably since the beginning, people gathered in small groups around firelight and listened to each other's stories, learned from each other, laughed together, and built community. The sharing of stories connects us, and in our current digital world of isolating and divisive "social" media, more human connection seems like a really good idea. The ancient technology of storytelling provides a connective, shared experience. There is something magical about the way young listeners dive headfirst into the centuries-old tales I tell. The joy they find in them makes me want to bring more.

Without the buffer of a book between teller and listener, storytelling is intimate and interactive in a way that reading is not. When a story is told, the teller and the listeners create the story together. We go on the same journey, getting into scrapes, facing



Storytelling on Halloween.

down monsters, and solving problems, but it looks slightly different in each individual's imagination. Young listeners feel the stories intensely. They empathize with imagined characters. I look into their faces, and I see them going with me on the journey, feeling scared or excited or outraged or amused, thinking ahead a little to what must happen next. When they occupy the imaginary realm of story, children become completely unselfconscious. They sing and chant with me, they crow like roosters or rattle like rattlesnakes, they stomp and clap and howl like coyotes, and we all enjoy ourselves very much.

Storytelling allows struggling and non-readers to experience what those of us who love to read call "getting lost in" a good book. When they relax and listen, the words are effortlessly transformed into vivid scenes that play out in their own wonderful imaginations. Because their imaging engines are churning at full capacity, young listeners tend to remember and re-tell the stories. I know this because they tell me about it later. "I tell all my little cousins that story with the baby," a third grader reported, two years after she heard me tell it. And this year, after Halloween, a sweet six-year-old girl held on to my hand to say, "I loved that ghost story you told us. I told my mama and all her co-workers at the Waffle House, and they loved it, too!" Hearing about their re-tellings warms my heart and makes me want to continue working at this storytelling thing even more.

Slow and steadfast, like the tortoise, working at it outside of my paid jobs, I've become the middle-level storyteller: no longer a novice, but not yet a professional. Progress! I am not planning to quit my day job, but I secretly wish I could. How fun it

would be to travel around Arkansas sharing the joy of storytelling. To my astonishment, I got to live a little bit of that dream last year when the SEARK Concert Association hired me to tell stories to early elementary students in Monticello. In preparation for that event, I took time off from my regular work, and I rehearsed and rehearsed. It was the first time anyone offered to pay me to tell stories. I did not want to disappoint them! I think it worked. I have been invited back to tell stories in additional schools in the region this November. The chance to introduce the idea of storytelling to more children feels like a gift. I'll be spending time this summer digging through folktale collections, looking for the right stories to tell, listening to my favorite storytellers, and looking forward to telling the old tales to new listeners come September.

Cindy Phillips grew up in eastern Arkansas on a family farm where she and her sister played outside all day and made a whole lot of mud pies. Her parents sent her to Hendrix College back in 1987, for which she is eternally grateful. A love of learning led to further degrees, and now she works part-time as a music librarian at Ouachita Baptist University. She has been telling folktales and fairy tales to children in Arkadelphia since 2013. She loves to talk about storytelling, so if you want to connect with her or have her visit your library, please contact her at cindykingphillips@gmail.com.



Storytelling to first grade students in Monticello.

ARKANSAS BOOKS & AUTHORS
by *Jasmine Jobe & Beth Stewart*

The Perfect Summer Read: *Cicadas Sing of Summer Graves*

Cicadas Sing of Summer Graves is a modern southern gothic novel with a heavy dose of magical realism. This debut novel was cowritten by Alexandra Cronin and Robyn Barrow under the pen name Quinn Connor. The story was inspired by Barrow's childhood weekends spent on Lake Ouachita and Cronin's family time spent on Cedar Creek Lake in Texas. The final product is a book that is literary, spooky, delicate, and insightful. But lest the reader fear this book be "only" a gorgeous, magical tale with a delightfully gay slant, these authors also treat honestly and thoughtfully with a fraught and complex history.

As stated in the author's note preceding the novel proper, "The town of Prosper was inspired by Buckville, Arkansas, which was flooded in the 1950s by the Blakely Mountain Dam and is now beneath Lake Ouachita. The upper Ouachita valley is a part of the homelands of the Indigenous Caddo Nation, which has been systematically displaced by settlers for hundreds of years. The dam resulted in the mass dislocation of Garland County residents, mainly struggling white farmers but also many who were



Jobe

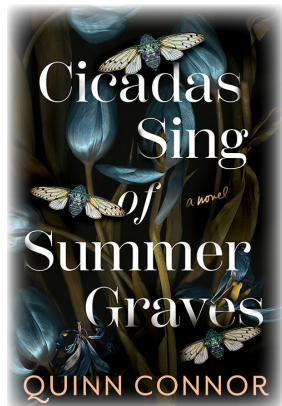


Quinn Connor

Black and Native American, from their homes."

The book follows three main characters, all young women in their twenties. Cassie, half Syrian and half Irish, is a quiet, all-American girl beekeeper and small business owner – she runs her grandfather's antique shop, a local tourist attraction. She sleeps in her parked RV rather than the double-wide mobile home of her childhood, which may or may not be mildly haunted. She grew up with Mom, younger brother Bolt, and Grandad, with whom she was close. Grandad remembered the town before the dam, learned to box like Jermain Taylor in the army, flew a Dauntless in World War II, and taught Cassie to fix things and value objects with history. When he died, he left her his shop and his few acres of land.

Cassie has a deep fear of the water, although she still lives on Lake Prosper and thinks back fondly on her early swimming experiences with



her childhood friend, a deeply tanned older girl and talented swimmer nicknamed Catfish. Cassie sells the honey from her beekeeping at her grandad's shop and also shares it with Valerie for her famous honey pies; she thinks of the honey she collects as widely varied in complexity as wine – some dark, some light, some flavored with wildflowers or clover. An

introvert through and through, Cassie thinks, "when she couldn't find the words for what she felt, the language of bees sufficed." While classic Victorian novels use weather to reflect the feelings of the main characters, Connor cleverly uses the moods of the bees to reflect Cassie's inner turmoil. After a strained visit with Mom, "a pair of bees returned to sit on her sill... a benevolent sign of the natural state restored" – a play on the official state nickname.

The second main character is a pink-haired girl named Lark. She is introduced to the reader driving the highway at night through the Arkansas Delta. She leaves Memphis and then the city of Charlene behind her as she heads into unincorporated Prosper. She passes deer and a shop advertising Arkansas quartz for sale. The reader learns that Lark is going on this trip solo because her mom is taking care of her dad in Hot Springs (Garland County). She is here to address a chore they have all been avoiding, to "settle the boat and the collection." Lark has to clean out the countless telescopes of her father's colossal collection on the boat where he literally went insane. Already a daunting task due to the sheer volume of telescopes he has amassed, Lark also has the uncanny sense that all those spyglasses are watching

her. Sometimes they even spin on their tripod stands, like weathervanes foretelling a storm. She looks through one and sees something unexplainable, which starts her having bad dreams and fearing she will go crazy just like her dad did.

The third main character of the novel is June, who starts out the story travelling by bus on an extremely rainy night. She is leaving Chicago, a dead-end job, and a relationship gone bad. She has a wanderlust that is palpable and she is full of chaotic energy. Her mom calls her “Hurricane June.” June is half Black, half white, and often mistaken for Latina. She stops at the church of her Aunt Eliza, whom June remembers fondly as a second mom to her during her childhood in Texarkana (Miller County). Eliza has been inspired to run the church in Prosper after their great-grandfather, whose church is buried “somewhere under the lake.”

While June and Eliza do chores together, Aunt Eliza sings B. B. King and Howlin’ Wolf, even surprising June by recalling a stint of her niece doing college radio. Eliza considers the differences and similarities between great-grandfather being “pastor for the Black folks’ church” versus her own congregation being a weird combination of poor locals and rich tourists.

June visits a local bar called The Mosquito Bite on the verge between the road and the water’s edge. She meets a group of four locals “with sunburned faces and scraggly beards.” These four old men reveal some of the history of the town, and might be ghosts themselves, or something like it. They say the dam was built in 1920 or 1930, or even as late as 1940, around the time of “that big sickness,” which is revealed to be yellow fever.

Are these four men ghosts? June compares being in the bar to being underwater, “as if they had all already drowned, only none of them knew it.” One speaker’s age is undeterminable, another’s bottle is dusty and his shirt faded. Another’s food looks green in the light. When they leave, they’re described as floating and drifting, much like ghosts or driftwood. One reviewer refers to this foursome as the novel’s Greek chorus.

The traits of the main characters overlap: quiet Cassie and helpful Lark are both described as imaginative, while Cassie’s night terrors and June’s mania had both their mothers labeling them as difficult children. The book features realistically complicated relationships between mothers and daughters and the graceful reprieve of loving aunts. Villains of the story include Jeff Daley – local ambitious chain store owner and newcomer to Prosper’s marina from nearby Charlene – and, to a lesser degree, his son. A second storyline follows Cassie’s younger brother Bolt, and his friends, as they, too, get caught up in the magic and danger of the town’s old secrets. Meanwhile, a sweet romance blossoms between Lark and June.

Lark’s Aunt Valerie and cousin Mitch own and operate The Grand Destiny Resort, a local motel complete with swimming pool, market, and restaurant. Cassie is unobtrusively in love with Mitch, who she’s known all her life. Oblivious gentle giant that he is, Mitch is back home after an engagement did not work out in Little Rock (Pulaski County).

Over the course of the story, as murky details of the town’s demise come to light, June must contend with the pyrotechnic fireworks man, Jack, who offers to mentor her. Ultimately June must decide if she will use her special gifts for destruction or creation. Cassie will have to face her fear of the water and what really happened between her and her childhood swimmer friend. And Lark will discover the truth of what irreparably damaged her father.-

Cicadas Sing of Summer Graves was published May 30, 2023, by Sourcebooks Landmark. The authors celebrated its release with an appearance that day at WordsWorth Books in Little Rock. The audiobook was published by Tantor Audio and was narrated by Marnye Young.

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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.

Black Women’s Activism in Rural Twentieth Century Arkansas: *Better Living by Their Own Bootstraps*

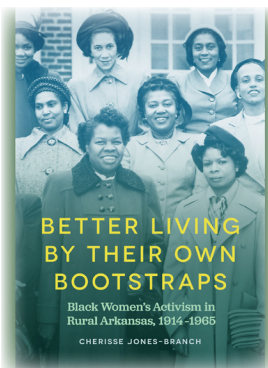
Better Living by Their Own Bootstraps examines the role of Black women in Arkansas during the early twentieth century and how they used the

limited resources they had to improve the lives of people living in rural Black communities. Author Cherrisse Jones-Branch, Graduate School Dean and Professor of History at Arkansas State University, discusses the active role that Black women played through government mandated groups, political organizations, and community created clubs to bring educational and vocational resources to rural Black communities. The book focuses on the Arkansas delta region along Arkansas's eastern border. In each chapter the reader is introduced to individual Black women who made a difference in rural Black communities.



Stewart

Better Living by Their Own Bootstraps begins by discussing the role of Jeanes Supervising Industrial



Teachers in the early twentieth century who worked in southern rural schools and communities. This group of teachers was funded by an endowment by Pennsylvania Quaker Anna T. Jeanes to support rural Black education in cooperation with white state and county school officials. Educated Black women were often selected to serve as Jeanes

Supervisors in rural Black communities. Jeanes Supervisors were tasked with providing a better education including agricultural and domestic arts to these communities. They also encouraged rural Black community members to adopt better health, home, and farming practices. Ila Upchurch, a Jeanes Supervisor in Nevada County, was a member of the Arkansas Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers (ACCPT) and later the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She was a firm believer in the education of Black communities to improve lives. The Jeanes Supervisor program ended in Arkansas by 1950 but there were other groups that were working to improve rural Black communities.

One of the other groups that Jones-Branch discusses is home demonstration agents. Home demonstration agents were trained and employed by state agricultural extension agencies. The agents went out into rural communities to teach domestic science skills. Mary Lee McCrary Ray was appointed the first Black home demonstration agent in Arkansas in 1916. During the early twentieth century through

World War II, Arkansas was losing a large portion of its rural population to Northward migration. In rural communities this often meant a large loss of its agricultural workforce including Black farmers. A major goal of the home demonstration agents was to teach rural communities about domestic arts and sciences, nutrition, food preservation, hygiene, and agricultural advancements to try and improve their lives to keep them from leaving the state. Black women would participate in county fairs to exhibit the new skills they learned such as food preservation. The flood of 1927 brought devastation to the Arkansas delta and rural Black communities were hit the hardest. Not only did they face the devastation from the flood, but from the predominantly white government as well. To be able to obtain food donations they had to prove that they had helped control flood damage. Red Cross items for sale were also marked up in price to be sold to Black communities. This strengthened the resolve of rural Black communities that they needed to continue to fight to improve their situation. Home demonstration clubs began to develop where rural Black women could come together to learn domestic skills. They were an all-female space that was safe for them to socialize, discuss issues with health, family, and children as well as develop their own leadership skills. Black women began to form political groups. The Arkansas Association of Colored Women (AACW) was connected to the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and used their resources to advocate for women's and Black people's suffrage in Arkansas. Members of the AACW worked with home demonstration agents and clubs and Jeanes Supervisors to enact rural school, health, and sanitation improvements. One of their major issues was the establishment of an industrial school for Black girls in Arkansas.



Cherrisse Jones-Branch

During World War II, agrarian women understood their critical roles and the patriotic duty as farmers to shore up the nation's food security. Black women were key to helping this effort. They would "mend and make do" and teach other Black women in rural communities these skills. Demonstration agents in rural Black communities understood their importance in keeping people working on farms instead of moving to cities and they provided programs to help community members endure in rural Arkansas. Groups continued to develop in rural Black communities in the state. The Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation Negro Division (ARFBF) was formed after the war. Leoda

Berry-Gammon was the wife of ARFBF Negro Division president John Henry Gammon Jr. She was a home demonstration agent and dedicated to equal educational opportunities for rural Black citizens. She was an active member of the NAACP and Democratic Party member. Leoda and other Black women were important to recruitment to the ARFBF's Negro Division due to their close ties to the rural communities. In 1935, the Cotton Makers Jubilee was founded to highlight cotton production and African Americans' agricultural contributions. It established the Spirit of Cotton Pageant to celebrate Black women's beauty and talents.

Black home demonstration agents and club members continued to serve their communities and push for equality in Black communities during the 1950s. They continued to focus on food insecurity and poor health care in rural Black communities but also on voting rights. They worked with state and national groups to increase resources in rural Arkansas including the installation of telephones and electricity in Black communities. Some Black women activists engaged in rural religious activism through the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America (NCC). The NCC believed that rural people needed moral direction as well as economic assistance. Ethel B. Dawson of Lincoln County encouraged her community to take responsibility for improving their conditions and accessing their right to full citizenship. Dawson taught rural Blacks not only the same skills as home demonstration agents but also imparted important political education in the community. While many Black demonstration agents worked for the Arkansas Agricultural Cooperative Extension Service (AACES), they were not allowed to become members of the National Home Demonstration Agents' Association (NHDA). In 1957, Black women formed the National Negro Home Demonstration Agents' Association (NNHDA).

After the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the home demonstration agents' associations were merged although it was not an equal integration. Many Black women found their qualifications questioned by white home demonstration agents. The number of Black women members began to decline because they were unwelcome in the new integrated clubs.

In the final chapter of the book, Dr. Jones-Branch examines the life of Ms. Annie Zachary Pike, a Black woman farmer whose life as an activist at the state, local, and national levels influenced monumental change in rural Arkansas and the nation. Ms. Annie was the first African American to be appointed to any state board in the twentieth century when Governor Winthrop Rockefeller appointed her to the Arkansas state welfare board in 1967. She was a rural Black woman, homemaker, farmer, and politician all at the same time. As Dr. Jones-Branch shows in *Better Living by Their Own Bootstraps*, Black women in rural Arkansas organized on their own around issues that impacted their communities to ensure that African Americans were able to provide a better living for themselves and others in their community.

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

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WHAT'S UP? DOCS. Government Docs Column Revival! by *Dominique Hallett*, Arkansas State University

The June 2003 issue of *Arkansas Libraries*, debuted the column "What's up? Docs." It was written by one of my mentors – Karen Russ. Many of you may remember her. Sadly, she passed away on December 15, 2017, and government information has not been the same in Arkansas



Hallett

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since. While there are other documents librarians, none are such a driving force as Karen. I hope that I can do her justice by reopening this column, breathing new life into it, and raising government information awareness for librarians and libraries in the state.

Karen's first column was primarily introducing herself and giving an overview of her plans for the column. I will adopt this same idea here. I am Dominique Hallett, the Government Information librarian at Arkansas State University, Jonesboro. I have been in this position since July 2014. As Karen stated in her inaugural column, "The goal

in creating this column was to help everyone in Arkansas libraries navigate the world of government information, especially now that so much of it is available for free on the internet.”

It seems appropriate to take this on now for three reasons. First, the Government Publishing Office has moved to an almost entirely online format for Federal Depository Libraries, (<https://www.fdlp.gov/project-list/digital-fdlp-implementation>), and second, a library does not need to be a depository to access government information. Third, I have nearly ten years of experience as a documents librarian, so I finally feel I have enough knowledge to contribute in a small way on the state level.

The U.S. government is the world’s largest publisher, and my goal is to share different documents, websites, and resources you might find useful in your libraries. Each column will focus on a different publication/tool and offer insight into how it might be useful to you in your library. While I already have a list of topics, I am asking you to share any topic or tool you might want to know more about. In the world of government information, there is something for everyone – at every level and type of library. Please email me if you have suggestions for column topics or any questions about government information in general. My email is dhallett@astate.edu.

I am writing this in spring, but I am guessing this will be just a bit late for most of you. One of the most dreaded days of the year is April 15 (or thereabout, depending on the year) – tax filing day. Fortunately, the IRS has a well-organized website with the information needed to file personal, business, and other types of taxes. Their website

(<https://www.irs.gov/filing>) gives information for various groups. This website is also translated into multiple languages – a boon for helping patrons who are not primarily English speakers!

For individuals, there is information on who needs to file, what documents you need, forms you need to fill out, when to file, where to file, various credit and deduction information, and even who is eligible to free-file and how to do that. There is also information about filing electronically.

Forms are there along with extensive guidance for businesses. Charity and nonprofit tax forms and information are also available. If you have a patron who is an expat or a foreign national with income in the U.S., the forms are on the IRS website.

Most of the forms are just a few pages long, so if your library allows printing, it doesn’t use up many resources. The exception to this is the instruction books. For individuals, the instructions for the current 1040 form are 114 pages long, so keep that in mind before printing. The link for the actual forms is <https://www.irs.gov/forms-instructions>, with the most common forms at the top. You can also download/print prior year’s forms.

That’s enough for my first column. I hope you enjoyed it. If you have any questions about government information or suggestions for topics, feel free to reach out – I look forward to hearing from you!

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

2024 ArLA Award & Scholarship Nominations

by Judy Calhoun, Awards Chair and Lacy Wolfe, Scholarships Chair

ArLA Awards

Do you know an Arkansas librarian who has made an impact this year at their library? Are you an Arkansas librarian who has demonstrated a special commitment to the profession? Nominate them or yourself for a 2024 ArLA Award! The Arkansas Library Association has a number of awards suitable for recognizing the work of Arkansas librarians. The awards ceremony at our fall conference in Hot Springs is the perfect way to recognize colleagues for their hard work and positive contributions to the library profession in our state. The following awards will be presented at conference:

- The **Ann Lightsey Children’s Librarian Award**

recognizes a current or recently retired children’s librarian who has provided dedicated and exceptional service to Arkansas’ young people through a public or school library.

- The **Arkansiana Award** is given to the author(s) of a book or other work which represents a significant contribution to Arkansas heritage and culture.
- The **Arkansas Intellectual Freedom Award** recognizes an individual or a group that have made significant contributions in support of intellectual freedom on behalf of a library in Arkansas.
- The **Bessie B. Moore Trustee Award** is given annually to an individual trustee or a board of trustees that have made a substantial contribution to the development of a library at the local,

regional, or state level.

- An annual **Distinguished Service Award** recognizes an outstanding achievement in a specific area of librarianship by an Arkansas library employee.
- The **Francis P. Neal Award** recognizes a career of notable service in Arkansas librarianship by a library worker who is retired or no longer working in libraries.
- The **Lorrie Shuff Paraprofessional Award** is awarded to an individual for distinguished service as a paraprofessional library worker.
- The **Retta Patrick Award** recognizes an individual Arkansas librarian who has made an outstanding state or national contribution to school librarianship and/or school library development.
- The **Rising Star Award** is given to an individual who has been a library worker for less than five years and who has provided exceptional service to their library community.
- The **Suzanne Spurrier Academic Librarian Award** recognizes a currently employed academic librarian who exemplifies a spirit of outstanding service and dedicated professionalism.

Any Arkansas library employee or library-affiliated person such as a trustee can nominate a colleague for an ArLA Award. Full eligibility and awards criteria can be found at <https://arlib.org/membership/awards>. To nominate someone, please fill out the nomination form located on the awards page. **Deadline is August 16th**. If you have any

questions about eligibility, criteria, or the nomination process please contact Awards Committee Chair, Judy Calhoun at director@searlibrary.org.

Scholarships

Each year the Arkansas Library Association invites applications for its annual scholarship for graduate study in librarianship. The Arkansas Library Association will select one scholarship recipient each year from a pool of eligible applicants. Criteria for selection include:

- 1) the applicant's interest in librarianship as a profession
- 2) academic record
- 3) compliance with application requirements

Awards are made without regard to race, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnic background. The Scholarship Committee encourages a higher standard of professional education for libraries in Arkansas by awarding scholarships and soliciting contributions to the scholarship fund. For more information and to apply, visit <https://arlib.org/Scholarship-Committee>. Please contact Lacy Wolfe, lacy.wolfe@lamanlibrary.org, chair, for more information. The application deadline is **September 1, 2024**, and the scholarship recipient will be announced at the Awards Dinner during the conference.

The ArLA Awards Dinner is scheduled to be Saturday, October 5, at 6 pm in the Hot Springs Convention Center. Guest tickets will be available for purchase on the ArLA conference website: <https://arlib.org/page-18246>.

Talk to the Scientist! The Ultimate Primary Source

by Darcy Pattison,

MimsHouseBooks.com

I'm the author of 24 children's nonfiction picture books, mostly about STEM topics. Most of the books require me to talk with a research scientist. Often, their stories are more fascinating than the topic I'm researching.



Pattison

The Galapagos Herpetologist – Why Interview a Scientist?

The giant tortoise stood on the edge of a raging stream. The young research scientist, Linda Cayot was observing, watching to see what the tortoise would do in this wet weather. Flash floods had turned the tropical island into a maze of streams, run off from the storms.

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Another Extraordinary Animal series. Link to: <https://mimshousebooks.com/collections/animal>



The tortoise stepped forward and, without warning, the water swept him away. Linda dashed forward, trying to see where the tortoise was headed. Down. The island's hillsides dropped off steeply. She hesitated only an instance. She couldn't lose track of this tortoise. Her foot slipped into the water, and whoosh! The current caught her, and she plunged downward, her backpack slapping against stones.

When I interviewed Linda Cayot, Ph.D, the leading herpetologist in the Galápagos Islands for four decades, that memory of rashly jumping into a flash food stream to follow the tortoise was one of her favorite memories. She brought her 40 years of experience to a book *Galápagos Giant Tortoises (Biodiversity of the World: Conservation from Genes to Landscapes)* by James P. Gibbs; Linda J. Cayot; Washington Tapia A. It's a 1000-page ebook for which I paid \$90! But it's the definitive book about the tortoises. And before I interview a scientist, I need to learn everything I can about their work. An interview shouldn't be about the basic science, but about the scientists' work with their topic or subjects.

She was invaluable to writing *DIEGO, THE*



San Diego male tortoise returning to the Galápagos Islands to be part of the tortoise breeding program for the Española Island species.

GALÁPAGOS GIANT TORTOISE: Saving a Species from Extinction. She untangled the nuances of working with several conservation agencies, the unraveled the complexities of the tortoise breeding requirements, and provided rare photos from a lifetime of work in the Galápagos. She allowed me to interview her by Zoom, vetted the manuscript, and saw the book receive a starred Kirkus review before she passed away.

Linda's information was vital to the story, and the accuracy of the information. The Española Island tortoises were down to just 14 individuals, almost extinct. The herpetologists sent messages throughout the world asking if anyone had another tortoise of this species. Amazingly, they found one in the San Diego Zoo. When the tortoise was returned to the Tortoise Breeding Facility, he was named Diego. Linda provided photos of Diego from the time he first stepped foot back in the Galápagos. And details about the forty years it took to save this species from extinction.

Midway Island Scientists: Scientists Add Details

Contacting scientists can be straightforward or convoluted. When I contacted the scientist on Midway Island about a Laysan albatross, it was easy. I found his information online, emailed him and set up a phone call. The result was *WISDOM, THE MIDWAY ALBATROSS: Surviving the Japanese Tsunami and Other Disasters for Over 60 Years.*

Imagine this: on March 11, 2011, the radio has reported that a tsunami struck Japan, damaging a nuclear plant, killing thousands, and devastating the area. The tsunami wave was traveling across the Pacific Ocean. Calculations on the tsunami's speed put it at Midway Island about midnight. If you were a scientist stationed on Midway Island, what would you do? Especially considering that the island is barely above sea level.

Scientist Pete Leary said they did the only thing they could do: they climbed to the top of the old army barracks and huddled together, waiting for the tsunami to hit. The scariest thing, he said, was that the tsunami wave hit about midnight when they could hear the water rushing in, but they couldn't see it. That detail made the danger more poignant!

The morning sun revealed devastation across the island. Over 11,000 chicks and 2,000 adult Laysan albatrosses were dead. Midway Island is the major breeding ground for this albatross species, so this was devastating news. Nesting on the island was the oldest known wild bird, Wisdom, a Laysan Albatross. When they checked her nest, her chick

was there—alive. But Wisdom was missing.

A week went by. No Wisdom. Eight days. No Wisdom. Nine days. No Wisdom. Finally, on March 20, the answer came: scientists spotted Wisdom feeding her chick. This story was only possible because of Pete Leary’s phone interview.

Live Animal Experiences on the International Space Station: Favorite Interview

One of my favorite experiences was to interview an astronaut. *NEFERTITI, THE SPIDERNAUT: The Jumping Spider Who Learned to Hunt in Space* is the true story of a spider that went to space on the International Space Station (ISS). First, I went to Colorado Springs and interviewed Stephanie Countryman, the person responsible for all live animal experiments on the ISS. She showed me prototypes of the spider habitat and explained the whole process. Vital information!

But then, she offered to have the astronaut Captain Sunita Williams call me. Notice that this time, I didn’t get contact information! Instead, Captain Williams called me. We spoke for about five minutes in-between meetings at SpaceX. But her information was crucial.

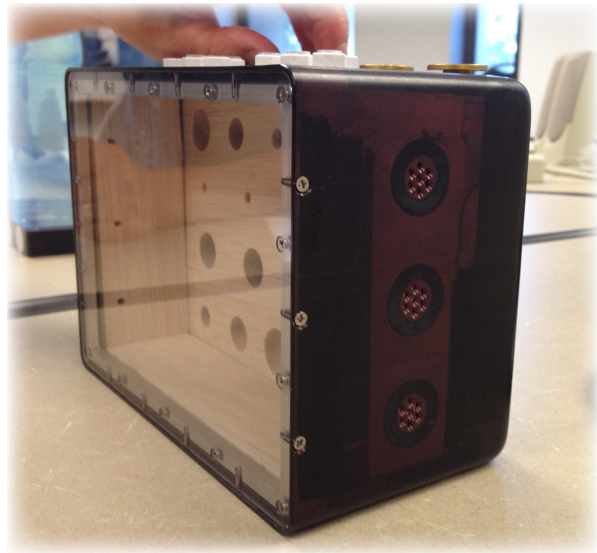
We quickly discussed the science experiment involving Nefertiti, the Johnson jumping spider. Then, Williams said that after the experiment she was supposed to just put the spider habitat back in storage to return to Earth. In other words, the spider would die in the dark. Instead, she put the habitat beside her workstation. It was fascinating, she said,



Author Darcy Pattison and scientist Stephanie Countryman discuss the jumping spider that went to space on the International Space Station. Photo by Dwight Pattison.

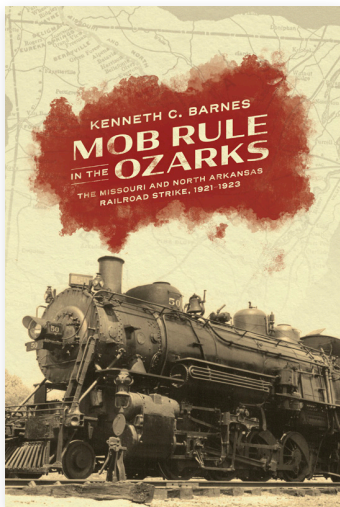
to look over and see Nefertiti watching her work. Nefertiti’s eyes would track her movements. It’s a small detail! But it helped bring the story to life.

Throughout my career as a children’s book author, I’ve had many delightful interviews with scientists. It’s a privilege to bring their stories to life in a book. I love putting a book in a kids hands that I know has solid science and a great story about a hardworking scientist.



Prototype for the spider habitat to be used on the International Space Station. Photo by Dwight Pattison.

Children’s book author and indie publisher Darcy Pattison has written over seventy award-winning fiction and non-fiction books for children. Five books have received starred PW, Kirkus, or BCCB reviews, and Pattison has received several awards, including ArLA’s Arkansiana Award. Just after her tenth birthday, Darcy’s family drove from New Mexico across Texas and Oklahoma and hit the Arkansas state line at Siloam Springs, where she discovered the color green. Since then, she’s made her home in Arkansas, where she has floated the Buffalo River, explored wild caves, hiked trails on Mount Magazine, and skied Lake Ouachita. She can often be found riding her bicycle on the Arkansas River Trail. Writing FRIDAY COMES ON TUESDAY for Alice Walton and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art remains a highlight of her career.



Mob Rule in the Ozarks

The Missouri and North Arkansas Railroad Strike, 1921-1923

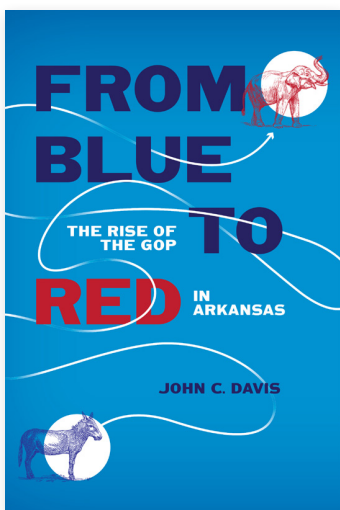
Kenneth C. Barnes

“Mob Rule in the Ozarks is a rare achievement, a page-turning, blood-boiling work of history that pulls the hoods off the architects of past vigilante violence to help us understand our perilous present moment.”

—Guy Lancaster

October 2024

Paper \$24.95, Cloth \$39.95



From Blue to Red

The Rise of the GOP in Arkansas

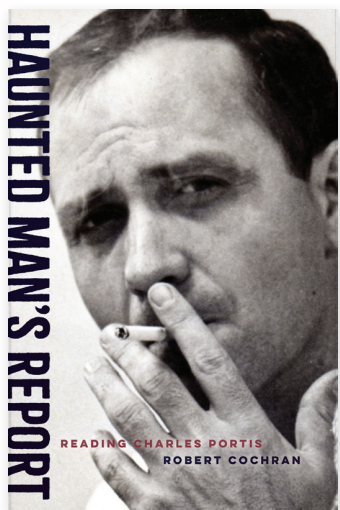
John C. Davis

“From Blue to Red provides a new view on the shifting partisan behavior within the South by looking at the uniqueness of the state of Arkansas. John C. Davis uses interviews, historical overview, and voting data to explore the trends that began in the 1970s but did not culminate until years after the Reagan administration. This is a story worth exploring.”

—Pearl K. Ford Dowe

February 2024

Cloth \$34.95



Haunted Man's Report

Reading Charles Portis

Robert Cochran

“Cochran’s volume gathers a great deal of scrupulous research, and even some portion of psycho-biographical speculation, into a persuasive close reading of five novels, plus journalism, a short story, and Portis’s single stage play. Cochran brings to light both the sidelong historical ruminations and the sorrowful depths of feeling that admirers have always sensed moving beneath the picaresque plots and the insouciant breezes of Portis’s prose.”

—Jonathan Lethem, *The New York Review of Books*

April 2024

Paper \$25.95, Cloth \$39.95

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TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Generative AI: A Journey from the Past to the Future

by F. Tracy Farmer, Arkansas State University

One of the hottest technologies over the last couple of years is generative AI. All the major players have their versions. Google has Gemini, Facebook has Meta AI, and Microsoft has Copilot. These are just a few of the numerous generative AI engines available, but probably the best known is OpenAI's ChatGPT. If you have not played with generative AI, I suggest you do so. I would recommend starting with ChatGPT. You'll be entertained, and maybe even a little amazed, as to the answers you will receive to your questions.

But after the new wears off, you might be like me and wonder if generative AI is truly new technology or even AI. So, before we delve further into the topic, let's define a couple of terms. First, let's define AI. The acronym AI stands for artificial intelligence, but what does that mean? The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) defines artificial intelligence as "(1) [a] branch of computer science devoted to developing data processing systems that perform functions normally associated with human intelligence, such as reasoning, learning, and self-improvement. (2) The capability of a device to perform functions that are normally associated with human intelligence such as reasoning, learning, and self-improvement" (Computer Security Division, 2019). There are many words in the definition, but what does it mean? AI can be thought of as machines that think, reason, and learn independently. If you are a *Star Trek: The Next Generation* fan, think of the android Mr. Data.

Amazon defines generative AI as a powerful type of AI that can create new content and ideas, including conversations, stories, images, videos, and music (*What Is Generative AI?*, n.d.). Generative AI, with its historical context, is not just a modern technology but a continuation of a fascinating journey. It can be traced back to the mid-1960s when Joseph Weizenbaum at MIT developed the ELIZA program. This historical connection adds depth and intrigue to our understanding of generative AI (Weizenbaum, 1966, p. 36). In its simplest version, ELIZA is nothing more than a natural language



Farmer

processor where an end-user enters a statement or question via the keyboard. ELIZA parses the input string and splits it into words based on the assumption that spaces indicate word breaks. Stopwords are ignored during the string parsing. ELIZA then applies transformation rules developed by the programmer, with the transformation rule containing a weight for the given word.

For example, let us assume the end-user enters the string "I am sad today." The following weights might be applied: 'I' has a weight of 1, 'sad' has a weight of 3, and 'today' has a weight of 2. The word 'am' is a stopword with no associated weight. It will be ignored during the parsing phase. ELIZA parses the input string into the tokens 'I,' 'sad,' and 'today.' Next, the tokens are sorted by weight, giving us an order of 'sad,' 'today,' and 'I.' Next, the transformation rules are applied. For simplicity, we will assume this instance of the ELIZA always responds with a question to the user's input. Let's also consider that the developer of this particular instance of ELIZA is somewhat lazy and only constructed one transformation rule for converting the word 'I' to 'you' and prepending the phrase 'What makes' to the transformed 'I.' Since the words 'sad' and 'today' do not have associated transformation rules, those words are left alone. ELIZA would return the phrase 'What makes you sad today?' to the end-user. Does the output from ELIZA seem familiar? The output should be familiar if you have tried any GPT-based generative AI tools.

Now that we have seen where we came from, let's examine where we are today. Before we go any further, we need to define two acronyms: LLM and GPT. The abbreviation "GPT stands for Generative Pre-Trained Transformer" (Bodungen & Crow, 2024, p. 1), and the abbreviation LLM stands for large language model (Bodungen & Crow, 2024, p. 1). Why are these acronyms significant? Our current generative AI tools, like ChatGPT, rely on both concepts to function. As stated, LLM stands for large language model, but what does that entail? For librarians, LLMs should be a familiar concept. We have been using LLMs for as long as librarians have existed, but under a different name. Librarians know LLMs as knowledge domains. However for our discussion of generative AI, LLMs are the large datasets used to train the generative AI. Generative AI tools transform the data in their LLM using custom-built GPTs. So, it is easy to see that generative AI is familiar. Generative AI is a rebranded, more sophisticated version of Weizenbaum's work from the mid-1960s.

While the idea behind generative AI is familiar,

it is worth exploring and using. Despite this, the end-user must be aware of the system's limitations. Generative AI systems can suffer from the concept of hallucination, providing responses that incorporate fabricated data that appear authentic (*Generative AI Hallucinations*, 2023). Users should be cautious about this fabricated data, which can manifest as citations for nonexistent sources, false facts, or complete gibberish. Depending on the training data, these systems can also suffer from bias. For example, if the system is trained using highly racist data, the system will appear to be racist with the results returned. While speaking of training data, the end-user should also know the cutoff date for the data used. For example, the free version of ChatGPT's cutoff date for the training data is January 2022 (OpenAI, 2024). However, the paid version's training data goes until January 2023. Lastly, like the ELIZA example, sophistication limits these systems. The system will not be beneficial if the GPT and LLM are not sophisticated.

Given the above issues, should we even use generative AI systems? The answer is yes. Generative AI systems are excellent at tasks with rigid syntactic guidelines, such as computer code development. But again, the end-user should not blindly trust the correctness of the code. Another area where generative AI is useful is grammar checking. Services like Grammarly use such systems to recommend changes to vocabulary and punctuation in real time while the end-user writes papers, emails, and other documents. In fact, I used Grammarly while writing this article.

Generative AI is not true AI by definition. Instead, it is a sophisticated use of natural language processing technology based on GPTs and LLMs. It may appear to be sentient, but that is just smoke and mirrors programmed into the system by its developers. Generative AI, like most other technologies, will soon invade every aspect of our lives. You can already use generative AI on your

cell phone to translate calls in real-time. While most technologists would end by saying, "Embrace our new overlord," I will end by stating that we should use the technology but not trust it always to be accurate. Just as with other tools and technology that librarians use and teach, we need to ensure our patrons understand and embrace the essential concept of critical thinking when coming into contact with any information, whether it's generated by AI or not!

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

REPORT FROM STRATEGIC PLANNING 2024 Survey of the Arkansas Library Community Shows Change and Continuity by **Daniel Boice**, *ArLA Strategic Planning Chair*

A good strategic planning process never really stops. As conditions change and parts of a plan are completed, the plan is updated to meet the changes. Just so, the current ArLA Strategic Plan, having served well, is now due to be replaced by a new three-year plan. The

ArLA Strategic Planning Committee has been gathering input in several formats, and expects to have a proposal for association membership at the annual meeting.

Over the past decade, the most important way in which the committee has solicited input has been by means



Boice

of a membership survey. The current committee met in February to compose questions for the 2024 survey, which was sent out in March. There were 181 responses to the survey, of which 64% came from ArLA members and 34% from non-members, and 2% who chose not to indicate. Some of the results are displayed below, and it is interesting to note some things that stand out from the responses, and to compare them with the 2021 survey.

In 2021, nearly half of the survey respondents were from public libraries, with academics (33%) and schools (13%) lagging somewhat. This year, the results were more evenly divided among public libraries (37%), academics (35%), and schools with a robust 21% of the total.

The annual conference remains a highly valued service provided by ArLA with more than 60% of respondents indicating its worth. Opportunities for networking and professional growth remained popular, with the 58% and 51% votes identical to the 2021 totals. Interestingly, *Arkansas Libraries* was more highly regarded this year than three years ago (56% compared to 46%). Remaining the most highly valued service of ArLA, maybe not surprisingly after last year's dramatic assaults on libraries and librarians, is ArLA's advocating for Arkansas libraries. What was surprising was that the percentage of respondents indicating the value of advocacy had not increased, but this year's 68% was almost identical to 2021's 69%. In any case, this service remains critical for the state's library community.

Again, about half of the respondents reported having attended a conference within the past three years, the same as three years ago, with opportunities

for networking and the sessions ranking as equally important for attendees. For those who had not attended a conference, in 2021 the factors of cost and time had been equally problematic. This year, cost had become the chief challenge, while time remains a challenge.

This year, we asked about how members would like to receive the highly valued *Arkansas Libraries*, and more than half indicated that they would be happy with digital only, while a third want both digital and print, and 16% want print only.

Finally, Arkansas library professionals continue to want opportunities for professional development, including regional workshops and more pertinent sessions at the annual conference. Harnessing this desire for continuing education will be a good challenge for the officers of communities of interest and other leaders in the association.

These numbers, and the many comments that were included with the responses, will make for a superb resource as the committee begins drafting a new strategic plan. And we will, of course, welcome individual insights and comments during the process. The committee appreciates the time and thought taken by those who completed the survey.

The 2024 ArLA Strategic Planning Committee includes Carol Coffey (CALs), Crystal Gates (North Little Rock P.L.), Sarah Jefferson (Flippin Public School), Taylor Vanlandingham (John Brown University), and Jennifer Wann (State Library), and is chaired by Dan Boice (UA at Monticello).

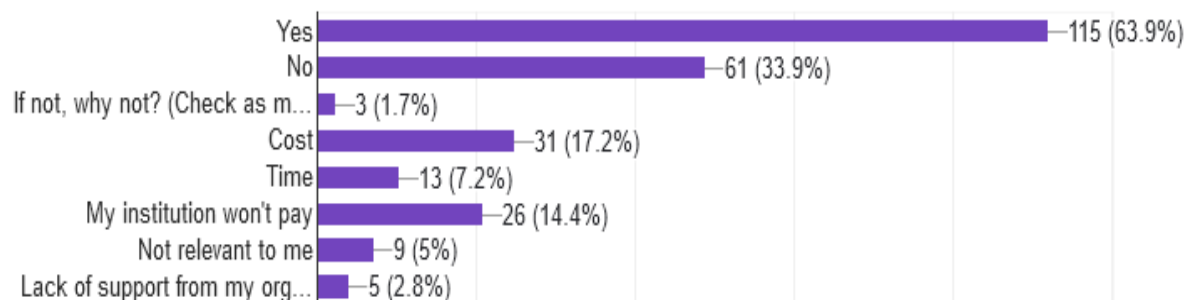
Daniel Boice is director of the Fred J. Taylor Library at the University of Arkansas at Monticello in Monticello, Arkansas.

2024 Survey of Arkansas Library Community Summary of Responses

Are you a member of ArLA?



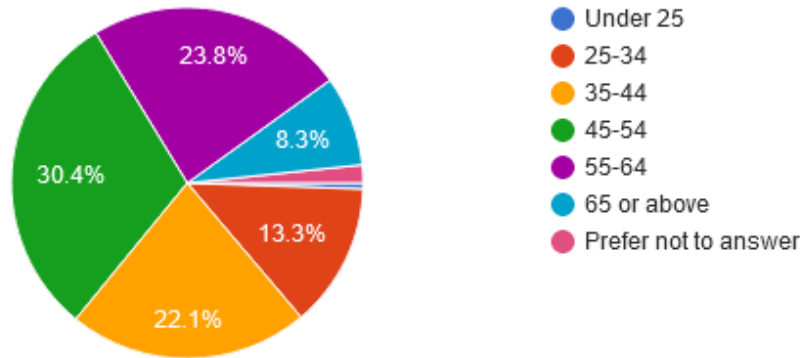
180 responses



What is your age bracket?

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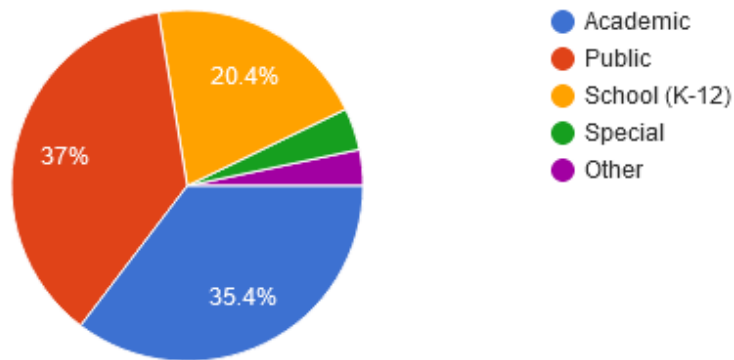
181 responses



What type of library are you affiliated with?

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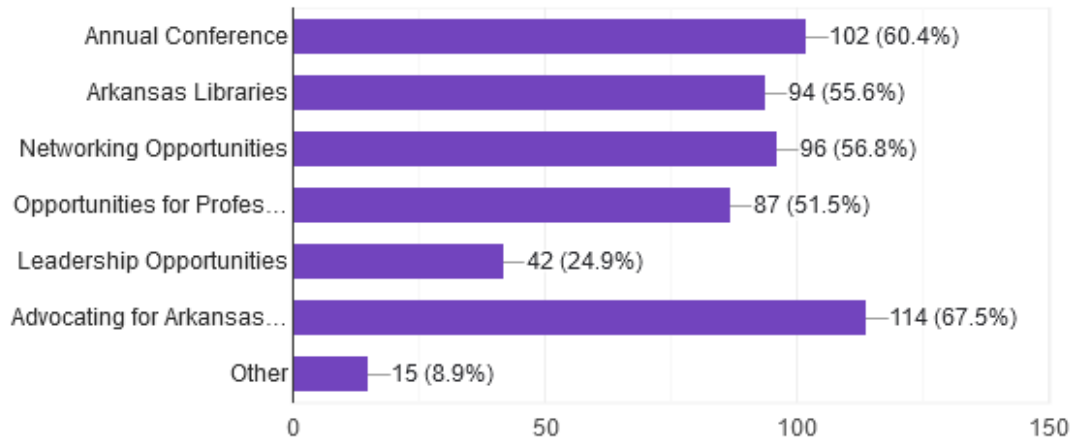
181 responses



What services does ArLA provide that you value?

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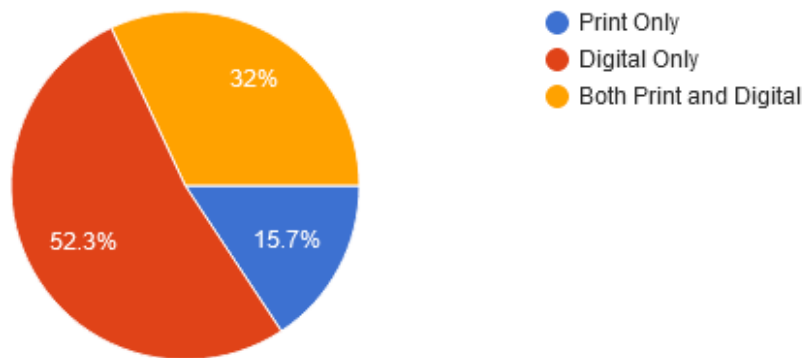
169 responses



How would you prefer to receive *Arkansas Libraries*?

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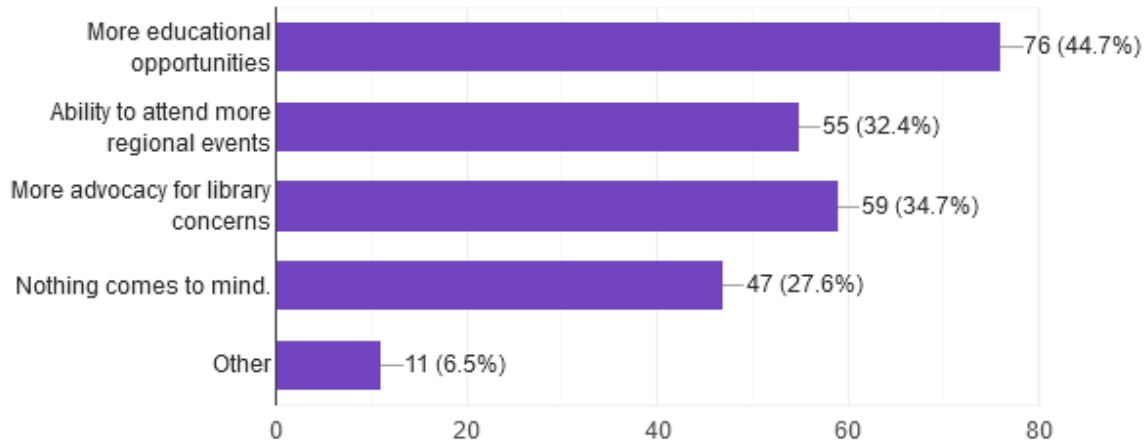
172 responses



What services could ArLA provide that we don't currently?

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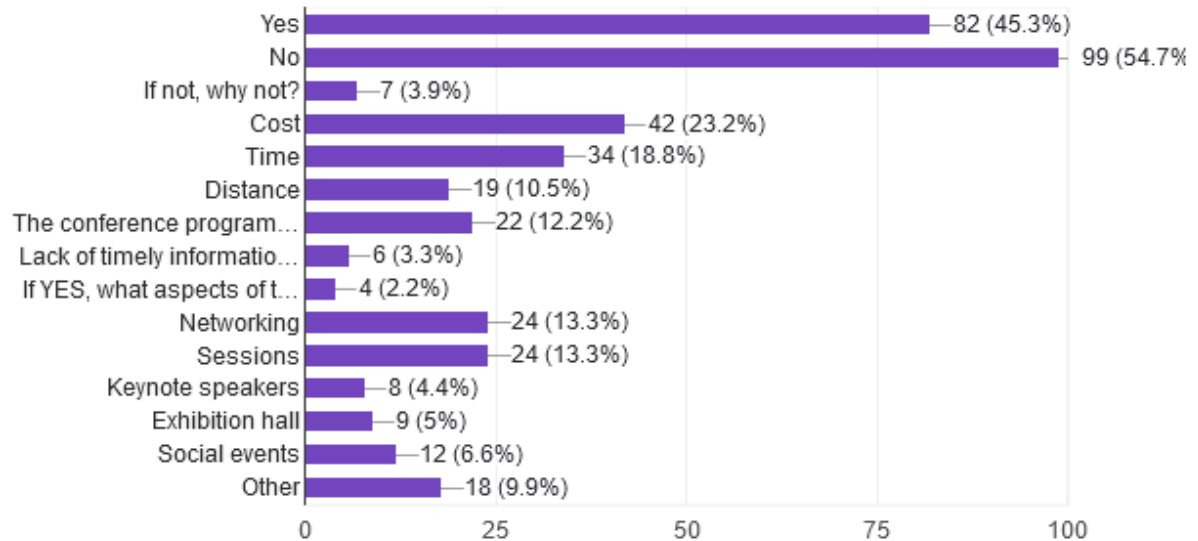
170 responses



Have you attended a conference within the past three years?

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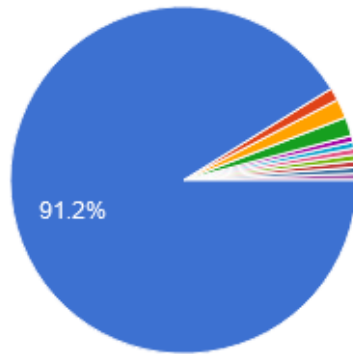
181 responses



How would you rate your ability to participate in virtual ArLA activities?



170 responses



- My connectivity and equipment is adequate
 - My connectivity is inadequate
 - My equipment is inadequate
 - I can only participate virtually
 - Staffing availability is the only barrier
 - Retired
 - Last 11 years in public library
 - [Small green dot]
- ▲ 1/2 ▼

TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

United We Onboard: Lessons Learned from a Collaborative Onboarding Process

by Rachel Baack, Heather McCain, Autumn Roberts & Shawna Thorup,

Northwest Arkansas Community College

In September 2023, Northwest Arkansas Community College Library was down to three out of seven librarians. After three months of the search process, two of the four vacant positions were filled. When the successful applicants

were ready to onboard in January 2024, the team developed an onboarding plan. What follows is a conversation between four team members – two trainers and two new hires. They will reminisce about their hoped-for successful onboarding and reflect on the onboarding process from both points of view. We hope our experience will benefit hiring managers and those responsible for onboarding new staff.

Shawna Thorup: I was one of the few library team members still here since March 2022, so I was the institutional knowledge. I was also serving as



NWACC Librarians. Left to right: Heather McCain, Shawna Thorup, Autumn Roberts, and Rachel Baack.

interim library director and was the hiring manager when Heather McCain (outreach) and Rachel Baack (access services) joined our team in January 2024. I trained others on the library team, most recently Anna Clymer, our eLearning librarian as of July 2022. We were severely overworked and understaffed at the end of 2023, so I asked Autumn Roberts (systems librarian, September 2022 hire) and Anna to help develop the onboarding plan. We had several versions of training checklists plus Anna and Autumn's relatively recent onboarding experiences to draw on. My goals were to make sure Heather and Rachel understood the parameters of their assignments, were trained and supported fully, and were encouraged to make the positions their own. I doubt I gave Autumn and Anna enough guidance as they developed the onboarding. What was it like, Autumn, and did you have your own goals for welcoming Heather and Rachel?

Autumn Roberts: When Shawna tasked Anna and me with this project, we decided to start with our own journeys as we were onboarded to the NWACC library team. Much like Heather and Rachel, we were both brand new librarians with little-to-no previous librarian experience. I personally came on board in mid-September 2022 when the semester was already in full swing. During that time, I was completely unaware of tasks, people, and spaces I was supposed to manage. I had no way to track my progress or know if I was completing my training. With that experience, I did not want our new members to have that lost feeling I had. Anna had a much more fluid onboarding process than my own due to being hired before the semester started and having a different supervisor, so we heavily drew from her experience where she had regular check-ins and checklists.

Together we created a way for our new librarians to track and make notes as they went through the training process. We had previously used a spreadsheet for basic library training for our Summer 2023 hires, however, we used it much more informally. Using this initial spreadsheet, we built it out to be specific to the new librarians and their respective positions. We created categories including individual items, along with a space for the trainer to initial, date, and a space for them to take notes.

Shawna: For me, the onboarding was complicated by Anna's unexpected resignation just a few days after Heather and Rachel started. It was further challenged by the icy weather – we worked remotely five of the first ten days on the job. Heather and Rachel, what was your onboarding experience? What were you hoping for, and did you get it? What

did we get right, and where did we fall short?

Heather McCain: Onboarding with the NWACC Library gave me a better yardstick to compare other training processes to. I did not expect to receive the support, encouragement, and belief in my abilities that I felt from day one. Warned at the beginning that I would experience information overload, I soon discovered this was not an exaggeration. Because Autumn and Anna had experienced this in their own onboarding, they understood how to pace our training, so we weren't caught in a tornado of new ideas and information. The documentation, structure, and realistic expectations communicated a supportive and professional environment where growth was safe. I especially appreciate that Rachel and I were told we could ask as many questions as we wanted and to ask for help as much as we needed, without risk of embarrassment. When the training wheels began to come off, I felt equipped to handle the regular tasks of my role.

Rachel Baack: Despite the weather and staffing changes, my onboarding experience has been quite positive, and I have felt very supported by the library staff. Before I started at NWACC, I was expecting my onboarding process to be fairly similar to the experience I had starting my last job, where I received about a week of focused training and then began doing my job duties independently while engaging in semesterly check-ins with a mentor. The training I have received here, however, has come with a much higher level of support. Heather and I did get a week of training before students came for the Spring semester, but we continued to receive training after the semester began. We were given a checklist of things to learn to help guide our training process, and we participated in weekly librarians' meetings and in one-on-one check-in meetings with Shawna. We were also encouraged to continue asking questions and asking for help learning the ins and outs of our jobs as difficulties arose, which was a huge help and a major paradigm shift for me, as my past experiences had taught me to try to figure things out on my own before reaching out for assistance. So far, my onboarding experience has far exceeded my expectations.

Shawna: What is your biggest takeaway from this experience? What do we want to make sure we do (or don't do) when we on-board our new Technical Services librarian this summer?

Autumn: Overall, I found the onboarding process for Heather and Rachel to be successful and would like to implement it again. There are some minor adjustments to be made, such as trainers being

more proactive in signing off when they taught the trainees a new skill. I would also like to incorporate a section outlining annual and semester-specific tasks.

Heather: Luckily, ice days will be a non-issue in summer! I think I would incorporate more intentional team building into the on-boarding process so that joining an established team will be less intimidating to our new hire. I think repeating our recent onboarding experience will prove successful with the librarian joining our team.

Rachel: I feel that the onboarding process went well, and we could repeat a similar process with our new librarian. I think it would be helpful for us to add a method of documentation that the trainers could use to keep track of their work with the trainee; that way, we would be better able to ensure

not only that we had trained our new librarian on each aspect of the job, but also that we had followed up and practiced with her several times to help her become more proficient and confident with each task.

Shawna: I was recently appointed library director. Building a supportive team culture is my passion, and your reflections are invaluable. Thank you for helping us all learn and grow together!

Access Services Librarian Rachel Baack, Outreach Librarian Heather McCain, Systems Librarian Autumn Roberts and Library Director Shawna Thorup work at Northwest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville, Arkansas.

AROUND ARKANSAS:

by *Heather Hays, Associate Editor*

A few updates from the Tri-County Regional Library System headquartered in De Queen, Arkansas:

Tammy Whitlow of the Little River County-Foreman Library retired at the end of March 2023, after almost 18 years. She was hired October 30, 2006, after her Aunt, Billie Richmond, retired after 23 years. A family tradition continues with the hire of cousin, Amanda Mills.

Tammy Watson, Howard County-Nashville Library, took over in January 2023. Tammy had served as an assistant for 18 years, after the retirement of Janice Curry, who served more than 40 years.

According to the 2019 GLSEN Arkansas School Climate survey, about 40% of Arkansas students say they have access to LGBTQ+-related library resources at school. Just 6% of Arkansas students say they were taught positive representations of LGBTQ+ people, history, or events at school. A collection of texts that positively represent LGBTQ+ characters and historical figures is critical for any school to be an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ students and those with LGBTQ+ family members. (GLSEN)

Arkansas is one of 33 states that can request a free Rainbow Library! The Rainbow Library is an initiative that provides LGBTQ+ affirming text sets to schools free of charge. They have sent 8,100 sets to schools and libraries across 33 states. If you would like to apply, go to rainbowlibrary.org/Arkansas and click "request now."

The Arkansas State Library is pleased to announce a Little Free Library project for public libraries in the state of Arkansas. Twenty (20) Little Free Library kits will be awarded to public libraries throughout the state of Arkansas in a project to support public libraries' role of sharing reading activities with all members of the community. Applications will be available on July 1 and will remain open through August 15. Please visit the Little Free Library Project page on the Arkansas State Library's website for more information.

The Little Free Library project as developed by the Arkansas State Library fulfills the statutory requirement of A.C.A. § 13-2-207 to undertake activities and services that further statewide development of libraries, and the federal Library Services and Technology Act (20 U.S.C. § 9121).

The Ashley County Library is changing! This summer, the library purchased a building next to the Ashley County Courthouse. It is a scant block from their current location and features expanded parking and a safe area for outdoor programming. The building needs extensive renovations, but the ability to not only tailor the interior to better facilitate library operations and to offer expanded services, such as a meeting room, has the entire library board and staff excited. Demolition of the existing fixtures is in progress and contractors and vendors are being contacted. It is going to be a huge labor of love, but something the library and community have been working toward for nearly four decades. You can follow the renovation process on the library's social media pages.

Andrea Cantrell, emeritus librarian from the University of Arkansas, received the 2023 Ned Shank Award for Outstanding Preservation Publication for the article “Cy Sutherland: Architect, Educator, Preservationist,” published in *Flashback: Journal of the Washington County Historical Society* (Spring 2023). Sutherland was a professor of architecture at the University of Arkansas. The award was announced at the Arkansas Preservation Awards dinner and program hosted by Preserve Arkansas on Friday, January 26, 2024, at the Robinson Center in Little Rock. Preserve Arkansas is the statewide nonprofit organization advocating historic preservation.



A notice by the Education Department published in March announced a proposed revision of the National Center for Education Statistics’ (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) information collection, including the proposed elimination of the Academic Libraries survey. The department is requesting to make changes to multiple survey components and other updates, including the planned elimination of the Academic Libraries (AL) survey beginning in the 2025–26 administration. The IPEDS Academic Libraries (AL) survey and resulting data are used by many academic libraries for benchmarking. Unfortunately, NCES was unconvinced by many comments left by academic librarians overwhelmingly in favor of keeping the Academic Libraries survey intact, and is planning to move forward with their plans to eliminate the academic libraries portion of the survey.

The Rogers Public Library remains closed due to damage caused by a May 26 tornado. The tornado

knocked out lights due to water damage and some flooding, and several large trees on the grounds were lost. Curbside pickup and locker services are available, with some summer programming happening at other venues. The collection survives largely intact, and online services continue. Our hearts go out to director Hannah Pearce and her employees!



ArLA President Taylor Vanlandingham (and director of John Brown University’s library) gave birth during a tornado on May 26 to a baby boy! In her own words, “Little one decided he wanted to come during a

tornado. He arrived 5/26 at 7:54. We are both doing well.” Taylor will be on maternity leave until August, but until then, Vice President Lynn Valetutti (Lynn.Valetutti@np.edu) will be taking the reins of ArLA.

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.

Arkansas Libraries

Volume 80, 2023 Index

compiled by Joanna Warren,

*Library Faculty & Cataloguer, Torreyson Library,
University of Central Arkansas*

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