

ARKANSAS LIBRARIES

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EXECUTIVE BOARD CANDIDATES

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COUNCILOR'S REPORT

Arkansas Library Association, 2026

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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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Arkansas Libraries

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FROM THE PRESIDENT Forward into Light

by Adam Webb

ArLA President

*"This job...is not...
for sissies."* -Honore Bray,
retired Director of the
Missoula Public Library

By now, you have heard the bad news. The Arkansas Library Association, along with our fellow plaintiffs in the Act 372 case, lost on appeal at the Eighth Circuit Court. The court's decision means that, unless further legal relief is granted, the challenged provisions of Act 372 are expected to take effect in the coming weeks.

Like many of you, I was disappointed by the court's decision to reverse the district court's injunction that had prevented Sections 1 and 5 of the law from taking effect. While the ruling represents a significant setback, it doesn't change why so many librarians, library leaders, booksellers, and advocates remain committed to challenging this legislation. At its heart, this has always been about protecting the freedom to read and ensuring that libraries remain places where people of all ages can explore ideas without fear that librarians will face criminal penalties simply for doing their jobs.

As attorneys continue to review the opinion, there are still important questions about how parts of the law will be interpreted and enforced that the circuit court didn't address. These questions matter because they not only affect our day-to-day work lives but possibly our very freedom. A Class A misdemeanor carries a penalty up to a year in jail, after all. The remaining questions may just be persuasive enough to grant further relief. While there is still uncertainty, I'm encouraged that legal counsel continues to pursue every available avenue to seek clarification from the court. Clear guidance is essential, not only for library administrators, but for every staff member at every library across the state.

One aspect of the ruling offers a small measure of perspective. The court didn't uphold the constitutionality of the review provisions in Act 372. Instead, it concluded that those questions can't be decided yet because the law has not been applied. That means the constitutional issues surrounding those provisions remain unresolved and may



Webb

ultimately return to the courts. It is important as we move forward for membership to report *any* challenges that you face under Section 5 of Act 372 to the Intellectual Freedom Helpline. Somewhere in the messy application of these challenges might be some hope.

I know that many of you are feeling anxious. I do too. Those feelings are understandable. You're right to feel nervous when the possibility of criminal liability enters a conversation about merely doing your job, even more so when the law doesn't make it clear when, where, and how you have broken the law. But I also know this profession. We've weathered challenges before, and we'll weather this one too, together. Arkansas' librarians are a shining example of the true grit that Charles Portis wrote about. We do incredible things each and every day with little money, in aging facilities, without enough staff members, all in the face of increasing hostility towards our profession. Not only that, but we're usually able to do it with grace and dignity.

As President of the Arkansas Library Association, I want you to know that you are not facing these challenges alone. I'm always available if you want to chat, vent, commiserate, or share a drink. If you're feeling alone, this is a great time to remind y'all about the Arkansas Library Association's many Communities of Interest, where you're likely to find camaraderie, friendly faces, a shoulder to cry on, or an alibi (if needed).

The Arkansas Library Association is committed to fulfilling our mission to advocate for libraries and support library workers throughout the state. We will navigate these murky waters together. Although this decision is discouraging, it doesn't define us. What defines us is our commitment to service, our belief in equitable access to information, and our dedication to the communities that trust us every day.

I'll close this message the same as the previous one. Thank you for your dedication, your professionalism, and the generosity with which you support one another. It is a privilege to lead this association, and I look forward to continuing our work together.

Adam Webb is the Executive Director of the Garland County Library in Hot Springs, Arkansas. He serves on the Public Library Association's Advocacy Committee and is a liaison for the American Library Association's Committee on Legislation. Webb is the 2026 ArLA president.

FROM THE EDITOR Critical Reading

by **Britt Anne Murphy**

Library Director, Hendrix College

This fall at Hendrix, as part of the new curriculum, I will have a chance to mentor 14 freshmen through first-year advising and teach the newly devised First-Year Foundations class. For many years at Hendrix I taught the intro to college course that all first years took, and on the first day I would conduct an icebreaker activity. One of the questions I wanted them to answer was, "What is your favorite book?" During the 20 years I taught the class, the answer to this question changed. At first, I got responses that were more typical of a Gen Xer's response: *Pride and Prejudice*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and even sometimes a Tolstoy tome. About 5-10 years in, there was a move away from the classics, and towards popular reads such as Harry Potter books, and then *Twilight*, and then series I had never heard of. Most recently, the answers included several who listed Dr. Seuss books, or worse, nothing at all.

High school education and the rise of AP classes and assessment, social media, and now AI have taken a toll on the reading habits of young people. The wave of censorship and bad library press is just the next deterrent to our young readers. We librarians have all read those depressing statistics about sinking levels of readership across the country. Normally, school librarians and public librarians have been on the front lines of literacy and readership. But now even academic librarians need to join the ranks in promoting and teaching reading to first year students, some of whom may have never read an entire book



Murphy

since their Dr. Seuss days.

So, when confronted with the opportunity to shape the liberal arts portion of this course, I decided I would compel my group of freshers to fall in love with reading. As my students learn to "college" at Hendrix, they will read a book of their choosing from a list curated by me, their librarian. All the books are under 300 pages, banned, and compelling to 18-year-olds. My students will learn how to find the book from a library and research how the book has been received in critical circles. Their final activity in my class will be to convince their classmates to read their book, or to argue, from their informed perspective, why it wasn't the best.

This issue of *Arkansas Libraries* offers many examples of how librarians in Arkansas continue to do the essential work of enabling critical reading by ensuring our spaces, services, staffing, and resources focus on serving our communities. We learn about topics ranging from accessibility compliance plans at NWACC to advice for managers on making good hires. A program at CALS removes barriers to addiction resources, while reading circles at Highland High instill the love and community of reading in teens. New facilities and spaces in south Arkansas at South Ark Community College and Ashley County Public Library enliven their communities. Arkansas librarians inform us about everything from how to commemorate government information at 250 years, to advice on using Copilot in tech services. I hope you will continue navigating the wealth of resources Arkansas libraries provide their communities by reading about our upcoming conference in Hot Springs: Camp ArLA – New Trails in Library Science. It's inspiring to see how Arkansas library workers lead the way down familiar trails while also forging paths into new territory. Please join us for the journey!

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

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Camp ArLA: Fall Conference Preview

by Lacy Wolfe

President-Elect and Conference Chair

Calling all campers! Our 2026 theme, New Trails in Library Service, embraces exploration, stewardship, resilience, and discovery – drawing inspiration from the spirit of our own Hot Springs National Park. This year at our annual conference we will celebrate the ways libraries are **blazing new paths** with innovative programs, services, and partnerships and **exploring uncharted terrain** in examining emerging trends, technologies, and community needs that require creativity. Arkansas libraries build strong **trail networks** by strengthening connections within and beyond our communities through collaboration, outreach, and shared purpose. In our daily lives we **practice stewardship** through demonstrating sustainable practices that protect resources, nurture staff well-being, and ensure long-term impact. As we build new paths, we are **reading the landscape** by exploring how library services intersect with and respond to cultural, environmental, and societal shifts. Finally, we **reach new summits** as we highlight professional growth, leadership development, and transformative learning that elevate the work of library professionals and paraprofessionals.

Just as trails guide explorers through forest and mountains, this year's conference will illuminate the way forward – equipping attendees with practical tools, fresh perspectives, and renewed inspiration to navigate the evolving terrain of library service. Inspired by Arkansas's scenic beauty, this year's conference will include tracks to guide attendees through a diverse range of library topics. Each trail offers opportunities to learn, connect, and discover ideas that can strengthen libraries and the

communities they serve.

Cedar Falls Trail – Outreach Services: Focuses on building meaningful community connections through outreach, partnerships, marketing, social media, community events, bookmobiles, and creating welcoming library spaces.

Whitaker Point Trail – User Services: Highlights public-facing library services, including reference, readers' advisory, library instruction, adult programming, user experience, research support, and serving underserved and underrepresented communities.

Buffalo National River Trail – Leadership & Management: Covers library leadership topics such as strategic planning, finance, human resources, recruitment and retention, professional development, system administration, capital projects, and organizational change.

Mount Nebo Rim Trail – Collections & Technology: Explores collection development, technical services, preservation, special collections, intellectual freedom, databases, e-books, and emerging technologies.

Arkansas Arboretum Trail – Youth Services: Features programming, collections, literacy initiatives, school and homeschool partnerships, early literacy, third-grade reading promotion, and services for children and teens.

Hotel Information and Registration

We will once again be greeted by the hospitality of the Embassy Suites by Hilton Hot Springs Hotel & Spa for this year's conference accommodations. The conference accommodation rate is \$159/night from October 15th through October 18th. Book your room using the following link: <https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/arkansaslibraryassociationblock/>

Registration rates for the conference are below. Not only are we doing the institutional membership promotion (if you send four employees, you get the



fifth employee free); we are also offering single day rates for both members and non-members!

A note on conference registration – registration is a two-step process!

1. Step 1: Purchase your conference ticket. This is the transaction where payment is made.
2. Step 2: Complete your conference registration. After purchasing (or receiving a transferred ticket), you must complete the registration form with your personal information. This step is required for every attendee and includes important details such as dietary restrictions for conference meals.

If someone at your institution purchased tickets and transferred one to you, you are responsible for completing your own registration form. Receiving a ticket does not automatically register you for the conference.

Registration

Members: \$155 (early bird) / \$250 (after August 15)

Non-Members: \$305

Members Day Rate: \$55

Non-Members Day Rate: \$125

Preconference: \$45

Register for the conference at the following link: <https://arlaconference2026.sched.com/registration>.

Friday, October 16 (Preconference Events)

Note that all preconference events require a separate ticket that is available on the conference registration website.

AI & Emerging Trends in Academic Librarianship

Hot Springs Convention Center, 9 am – 11 am

The College and University Librarians of Arkansas (CULAR) will be hosting an AI focused preconference that features a discussion on AI in research, utilities such as MCPs, and other topics of academic library interest such as the proposed changes to the ACRL Framework. This session, led by Angela Black, is open to those working in all types of library settings and will be held at the conference center on Friday, October 16 from 9 am – 11 am.

Natural State Librarians: Building Sustainable Programs and Communities

Hot Springs Convention Center, 9 am – 11 am

The Sustainability Community of Interest will be hosting a preconference that will explore how libraries can support sustainability through programs, services, and partnerships. This interactive session will highlight practical ideas from libraries across Arkansas while encouraging attendees to share experiences and challenges within their own communities. The main focus of the workshop is

to develop a sustainable program or initiative to take home to your library. Sydney Mullins-Britt, Faulkner County Library, and Nicole Norelli, Fayetteville Public Library, will lead the session from 9 am – 11 am on Friday, October 16 at the Hot Springs Convention Center.

**DIY Memory Lab
Hot Springs Convention Center, 9 am – 11 am**

Meredith Li, Central Arkansas Library System – Roberts Library, will lead an informational session that will provide an overview of how CALS developed their DIY Memory Lab service and provide insight into digitization practices that are easily accessible for the public in preserving their history. Attendees will receive instructions on how to set up their own Memory Labs and personal archiving programs. Attendees will also participate in a hands-on demonstration using the DIY Mobile Memory Lab equipment. This preconference will be held at the conference center on Friday, October 16 from 9 am – 11 am.

**Saturday, October 17
Author Lunch**

In a small departure from previous years, we're thrilled to host a panel of authors in conversation with one another as they discuss their work, impacts of libraries and archives, and intellectual freedom. The panel includes Dr. Cherisse Jones-Branch, dean of the Graduate School and professor of History at Arkansas State University, author of *Better Living By Their Own Bootstraps: Black Women's Activism in Rural Arkansas, 1913-1965*; and Olivia Paschal, Arkansas native journalist, historian, and author of the forthcoming book *Something in the Water*. Dr. Erin Shaw, program coordinator for the Library Media and Information Technologies graduate program at the University of Central Arkansas, will moderate the panel. Check Sched for more information on the panel's composition, as well as



Branch



Paschal



Shaw

details on timing and location.

ArLA Scholarships & Awards

This year, the ArLA Awards Reception will feature a new format. Hosted by current ArLA President Adam Webb at the Garland County Library, the reception will replace the traditional seated banquet with a relaxed evening of light refreshments and fellowship. This change gives attendees the opportunity to explore Garland County Library while celebrating this year's award and scholarship recipients!

Another item to note this fall is a new award, the **Arkansas Library Champion Award**, which recognizes those outside of our library communities who champion libraries and library workers in Arkansas.

In addition to awarding scholarships for graduate school, the reception will recognize and celebrate our community of librarians with presentations of the following awards:

- **Arkansas Library Champion Award** – recognizes individuals, businesses and organizations outside of the library community that contribute tremendously to outstanding library service in our communities. Library champions work tirelessly in advocating for all types of libraries and/or the library profession throughout the state.
- **LaNell Compton Prize** – first awarded in 1982 and named in honor of LaNell Compton, editor of *Arkansas Libraries* from 1949 to 1971, the prize is given to the author of the best contribution to library literature published in *Arkansas Libraries*.
- **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
- **Ann Lightsey Children's Librarian Award**

– named in honor of Ann Lightsey, this award recognizes excellence in children's librarianship in the state.

- **Retta Patrick Award** – recognizes an individual member of the Arkansas library profession who has made an outstanding state or national contribution to school librarianship and school library development
- **Intellectual Freedom Award** – established in 1994, the award is given to a person(s) or group(s) for notable contributions that have furthered the cause of intellectual freedom on behalf of a library in the state of Arkansas
- **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
- **Past President's Gift** - recognizes the past president for three years of dedicated service to the Arkansas Library Association

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

Sunday, October 18

Parks Panel

Join us at lunch for a moderated panel discussion featuring local, state, and federal parks professionals discussing their work and offering insight and ideas on how libraries and parks could collaborate and support each other in innovative program and resource development. More information on this session to come!

Annual Membership Meeting

The annual membership meeting is scheduled for Sunday immediately following lunch. The meeting will 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. A quorum shall consist of thirty members or ten percent of the total Association membership, whichever is less. Stick around to learn more about what is going on in ArLA!

Basket Auction Fundraisers

The basket auction bonanza will begin on Saturday and will close the conference in the afternoon on Sunday. We need your basket donations

– be creative and deliver a basket on a theme close to your heart! Or add to this year’s conference theme – be a trailblazer and create baskets for hiking, environmentalism, and outdoor activities! Please drop it off as early as possible, no later than Saturday morning in the vendor hall. More details will follow on where to bring the baskets. We do ask that you identify who the sponsors of the baskets are, and to fill out a basket auction entry form. Proceeds go towards supporting the Arkansas Library Association. Email Britt Anne Murphy for more information or basket ideas: murphyb@hendrix.edu.

Camp Events

Members, new and old, are invited for a social hour at the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts, a short walk up from the Arlington and Bath House Row. Join us for drinks and snacks, games and prizes, and the chance to get to know both each other and the leaders of ArLA's Committees and Communities of Interest. Lead by the ArLA Membership Committee, the **Membership Social Hour** is a great chance to explore the opportunities your membership provides! The meetup will be held on ASMSA's campus Friday, October 16 from 4:00 pm – 6:30 pm.

The **MELLW Refresh Room** is a dedicated quiet space for attendees to relax, recharge, and take a break from the noise and stimulation of Camp ArLA. This Refresh Room will be open throughout the conference. Details coming soon with location and availability.

In the vendor hall, we will be hosting a **Crafting Unconference** that will offer opportunities for attendees to network, connect, and craft during downtime. Ice breakers, facilitated discussion questions, puzzles, and camp crafts will be available throughout the conference.

Need a new headshot? Stop by for a free, quick photo session and leave with a professional image you can use wherever you need it. Just drop in – no registration required! Check Sched for exact days and times. A special thank you to photographer MK Rockett for helping us bring back **professional headshots** again this year!

You know you don't want to miss out on **Trivia Night!** Trivia Night will raise money for LEAF (Library Education & Aid Fund), an ArLA fund which supports libraries undergoing emergencies, as well as educational initiatives and advocacy efforts. University of Central Arkansas' dynamic librarian duo Amber and Jessica are running the show, so we are confident the night will be a blast. Trivia is scheduled for Saturday night at 8 pm at the Embassy Suites.

Attendees can experience the natural beauty of Hot Springs National Park through two optional guided walks. Early risers can join a **sunrise hike to Goat Rock** for scenic views of the Ouachita foothills on Sunday morning, while those looking for a more leisurely outing can enjoy an evening **stroll along the historic Grand Promenade** overlooking Bathhouse Row on Friday night after the New(ish) Member Meetup. Both excursions offer opportunities to network with colleagues while exploring new trails!

Vendors

Three days of conference means three days of vendors! Check out the booths for invaluable resources and opportunities. We are always trying to include vendors in the conference program, so mention how meaningful it would be to see their participation, invite them to dinner or one of the many social gatherings that are planned this year. If there are vendors you would like to see in the hall, have them reach out; ArLA is always looking to bring in vendors to share a wealth of resources with attendees. 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.

Conference Merch

Don't miss out on conference merch! This year's collection includes T-shirts, sweatshirts, tote bags, and hats inspired by the conference theme. Ordering in advance ensures your merchandise is ready to wear (or carry!) throughout the conference: <https://www.bonfire.com/store/arkansas-library-association/>.

Conference committee

The ArLA Annual Conference is made possible through the dedication of volunteers from libraries across Arkansas:

- Chair: Lacy Wolfe
- Co-chairs: Jamie Middleton & MK Rockett
- Programming: Jenn Wann
- Vendors: Jamie Middleton
- Marketing: Tammie Evans
- Awards: Crystal Gates
- Scholarships: Amy Wallace
- Basket Auction: Britt Anne Murphy
- Trivia: Jessica Riedmueller & Amber Wilson
- Treasurer: John McGraw
- President: Adam Webb
- Webmaster: Oliver Jennings

In addition to serving ArLA as president-elect and conference chair, Lacy Wolfe is the chief operating officer at the North Little Rock Public Library System.

2026 ArLA Executive Board Candidates for Office

by *Taylor Vanlandingham*

Chair of the Nominating and Elections Committee/ArLA Past President

The Arkansas Library Association will soon hold elections to choose who will serve on the Executive Board of the Association in 2027. Open positions this year include president-elect (3-year term), treasurer-elect (3-yr 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. Be looking for the links to vote soon!

The Nominating and Elections Committee submits the following candidates for office:

President Elect (3-year term including president and past president):

Lavoris Martin

Dr. Lavoris Martin is an educator, librarian, and scholar with more than 25 years of experience in academic libraries and K-12 school librarianship. She currently serves as a high school librarian and has extensive experience in information literacy, instructional technology, library administration, and collaborative teaching.



Martin

Dr. Martin has been a leader in academic library associations, including ARKLink and CULAR (formerly CULD), the academic community within ArLA, as well as other regional and national groups. Dr. Martin has presented at the local, state, and national levels on topics including information literacy, library instruction, emerging technologies, STEM education, instructional collaboration, and innovative library practices. She holds master's degrees in library science, educational technology, and computer science, and earned her doctor of education degree in 2025.

As a candidate for president-elect, Dr. Martin is committed to strengthening professional

development opportunities, fostering collaboration among all library types, mentoring future library leaders, and advancing advocacy for libraries throughout Arkansas.

Treasurer Elect (3-yr term):

Charlene McDonnough



McDonnough

Charlene began her librarian career working for the Darlington County Library System in South Carolina for 18 years before moving to Arkansas in 2022. Charlene has been the Crawford County Library System Director since February 2024. Charlene received her MLIS from the University of South Carolina and she began working as an Adult Services Outreach Librarian for the Darlington County system for eight years and then as Society Hill Library Branch Manager for ten years. Charlene began working for Crawford County Library System in 2024 as executive director. During this time, she has managed a budget over a million dollars and kept it balanced.

During her spare time, Charlene is an independent artist and self-published children's book author and illustrator. She has published two children's books with more on the way. She grew up in New Mexico and a great deal of that culture finds its way into her artwork through her designs and color choices.

Member-at-Large (1-yr term):

Cassandra Barnett



Barnett

Cassandra Barnett has been a school librarian for more than 40 years in elementary and secondary school libraries. She has served on ALA and AASL committees and is a past-president of AASL. She is currently program pdvisor for school libraries at the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, providing professional development, promoting best practices in school library programs, and advocating for school libraries.

Cassandra has been active in ArLA over the years and continuously makes presentations at state

conferences. She is currently on the ArLA Board as a member-at-large. Her latest endeavor has been to support collaborations between school and academic librarians through forming a community of interest, CASL (Collaboration of Academic & School Librarians).

Member-at-Large (1-yr term):

Ashley Cooksey

Dr. Ashley Cooksey is an assistant professor and the program director for the School Library Media programs at Arkansas Tech University. Throughout her career as an educator, she has served as a classroom teacher, an instructional technology coach, and a school librarian. During this time, she worked with students in all grade levels (K-16+), as well as led professional learning and development for educators across the country.



Cooksey

Dr. Cooksey holds a Ph.D. in Change Leadership with an emphasis in Digital Age Curriculum and Instruction. Dr. Cooksey believes professional learning and growth are essential in this field. She is a past president of the Arkansas Association of Instructional Media (AAIM) and a member-at-large of the Arkansas Library Association. She served on the AASL Standards Review Committee (2023-2025), and she is currently serving as a member of AASL's Publication Advisory Group.

Dr. Cooksey is a passionate advocate for student voice, technology-enhanced teaching and learning, Universal Design for Learning, and ensuring all students have access to a certified school librarian and a diverse library program. Dr. Cooksey is also a registered yoga teacher.

Member-at-Large (1-yr term):

Kimberly Green

Kimberly Green is the branch manager of the White Hall Library in the Pine Bluff/Jefferson County Library System and has worked in libraries for nearly three years. She holds both a BA and MA degree in history from Arkansas Tech University and is currently pursuing her MLIS at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Before becoming a branch manager, Kimberly served as the genealogy manager for the Pine Bluff/Jefferson County Library System, where she helped patrons research their family histories and explore the rich history of their communities. She is passionate about serving her community, promoting

literacy, preserving local history, and building meaningful connections through library services.

When she's not helping patrons discover their next great read, Kimberly enjoys reading, fueling up with plenty of coffee, and spending time with her 10-year-old son, her partner, and their 19-year-old cat.

One of her favorite parts of library work is connecting with patrons of all ages and learning something new from them every day.

Member-at-Large (1-yr term):

Shenise McGhee

Shenise McGhee is a librarian at University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff with 18 years of experience in academic librarianship. Shenise holds a MSLS from University of North Texas, along with Graduate Academic Certificates in Advanced Management in Libraries and Information Agencies and Digital Content Management. She also earned a Master of Science in Higher Education from Walden University and a Master of Science in Health and Physical Education from University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Her scholarly contributions include publications in *Arkansas Libraries* and *Texas Library Journal*. She also serves as a reviewer for the *Journal of New Librarianship*.



McGhee

Shenise has demonstrated significant leadership and service at both the state and national levels. She has served on the board of the Arkansas Library Association and currently serves on the 2025–2026 American Library Association Resolutions Committee and the ALA Intellectual Freedom Round Table. Shenise has chaired the Gerald Hodges Intellectual Freedom Chapter Relations Award Committee and remains actively engaged in intellectual freedom advocacy through numerous ALA units.

Member-at-Large (1-yr term):

Candace Latrese Owens

Candace has a wealth of experience as a former educator and contract substitute teacher, community advocate, coach, business owner, and frequent content creator and blogger. In 2022, Candace received her master's in Library Science (MLS) with a concentration in Archival Studies. She currently works at Dee Brown Branch Library in Little Rock,

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Green



Owens

a branch in the Central Arkansas Library System.

Candace has contributed to specialized areas of public libraries such as programming and outreach. In 2024, Candace was granted funds to organize a mindful pilot program, coined “Free Flow Fridays,” which aims to foster awareness of mental health

and social justice advocacy and support of, for, and in the community and libraries. Upon receiving certification in yoga, she offered programs to often-underserved and under-resourced populations.

Candace is passionate about family and community archiving and volunteering in archival practices. She has volunteered her time, studies, and expertise in the establishment and development of a digital archive for a local private two-year Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and in the filming and documenting of the Dixie Addition Community in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Member-at-Large (1-yr term):

Alan Robinette

Alan is the library director at Arkansas State University Three Rivers in Malvern, a position he has held for the last three years. He has an MLIS from Emporia State in Emporia, Kansas and an MBA from Henderson. Alan has been involved with the academic community of interest in ArLA – CULAR, for which he is currently serving as vice-chair. Alan has taken the lead in a collaboration of academic and school librarians (CASL), and has made several presentations at state conferences to educate and encourage partnerships between K-12 and academic librarians.

Alan has two grown children, one in Cincinnati and one in San Francisco. He lives in Royal, just outside of Hot Springs, with five precocious orange tabbies who allow him to continue to reside there providing he keeps them well fed and mildly entertained. So far, so good.

Member-at-Large (1-yr term):

Kacy Earnest Spears

Kacy Earnest Spears has served as a Reference Librarian at the Springdale Public Library since 10 *Arkansas Libraries* Vol. 83, Nos. 1-2



Spears

2023. She earned her B.A. in Mass Communications from Ouachita Baptist University (2018) and her Master of Library Science from Emporia State University (2022). Her various positions in public libraries include circulation supervisor at the Springdale Public Library, P.R. and events coordinator at the Bella Vista Public Library, and library assistant at the Bella Vista Public Library.

Kacy has served on multiple library boards including the Friends of the Pea Ridge Library Board and the Library Board at First Presbyterian Church of Bentonville. Kacy has been a member of ArLA since 2020 and has enjoyed serving ArLA in various capacities. She enjoyed her time on the conference planning committee for several years, as the marketing chair in 2024, and taking headshots and candid photos at the 2025 Annual Conference. Kacy loves large event planning, a good mystery novel, and engaging adults with library programming. She lives in northwest Arkansas with her lovely wife, two cats, and one dog.

Member-at-Large (1-yr term):

Shawna Thorup

Shawna Thorup is the dean of library and academic support services at NorthWest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville and brings experience from both public and academic libraries. She is passionate about helping libraries adapt and thrive, with particular interests in generative AI, information literacy, teaching and learning, and professional development. Shawna is active in CULAR, serves as editor of *Arkansas Libraries'* Two-Year Colleges column, and currently serves as both an ArLA Board member-at-large and president of the ARKLink Library Consortium. She values collaboration, innovation, and strong professional networks, and would be honored to continue serving Arkansas libraries through the ArLA Board.



Thorup

Taylor Vanlandingham is library director at John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Arkansas and currently is serving as past president for the Arkansas Library Association.

WHAT'S UP? DOCS.

America250: Public Memory, Federal Agencies, and Digital Government Information

by *Dominique Hallett*,

Arkansas State University

In 2026, the United States marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, commonly branded as “America250” or the Semiquincentennial. While public attention has largely focused on celebrations, historical reenactments, and patriotic programming, the anniversary also represents a major moment in the history of government information. Across the federal government, agencies are producing new digital collections, educational resources, commemorative publications, datasets, exhibitions, and public outreach initiatives designed to interpret the nation’s founding and present it to contemporary audiences.

For librarians and government information professionals, America250 is not simply a celebration. It is also a case study in how the federal government creates public memory through information systems. The federal government has long used anniversaries as opportunities to shape civic identity. The 1876 Centennial, the 1976 Bicentennial, and now the 2026 Semiquincentennial



Hallett

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each generated enormous bodies of government-produced information. These commemorations leave behind reports, posters, websites, audiovisual productions, educational curricula, oral histories, and digital archives that become valuable primary sources for future researchers.

What distinguishes the 250th anniversary from earlier commemorations is the extent to which it is occurring in a born-digital information environment. Unlike the Bicentennial of 1976, which relied heavily on printed publications, television broadcasts, commemorative postage, and physical exhibitions, America250 is fundamentally networked. Federal agencies now communicate through websites, social media platforms, streaming video, digitized archival collections, APIs, and interactive educational portals. One of the best examples of this digital format is on the White House website: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/freedom250>.

The central coordinating body for the anniversary is the United States Semiquincentennial Commission, established by Congress in 2016. Working alongside the nonprofit America250 Foundation, the Commission coordinates national commemorative programming across federal agencies, state governments, museums, libraries, and educational institutions. Its work illustrates the increasingly collaborative and decentralized nature of federal information production.

Agencies Celebrating America250

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the custodian of the Declaration of Independence, has expanded its public programming focused on the founding era. NARA’s digitization initiatives, online exhibits, and educational resources demonstrate how archival institutions increasingly function as both repositories and interpretive actors. The Archives is not merely preserving documents; it is actively shaping how the public understands them (<https://www.archives.gov/freedom250>).

Similarly, the Library of Congress has used the anniversary to foreground digitized manuscripts, newspapers, maps, and rare books connected to the Revolutionary period. These projects reflect broader trends in mass digitization and public humanities outreach. Researchers also raise important questions about discoverability, metadata, and the long-term sustainability of digital collections (<https://newsroom.loc.gov/news/library-of-congress-celebrates-america-s-250-years/s/f24d73a1-2beb-4ca8-bbb7-49ebc3f65145>).

The Smithsonian Institution and the National Park Service likewise occupy central roles in commemorative interpretation. Revolutionary War battlefields, historic homes, and museum exhibitions are being reframed through the lens of the 250th anniversary. Increasingly, these agencies are attempting to present more inclusive narratives that address Indigenous dispossession, slavery, women’s history, and the experiences of marginalized communities during the Revolutionary era (<https://www.si.edu/250> and <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/npscelebrates/usa-250.htm>).

This interpretive shift reflects larger transformations in public history and government information over the past several decades. Federal commemorations no longer present a single uncontested national narrative. Instead, agencies are attempting to balance celebration with critical historical interpretation. Whether these efforts succeed remains a matter of scholarly and political debate.

Other Anniversaries

The anniversary year also coincides with other important federal anniversaries. The Bureau of Land Management (<https://www.blm.gov/>) marks its 80th

anniversary in 2026, while the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/AboutUs_LawsandRegs_FLPMA.pdf) reaches its 50th anniversary. These observances highlight how agencies use commemorative milestones to educate the public about institutional history, statutory authority, and evolving policy missions.

For government information librarians and librarians in general, America250 presents both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, the anniversary offers rich opportunities for instruction and outreach. Librarians can use commemorative materials to teach students about:

- the structure of the federal government
- primary source research
- archival authority
- digital preservation
- metadata
- the political dimensions of public memory

The anniversary also provides opportunities for collaboration between libraries, archives, museums, and local historical organizations.

On the other hand, born-digital commemorations remain fragile. Websites disappear. Social media posts vanish. Interactive projects become technologically obsolete. Historians of the future may find that preserving the digital record of America250 is substantially more difficult than preserving printed Bicentennial pamphlets from 1976.

This challenge reinforces the continuing importance of web archiving initiatives and digital preservation strategies within libraries and the government information community. Institutions such as the Library of Congress, the Government Publishing Office, NARA, and the Internet Archive will play essential roles in ensuring that the documentary record of the Semiquincentennial survives.

The 250th anniversary, therefore, serves not only as a commemoration of the nation's founding but also as a reflection of the contemporary federal information ecosystem. America250 reveals how government agencies communicate with the public, how historical narratives are constructed, and how digital information is preserved – or lost.

For librarians, the anniversary offers an opportunity to examine not merely what the federal government says about history, but how it says it, through which platforms, and for which audiences. In that sense, America250 is as much about the future of government information as it is about the past of the United States.

Happy 250th Anniversary to the United States of America!

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

TWO-YEAR COLLEGES: The 48-Page Plan: Building Accessibility Infrastructure Under Pressure by Shawna Thorup and Heather Lundy, NorthWest Arkansas Community College

Note: This article was originally drafted before the U.S. Department of Justice released new guidance extending the Title II digital accessibility compliance deadline on April 20, 2026. For our institution, the compliance deadline has moved from April 24, 2026, to April 27, 2027. Also, at the time the work was performed, Thorup's title was Library Director, and we have maintained that in our narrative for consistency.



Thorup

Previously in this journal, Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) Library documented its first formal website accessibility review and shared a practical framework for improving



Lundy

LibGuides and web content through a partnership with Springshare (Roberts, 2025). That work was adapted into a poster session presented by Digital Services Librarian Autumn Roberts and Library Director Shawna Thorup at the 2025 ArLA Conference titled *Turning the Page on Digital Accessibility*. The poster focused intentionally on a defined project:

assessing a representative set of pages, understanding accessibility gaps, and translating audit findings into concrete improvements (Roberts & Thorup, 2025). The review was also part of the College's broader effort to prepare for compliance with emerging ADA Title II digital accessibility requirements. Since that time, Roberts, the library's team lead on the project, has departed NWACC.

What became increasingly clear since 2025 was that the most lasting impact of the review was not confined to our website. Instead, it reshaped how accessibility surfaced in everyday library decisions and revealed the need for a more comprehensive,

systematic approach. This article documents our process of developing a 48-page Digital Accessibility Compliance Plan and reflects on what we are learning as we begin implementation. This is not a success story or a completed case study; it is a progress report from the middle of the work, shared in the hope that our planning framework and honest account of implementation challenges may help other Arkansas libraries navigate similar terrain.

From Audit to Compliance Plan: Recognizing the Need for Infrastructure

The accessibility review marked a turning point in how our library approached everyday decisions. Once accessibility issues were named, documented, and discussed openly, they became difficult to ignore in contexts beyond web design. Questions that once felt peripheral began to surface naturally in routine work. During database renewals and vendor negotiations, accessibility documentation became part of our evaluation process rather than an afterthought. When reviewing LibGuides, instructional materials, or embedded media, staff were more likely to pause and consider keyboard navigation, heading structure, captions, or alternative text before publishing content.

The turning point came when our College established a Digital Accessibility Steering Committee (DASC) to ensure NWACC complies with federal accessibility laws, including ADA Title II, Section 504, and the 2024 DOJ web accessibility rule, and named Outreach and Engagement Librarian Heather Lundy as a member. The DASC issued a directive requiring all units to establish benchmarks for 75% institutional compliance of high-risk areas by the April 27, 2026, deadline, with 100% compliance of high-risk areas required by the Fall 2026 semester. Full compliance for all areas was given a two-year timeline.

Suddenly, the accessibility work that had felt manageable (a website audit here, some LibGuide improvements there) was reframed as part of a college-wide compliance effort with specific deadlines and accountability measures. The directive made clear that we needed more than good intentions and incremental improvements. We needed a systematic framework that could demonstrate measurable progress, assign clear responsibilities, and create sustainable processes rather than one-time fixes. We needed a compliance plan.

Developing the Compliance Plan: An Intensive Process

In approximately one month during spring semester 2026, we developed a 48-page Digital Accessibility Compliance Plan (DACP). The timeline was aggressive, driven by the College's compliance deadlines and the need to establish our benchmarks quickly. The work fell primarily to three people: Lundy and Roberts, who drafted the

initial framework, and Thorup, who expanded and finalized it. The other NWACC librarians provided input throughout the process by offering suggestions, details, and editing.

The intensity of the work cannot be overstated. Lundy and Roberts began with an AI-assisted document template provided by the College's Office of Risk Management, which gave us a structural starting point but required substantial customization to address the library's specific services, resources, and operational realities. They drew on our existing knowledge of College and Library operations and experience gleaned by working through a LibGuides accessibility tracker Roberts developed. We had prioritized our needed fixes, learned how to remediate them, and were systematically working through alt text, iframes, headings, PDFs, and other issues.

Lundy began reviewing the template for relevant content, pruning, sorting, and grouping to apply it to our library. Next, Lundy reviewed our existing documentation and timelines and added them to relevant sections of the plan. Lundy then answered open questions and documented existing workflows and partnerships. This work was squeezed between desk shifts, instructional sessions, and supervisory duties. Roberts provided feedback and input, and after revision, they submitted a Frankenstein of a plan, roughly 12 pages, to Thorup for review.

Thorup drew on deep policy-writing experience and AI assistance to revise and expand the plan. Perplexity searched for exemplar policies and guidance, which led to the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). ARL's "ADA Title II Regulations: Implications for Libraries" provided a framework to strengthen the plan. Claude 4.5 Sonnet was used to compare the plan draft to the ARL's guidelines and create a prioritized revision checklist to systematically work through recommended revisions. After revising, both drafts and the checklist were compared by Gemini 3 Pro for quality, formatting, content gaps, and integration recommendations. Finally, Gemini suggested a list of deliverables, logs, and internal documents referenced in the plan that we need to create to implement it. Thorup's work transformed the document into a full, fleshed-out 48-page plan, detailing all aspects of documentation, review, and training needed for sustainable compliance.

Our plan encompasses every point of interaction between students and digital information: database interfaces, the study room reservation system, videoconferences, public workstations, and beyond. The plan is structured around four integrated systems that together create a comprehensive compliance framework:

1. Accessible library services and resources:
Ensuring that what we provide to students is accessible by default.

2. Accessible technology and physical-digital interfaces: Addressing public workstations, assistive technology, and the points where students interact with library systems.
3. Staff training and service readiness: Building capacity across the library team to recognize and respond to accessibility needs.
4. Monitoring, documentation, and accountability: Creating sustainable processes for ongoing compliance rather than one-time fixes.

We organized implementation into three phases:

Phase 1: Establish Accessibility Standards and Governance. Defining roles, responsibilities, and institutional partnerships (particularly with the Disability Resource Center and IT), clarifying who is responsible for what, and creating the governance structure that would guide all subsequent work.

Phase 2: Infrastructure and Content Remediation. The concrete work of fixing existing problems in Springshare, remediating documents, and ensuring technology accessibility, addressing the backlog of accessibility issues while simultaneously establishing processes to prevent new issues from accumulating.

Phase 3: Library Staff Training. Building knowledge and skills across the team through baseline training for all staff and role-specific training tracks. We positioned training as the final phase because staff would be more receptive once they could see the systems and processes in place and understand how their roles fit into the larger compliance framework.

Implementation has been somewhat organic. Phase 1 has been largely established, and strong progress has been made on Phase 2. We have initiated staff development and training as well, and Phases 2 and 3 will be completed largely concurrently.

The completed 48-page document represents not just a compliance requirement, but a fundamental rethinking of how accessibility is embedded in our library operations. It gave us a roadmap, specific benchmarks aligned with the College's deadlines, and a framework for accountability. What it did not give us was additional time, staffing, or resources to do the work. That tension between the comprehensive scope of what needs to happen and the limited capacity to make it happen has defined our implementation experience.

Implementation Realities: What We're Learning

Springshare Remediation

Our plan sets specific, measurable targets for addressing accessibility issues identified in the Springshare audit. The timeline was ambitious but achievable because we trained all librarians to remediate content and delegated tasks to LibGuides owners.

Document Remediation: The Harder Challenge

The Springshare work, while time-consuming, followed a clear audit and checklist. Document remediation has proven more complex. We are working to review approximately 400 linked documents, particularly PDFs. The library management team will develop a sustainable document accessibility policy and workflow during summer 2026, with a target of having all linked documents fully accessible by August 2026. Remediating PDFs requires specialized software, and we are exploring tools and alternatives. We are learning that document accessibility is not a one-time project but requires an ongoing workflow for new documents and a decision-making framework for legacy materials. We plan a mixed approach, converting what we can to LibGuides and remediating what is necessary.

Vendor Accountability: ACRs and Renewal Decisions

As the College intensified its preparation for compliance with ADA Title II digital accessibility requirements, accessibility became less abstract and more operational for the library. Title II reframed accessibility not as a reactive accommodation process, but as an expectation that digital services be accessible by default. For the library, this shift showed up most clearly in how we evaluated and renewed electronic resources.

In partnership with IT and Procurement, we are now collecting and tracking Accessibility Conformance Reports (ACRs) from all vendors and requiring them before renewal. This includes our integrated library system (KOHA), Springshare, 26 library-specific vendors who provide 186 databases, and tools used in our instructional program, such as ScribeHow, Mentimeter, and Padlet. The library management team is monitoring and following vendors' accessibility updates, including attending webinars and requesting vendor meetings. Beyond collecting documentation, we now query all vendors about their complaint and remediation process before we purchase or renew. This shifts the conversation from passive documentation to active accountability.

Making Accessibility Information Visible to Users

We have also taken steps to make accessibility information visible and actionable for our users directly on our database A-Z list. We added a flag and resource icon to identify databases with archival content that is exempt under the law, helping users understand when accessibility limitations may exist due to the nature of historical materials. More significantly, we have added resource icons to all databases that link users directly to the vendor's accessibility statement. This serves multiple purposes: it provides transparency about what

accessibility features are available, it gives users a direct path to vendors for remediation requests, and it signals to our community that accessibility is a priority in our resource selection.

Real Decisions and Difficult Conversations

This process influences real decisions. In some cases, our procurement conversations became opportunities to share information about ADA Title II requirements with vendor representatives, reflecting the broader learning curve the field is navigating around accessibility compliance. We are pleased to report that all vendor interactions were handled respectfully and to our satisfaction. In some cases, we were able to find the ACR easily thanks to Google searches for vendor name + database + VPAT or ACR, Amigos Library Services (Amigos), and the Library Accessibility Alliance (LAA). Amigos is now linking ACRs in their vendor directory. The LAA provides “high-level accessibility evaluations based on WCAG 2.1 AA and, when applicable, WCAG 2.2 AA,” conducted by independent third parties and allows vendors to respond to their evaluations.

The IT Coordination Challenge

While this approach clarifies the library’s role as both a steward of access and a partner in institutional compliance, it also introduces new tensions. We discovered that a centralized ACR collection process had been initiated by IT without a shared communication channel to the library, a gap that revealed the need for more intentional cross-departmental coordination protocols. The library needs access to vendor accessibility documentation not just for institutional compliance tracking, but to evaluate whether a resource meets our users’ needs and whether a vendor is a reliable partner in accessibility.

Currently all plans are still considered “draft,” and the library and IT continue to work toward a unified process. This coordination issue reflects a broader challenge in institutional accessibility compliance: balancing centralized oversight with the distributed decision-making that happens in individual departments. A potential solution may be EDUCAUSE’s Higher Education Community Vendor Assessment Toolkit™ (HECVAT), a comprehensive vendor evaluation process organizations can request from vendors that includes a detailed accessibility evaluation in clear, easy-to-read language.

When we initiated the renewal process for Nexis Uni, obtaining an ACR required direct engagement with both Amigos and LexisNexis. Through persistent and collaborative communication, LexisNexis’s accessibility team ultimately provided the ACR promptly upon its completion, a positive outcome that reflects the value of clear, documented procurement expectations and the

growing responsiveness of vendors to accessibility compliance requirements. Nexis Uni has been renewed.

This process adds time to renewals, but it ensures that accessibility is weighted alongside traditional metrics such as cost, usage statistics, and curricular relevance in our decision-making.

Technology, Public Workstations, and Instruction

The plan requires that public computers support assistive technologies, operating systems and software are accessibility-enabled, adaptive hardware is available and functional, and lab software and applications are accessible or have alternatives. The library maintains designated accessible workstations in all spaces, supervised by the digital services librarian in partnership with the Disability Resource Center and facilitated by IT. Already a functioning partnership before the roadmap was developed, this relationship is flourishing.

All library instructional content must include captions for video, provide transcripts for audio content, use accessible presentation materials, and be navigable by keyboard. Library digital instruction takes place over Microsoft Teams and utilizes the accessibility features in that platform. During online library workshops, librarians now explain how to enable captioning and transcripts.

Challenges and What We Wish We’d Known

Looking back on the past 18 months, from initial audit through plan development to early implementation, several lessons have emerged.

We should have started earlier. Different understandings of the compliance deadline for our institution created various levels of urgency within college units. While the library was on target for the actual work of achieving compliance with digital accessibility standards and well ahead of college-established benchmarks, as we engaged more deeply with the college’s compliance framework, the documentation requirements proved more extensive than initially anticipated, highlighting the value of early cross-departmental communication. Beginning even a month or two earlier could have eased the intensity of the process.

We should have worked on it more consistently. The intensive one-month planning sprint was necessary given deadlines, but it also meant there was no time for the structured mentorship and collaborative scaffolding that a document of this scale and institutional significance demands. While the librarians brought solid digital accessibility expertise, drafting a formal, college-level compliance document of this scope was new territory, a different kind of challenge than the institutional documentation work they had been doing effectively. Competing workload demands limited opportunities for distributed collaboration, concentrating much

of the effort on project leadership. The compressed timeline created significant strain on project leadership, underscoring the need for sustainable workload planning in future accessibility initiatives. A more sustained, incremental approach might have resulted in reduced burnout for those involved and a stronger, more cohesive plan.

We needed help we didn't have. In an ideal world, we would hire someone to help us with this work. Consulting with someone experienced in library-specific digital accessibility would have been useful. Something as simple as delegating document management to the library administrator might have been a helpful boost, but we should note that position was vacant at that time. Like many community college libraries operating within constrained budgets, this work was integrated into existing responsibilities, a reality that shaped our timeline and reinforced the case for dedicated staffing and resources for accessibility compliance.

We thought we were in great shape, and it was confusing and disheartening to feel so underprepared after receiving the College's requirements. The initial Springshare audit and incremental improvements we were making felt manageable and even empowering. The institutional compliance framework, while necessary, introduced complexity we didn't anticipate. The detail and documentation required to withstand a robust audit is extensive and not intuitive, which in itself encompasses a steep learning curve.

Competing priorities and time pressure have been our biggest challenges, and we anticipate that will continue. Despite the importance of this work, it can feel like the proverbial "one more thing." What must give to achieve it? Something, because what we've done in the first three and a half months of 2026 is unsustainable.

The work also continues to expand in ways we didn't anticipate. Even as we work through the implementation phases of our compliance plan, new requirements emerge. We have been asked to write a formal Library & E-Resources Accessibility Policy as required under the ADA Title II Digital Accessibility standards, another substantial document that must go through institutional approval processes. This policy will codify our vendor requirements, staff responsibilities, and user rights, but developing it requires time and expertise when we're already stretching thin across remediation, vendor negotiations, and staff training. Each new requirement is individually reasonable and necessary, but collectively they illustrate how accessibility compliance is not a finite project but an expanding set of ongoing responsibilities that must somehow fit within existing workflows and staffing levels.

The irony is not lost on us: we are writing plans and policies about how we will ensure accessibility

while struggling to find the time to actually implement the accessibility measures the policy describes. This tension between documentation and action, between governance and execution, is perhaps the defining challenge of accessibility work in under-resourced libraries.

What's Working:

Small Wins and Emerging Practices

Despite the challenges, some aspects of this work are proving more manageable than expected or are yielding unexpected benefits. Our librarians have become adept at checking digital accessibility and remediating our LibGuides. It's not uncommon to hear someone say they're going to take a LibGuide page and "run it through WAVE," a website accessibility evaluation tool. Our LibGuides Accessibility Tracker has both created ingrained habits and been widely shared with other Springshare customers. We updated the digital services librarian's job description to emphasize and codify the digital accessibility work expected of them.

We are learning that cultural change is harder than technical fixes. Librarians sharing elements of universal design, that we all benefit from the accessibility changes that are implemented, have helped staff form useful connections between digital accessibility and student success. As a library, we believe in lifelong learning, and our team culture can adapt and incorporate accessibility with intentional and sustainable training.

Accountability and Ongoing Monitoring

The library's digital accessibility points of contact include the library director, the digital services librarian, and an appointed DASC member. They liaise with Risk Management, Policy Compliance, Purchasing, the DRC, and IT to maintain consistent digital accessibility.

The library management team maintains records of vendor documentation, accessibility audits, remediation efforts, and staff training in a SharePoint site accessible to all library managers. We continue to gather and maintain all relevant records as appropriate, including comments and complaints. No complaints have been recorded as of the writing of this article.

Looking Ahead:

Next Steps and Realistic Expectations

Our immediate priorities for the next 6-12 months include completing Springshare high-priority remediation, developing and implementing the document accessibility workflow, resolving the ACR coordination process with IT, and completing staff training with an emphasis on ownership and accountability.

We do not expect to achieve full accessibility compliance in the next year. What we are building is the infrastructure, the policies, processes, partnerships, and practices, that will make ongoing

compliance sustainable rather than a series of crisis responses. Moving forward, digital accessibility will be consciously included in planning, design, and workflows, rather than a post-creation remediation step. What this has taught us is that digital accessibility has no final destination. Rather, it is a never-ending, constantly evolving journey.

Implications for Arkansas Libraries

Digital accessibility is no longer a concern limited to a single platform, department, or library type. Public, academic, school, and special libraries across Arkansas are all navigating the same shift toward accessible-by-default digital services, often with limited time, staffing, and resources.

Our experience suggests several insights that may be useful to other libraries beginning similar work:

1. Comprehensive planning is necessary but resource intensive. The 48-page compliance plan provides structure and accountability, but developing it required significant time and expertise. Look for resources created by larger institutions, such as accessibility LibGuides, or reach out to colleagues at similar institutions.
2. Institutional coordination is essential and complicated. Libraries cannot achieve accessibility compliance in isolation. Partnerships with disability services, IT, and administration are necessary, but they also introduce coordination challenges that require ongoing communication and negotiation.
3. Vendor accountability is both possible and difficult. Requiring ACRs and making renewal decisions based on accessibility is the right approach, but it requires expertise to evaluate technical documentation, willingness to have difficult conversations with vendors, and sometimes the courage to decline resources that don't meet standards.
4. Cultural change is slower than technical fixes. We can remediate a LibGuide in an afternoon, but shifting staff mindsets and building genuine commitment to accessibility as a core value is ongoing work that requires patience, persistence, and strategies we are still developing.
5. Progress does not depend on perfection. We are sharing this progress report not because we have succeeded, but because we believe the planning framework, the honest account of challenges, and the specific processes we are developing may help other libraries set realistic expectations and avoid some of the pitfalls we've encountered.

When accessibility becomes part of how we plan, purchase, design, and evaluate our work, it becomes sustainable rather than overwhelming. But that integration takes time, resources, and institutional support. As libraries across the state prepare for evolving expectations under ADA Title II and

beyond, the most important step may be recognizing that accessibility is not a separate initiative, but a shared commitment woven into the routine work we already do in service of our communities and that building the infrastructure to support that commitment is itself significant work that deserves recognition and resources.

Conclusion

Eighteen months after our initial Springshare accessibility audit, NWACC Library has not achieved full accessibility compliance, but we have built a framework to get there. Our 48-page Digital Accessibility Compliance Plan represents a shift from reactive fixes to proactive systems. We are learning that sustainable accessibility work requires institutional coordination, staff buy-in that we haven't fully achieved, vendor accountability processes that are still evolving, and resources we don't always have.

As we continue implementation through 2026 and beyond, we are discovering that the gap between planning and doing is where the real work happens. For Arkansas libraries doing similar work, we offer not a success story, but a roadmap, a realistic timeline, and an honest account of the challenges that accompany institutional change. We also offer an invitation: if our compliance plan framework would be useful to your library, or if you are navigating similar challenges and would like to compare notes, please reach out.

Accessibility is not an add-on to library service. It is library service made visible in every decision we make. Building the systems to ensure that visibility is ongoing work, and we are still in the middle of it. Steady on.

Shawna Thorup is dean of library and academic support services and Heather Lundy is outreach and engagement librarian at NorthWest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville, Arkansas.



See ArLA Conference preview on Page 4.

ADMINISTRATION & MANAGEMENT: **The Role of Fit in the Hiring Process** *by April Sheppard, Arkansas State University*

Whether we're the top dog, leading from the middle, or a very involved grunt, many of us have found ourselves participating in the hiring process in one way or another. There is an imperfect, inconsistent science to hiring the right person. There are minimum qualifications and preferred ones, but hiring is often more than that. Nearly as important as skills and relevant experience are the harder-to-quantify qualities that we might categorize as "fit."



Sheppard

Fit is complicated. Used intentionally and equitably, it can be a useful tool in the hiring process that helps identify strong candidates and leads to more satisfied employees. Used without restraint or clear definition, it can reinforce bias and work against diversity (Hennigan & Evans, 2018).

At its simplest, fit can mean, "How well does this candidate and this position fit together?" I find that this is especially true with staff and entry level positions where candidates may not have previous library experience. In these cases, I look closely at transferable skills. What skills did the candidate develop in previous roles that might help them succeed here? Candidates with retail and food service experience may bring strong customer service skills that translate well to service desk positions, while those with computer programming experience may have the attention to detail needed for cataloging and metadata work. I also consider how fulfilled a candidate is likely to be in the role. A candidate who speaks passionately about working with small children may not find the same satisfaction in an academic library setting. Of course, this is only one part of the decision. After all, it is possible that a candidate is looking for a change.

Another definition is "cultural fit," or how well a candidate will fit with the existing staff, organizational culture, and shared vision. According to Gasper and Brown, "hiring for fit is critical in libraries because each member of the group interacts on behalf of the library" (2015, p. 374).

In other words, each interaction an employee has with a patron is a direct reflection on the library itself. They also suggest that employees who share the values and culture of the hiring institution work more effectively, adapt more readily to new responsibilities, and integrate more quickly into teams. Additional research shows that cultural fit can increase an employee's job satisfaction, long-term employment, and lead to stronger socialization, coordination, and trust among colleagues.

However, many scholars caution against overreliance on cultural fit in hiring decisions. Holley (2022) notes that fit can lead hiring committees to overvalue factors that have little to do with job performance, such as shared hobbies or personalities, while Evans points out that fit can become shorthand for "this person isn't like me" (Hennigan & Evans, 2018). Respondents in a 2023 survey reported that fit is sometimes used to stand in for federally prohibited criteria, and that "poor fit" is often cited when candidates from marginalized groups are not selected (Caragher & Bryant, 2023). Fit can also introduce bias during informal parts of the process, such as meals or social interactions, where differences in background, interests, or neurodivergence may be misinterpreted as lack of fit despite having no impact on job performance (Cohen et al., 2025).

By putting too much emphasis on cultural fit, we risk the possibility of a homogeneous workforce that reinforces biases and existing norms while perpetuating a culture that centers on dominant identities. Over time, this can lead to stagnation, the loss of new perspectives, and missed opportunities for growth and innovation (Arch et al., 2021). It can also create an environment that feels unwelcoming to patrons and employees who do not see themselves reflected in the organization. Libraries serve diverse communities, and that diversity should be visible within the organization itself. Hiring for fit, when unchecked, can exclude candidates from different backgrounds and experiences. What may feel like alignment in the moment can, over time, reduce adaptability, weaken our ability to respond to changing community needs, and undermine efforts to build inclusive, welcoming libraries.

So, what's a hiring manager or search committee member to do? First, there needs to be a shared and clearly articulated understanding of what "fit" means within your institution and throughout the hiring process. Without that clarity, "fit" too easily becomes subjective and inconsistent. Focus on overall fit such as skills, capacity to grow, and alignment with institutional values rather than personal interests

or informal rapport. Second, be intentional about priorities. If your institution values diversity, equity, and inclusion, then lived experiences and diverse perspectives must be treated as essential qualifications, not secondary considerations. Finally, commit to an equitable and transparent hiring process. Ask all candidates the same core questions, apply a consistent evaluation rubric, and invest in ongoing training for search committee members, even for the most seasoned. When approached thoughtfully, “fit” can move from a vague instinct to a more deliberate and equitable tool that supports successful hires while also contributing to stronger, more effective libraries.

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ARKANSAS BOOKS & AUTHORS

by Jessica Sawyer

Central Arkansas Library System – Main

***I, Medusa* by Ayana Gray**

Gray, Ayana. *I, Medusa: A New Kind of Villain Origin Story*. London: ZAFFRE, 2025. 320p. ISBN 9781785306839.

Sporting several thousand reviews and ratings, this 4.0+ star novel is Gray's adult debut. The edition I read was an English version; the Random House edition (which is available for about \$21.00 for a hardback on Amazon) was published in November 2025 and quickly voted Amazon Editor's Pick of the Month for Best Literature & Fiction. This New York Times bestselling novel "reimagines Medusa's story in the *Metamorphoses*" and focuses on Medusa's own personal evolution at the age of seventeen. Divided into four parts, Gray dives into Medusa's character as Mortal, Maiden, Mistress, and Monster (these chapters are titled Maiden, Mistress, Monster, Myth



Sawyer

in the Random House edition).

As Medusa's myth is well known, I feel comfortable talking about each part individually.

Mortal

The book begins with family dynamics and politics as Medusa, affectionately referred to as Meddy, prepares for a spring feast her parents are hosting for the Sea Court alongside her sisters Stheno and Euryale. Her parents, Phorcys and Ceto, plan the elaborate feast in hopes of impressing the gods of the Sea Court when a surprise guest makes an appearance. This guest's arrival sets the tone for the rest of this part, as their presence deeply impacts the behavior of every single character.

I absolutely love how Gray portrayed the sibling dynamics in this part. Their relationships with each other read authentically and, as a youngest sibling like Meddy, definitely felt relatable.

Maiden

In part two, Meddy's journey as an Athenian acolyte begins. Cast as an outsider among the acolytes because she's a foreigner, Meddy must not only work to prove herself a worthy acolyte to Athena, but also to her fellow acolytes. Forming friendships along the way, she begins to learn a lot about herself through the tests acolytes must pass



to become full priestesses. Her mind, creativity, and sense of justice are all challenged, some in precarious ways.

Reading Medusa's journey to becoming a priestess of Athena was very powerful and caused me to pause several times. Many scenes in this part were thought-provoking and full of complicated nuance in a beautiful way. Gray delved into Medusa's strengths in this part and really fleshed out her evolving internal compass.

Mistress

For part three, Gray expands on the iterations of Medusa's story that include Poseidon as a key part of her narrative. This part I will give a content warning for rape and sexual assault.*

Meddy takes Athens by storm with an acolyte friend during the festivities of Panathenaia, a festival typically held in June to honor Athena. After much drinking, Meddy and her friend become separated, and both girls must make their way back to the Acropolis on their own. Along the way, Meddy runs into Poseidon.

Poseidon spends this part of the book grooming Meddy and 'helping' uplift her as a priestess after she passes her acolyte tests. Eventually, while

visiting her family on their island, Poseidon makes Meddy break her vow of chastity to Athena, causing havoc amongst Meddy's mental headspace, her family, and, briefly, Olympian politics.

As is well known, after this loss of chastity, Athena curses Medusa to become the Gorgon she is so famous for being, with serpents for hair and the ability to turn anyone who looks her in the eyes into stone. Her sisters were given the same fate after standing up for her against Athena.

Monster

In the final part, we see Medusa struggle with her newfound curse and how her relationship with her sisters evolves after this drastic change. I will touch on this part the least to avoid spoilers about Gray's portrayal of the most well-known part of Medusa's myth, but I loved the insight into Medusa that we see here.

I truly enjoyed reading this fresh interpretation of Medusa's story. The focus on her strengths and the nuance in how she uses those strengths was incredibly well done. I also really liked the background details added about Meddy's family and how her familial experiences shaped her choices throughout the story. It would have been easy to have most of the characters aside from Medusa and the Olympians be fairly two-dimensional, but every character had depth, and I truly enjoyed getting a look into all of them.

*For a more complete list of content warnings, I recommend looking at *I, Medusa* on Storygraph (<https://thestorygraph.com/>).

For additional information:

- *I, Medusa*. Author's Note, page 317.
- "Panathenaia." *Panathenaea Festival* (Panathenaia) - Ancient Greek Religion, www.theoi.com/Festival/Panathenaia.html. Accessed 01 May 2026.

Jessica Sawyer obtained her BAs in English and History and AA in General Education Science from Central Baptist College. She is a library assistant in the Information Services department at CALS. Sawyer's hobbies include knitting and philately, and she is currently working on a non-fiction work about postage stamps and their importance to historical research. One of her favorite books series is The Invisible Library series by Genevieve Cogman.

YOUTH SERVICES

Dinosaurs, Discovery, and Steam: Reimagining Arkansas Summer Reading Programs through Science and Community Partnerships

by *Elizabeth Hurtado Lafont, Springdale
Public Library*

Each January, librarians across Arkansas begin the familiar but exciting ritual of planning for Summer Reading Program. While the calendars still show winter, our minds are already filled with storytimes, outreach visits, partnerships, and the question we ask every year: *How can we make this summer meaningful for our communities?*



Hurtado-Lafont

The 2026 Summer Reading programs theme, **Dinosaurs**, offers Arkansas libraries a powerful opportunity to go beyond traditional reading incentives and lean fully into science, discovery, and STEAM learning. Dinosaurs spark instant curiosity in children of all ages, but they also serve as an accessible gateway to topics such as paleontology, geology, habitats, evolution, engineering, and scientific inquiry. When thoughtfully designed, dinosaur-themed programming can support literacy while strengthening science learning and community engagement across the state.

For libraries serving rural towns, growing cities, and everything in between, the theme allows us to meet children where they are: curious, imaginative, and eager to explore the world around them.

Dinosaurs as a Bridge between Literacy and Science

Dinosaurs have long held a special place in children's literature, but their educational value goes far beyond fascination. They provide a natural bridge between reading and science-based learning. A single dinosaur storytime can include narrative comprehension, vocabulary development, movement, observation, hypothesis-building, and creative expression.

In Arkansas, where libraries often serve as essential informal learning hubs, dinosaur-themed programming aligns well with educational standards and community needs. Many families rely on public libraries to supplement science exposure during the

summer months, especially in areas where access to museums or science centers may be limited.

A dinosaur-focused Summer Reading Program can support:

- **Early literacy skills** through nonfiction and narrative storytelling
- **Scientific thinking** by encouraging children to ask questions, compare evidence, and draw conclusions
- **STEAM exploration** through hands-on activities such as fossil digs, volcano experiments, and habitat design
- **Social-emotional learning** by promoting curiosity, collaboration, and confidence

By framing dinosaurs as scientists' clues to Earth's past, libraries can help children understand that science is not just about answers, but about asking good questions.

STEAM in Action: Practical Program Ideas for Arkansas Libraries

STEAM programming does not require expensive materials or specialized staff. Many dinosaur-related activities can be adapted to libraries of all sizes and budgets.

Examples include:

- **Fossil investigations** using plaster casts, clay impressions, or found objects
- **Volcano demonstrations** to explore chemical reactions and geology
- **Dinosaur movement and measurement activities** to incorporate math and gross motor skills
- **Habitat-building challenges** using recycled materials to introduce engineering concepts
- **Nonfiction book exploration** that teaches children how to use indexes, captions, and diagrams

These activities work particularly well in Arkansas libraries because they connect global science concepts to local geography. Arkansas's natural history, including caves, rock formations, and fossil records, allows librarians to ground learning in the state's own landscape.

Community Partners: Expanding Impact beyond Library Walls

One of the greatest strengths of Arkansas libraries is our ability to collaborate. The dinosaur theme creates a clear invitation for community partners to participate in Summer Reading in meaningful, visible ways.

Libraries may consider inviting partners such as:

- **Museums and cultural institutions**, including local history museums, science museums, and university collections

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- **Universities and colleges**, particularly departments of geology, engineering, biology, or education
- **Nature centers, parks, and conservation organizations**, including state parks and extension offices
- **Wildlife organizations** that can connect dinosaurs to modern animals and ecosystems
- **Local educators and STEM professionals**, such as teachers, engineers, veterinarians, and researchers
- **Arts organizations**, to incorporate creative interpretations of dinosaurs through sculpture, photography, or storytelling

In Arkansas, partnerships often succeed because organizations share a commitment to community education. Inviting partners to participate in storytimes, hands-on programs, or outreach events not only enriches library offerings but also strengthens long-term relationships.

When reaching out to partners, it helps to clearly communicate:

- The age group and program length (typically 30–45 minutes for storytimes)
- The educational goals of the program
- The flexibility libraries offer in format and materials
- The visibility partners receive through library marketing and community engagement

Many organizations are eager to participate when they see libraries as trusted connectors to families.

Reaching Diverse Communities across Arkansas

Arkansas libraries serve diverse populations with varying access to educational resources. Dinosaur-themed programming can be adapted to meet different cultural, linguistic, and developmental needs.

Offering bilingual storytimes, sensory-friendly

programs, or family-centered STEAM events ensures that Summer Reading remains inclusive. Dinosaurs are universally engaging, making them especially effective in bridging language and cultural differences.

For communities where transportation is a barrier, mobile programming or outreach partnerships can extend the reach of Summer Reading beyond library buildings and into schools, community centers, and parks.

Why This Theme Matters

At its core, Summer Reading is about more than tracking minutes or completing challenges. It is about sustaining curiosity, preventing learning loss, and reminding children that libraries are places of discovery.

By embracing the dinosaur theme as a platform for science and STEAM, Arkansas libraries reaffirm their role as essential educational partners. We show families that learning is active, playful, and rooted in real-world exploration. We also demonstrate that libraries, large and small, can lead innovative, interdisciplinary programming that reflects the needs and strengths of their communities.

As we plan for Summer Reading, dinosaurs invite us to think big, collaborate boldly, and dig deeply into what makes libraries vital to Arkansas.

Elizabeth Hurtado-Lafont is a children's librarian at Springdale Public Library in Springdale, Arkansas. She specializes in early literacy, youth programming, and community partnerships, and has led grant-funded and collaborative initiatives that connect libraries with local educators, artists, and organizations across Northwest Arkansas.

AROUND ARKANSAS:

by Heather Hays, Associate Editor

We are sad to announce that Danny Koonce, our former State Library Public Information Officer, has passed away. Many of you will remember Danny as a fixture at a multitude of library gatherings, always with his camera and always a genial presence.

His obituary can be found here: <https://www.lakesidefh.com/obituaries/Daniel-Koonce?obId=47333203>

Thanks to the generosity of local philanthropists,
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publisher Alan Leveritt is offering free subscriptions to *Arkansas Times* to members of the Arkansas Library Association. This benefit includes full access to current issues, the award-winning *Arkansas Blog*, and their archives.

To receive this member benefit, you will need to provide either an official library-related work email address or request an @arlib.org email address. To update your email address, log into your profile at the following link and update your information: https://arlib.starchapter.com/account_info3.php.

Latara Williams, a UA Little Rock Applied Communication graduate student, received the 2026

Karen Russ Memorial Award for Excellence in Research for her study, *Resilient Voices: Exploring African American Patient Experiences with Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs)*. Dr. Gerald Driskill served as her faculty mentor. Williams presented her research at the 2026 Research Expo which was held on Friday, April 17.

Williams' research project explored African American patients' experiences with Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs), guided by communication theory to examine how stigma, trust, and culturally responsive care shape counseling experiences and resilience.

Crystal Gates has resigned from the Arkansas Chapter Council role due to a conflict with holding the position of PLA Division Councilor role at the same time. ALA advised that our ArLA president would need to appoint someone, which is confirmed by ArLA's bylaws. Allie Stevens Gosselink, library director at Calhoun County Public Library in

Hampton, Arkansas, was appointed as Arkansas Chapter Councilor to ALA and will be attending the ALA conference and council sessions and reporting back to the membership. Please send any communications to her at calcolib@gmail.com. Allie will also contribute to *Arkansas Libraries* as a columnist.

Please welcome Allie to the Board and as our new rep. Allie, thank you for your willingness to serve in this capacity.

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 heather.hays@bentonville.ar.gov, and you'll most likely see it published in our journal.

Heather Hays is the senior librarian at the Bentonville Public Library.

ALA COUNCILOR'S REPORT:

Notable News

by Crystal Gates, North Little Rock Public Library System

There are several ways to engage with your elected officials, even if you have just five minutes. Call and email your members of Congress and help spread the word on social media or in person. ALA has a communication toolkit with quick links, sample media posts, and templates for print and digital materials. You can find that toolkit by visiting ala.org/advocacy.

In June 2026 the ALA announced a new national advocacy campaign after the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted to advance a proposal for the E-Rate program to potentially terminate or limit to only rural areas. This campaign benefits from a partnership with Schools, Health, and Libraries Broadband (SHLB) partners. With connectivity now the backbone of nearly every function of modern schools and libraries, E-rate is vital to many communities nationwide. SaveOurERate.com is a central hub for everyone, including coalition partners and community



Gates

members. A free webinar, set for July 16th at 1 pm CST, will discuss the proposal and share how to help.

The dismantling of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) experienced a win on April 6, when a federal court granted the Trump Administration's request to withdraw its appeal of a federal judge's earlier ruling. This dismissal brings to a close the lawsuit filed by 21 Attorneys General in April 2025. ALA's separate case, which won a temporary restraining order in May 2025 preventing the Administration from mass layoffs of IMLS employees is still pending. Dear Appropriator letters remain available for you to contact your local officials requesting continued funding for the Library Services and Technology Act, which is administered by the IMLS.

ALA Celebrates 150 years at Annual in Chicago

The American Library Association celebrated its 150th anniversary at ALA Annual 2026. The opening session feature a conversation between ALA President Sam Helmick and Rachel Maddow. The President's Program featured Past First Lady Dr. Jill Biden.

Several Arkansas library workers presented programs and posters. Many of the breakout sessions featured topics such as Artificial Intelligence, programming, leadership, and diversity in libraries. More than 15,000 attended conference.

A group of Arkansas library workers enjoyed

dinner and conversation at Il Culaccino.

ALA Annual 2027 will be in New Orleans, June 24-28, 2027.

Council Actions @ Annual

Council met for three sessions at Annual. It was my honor to represent Arkansas during those council sessions.

Council I:

Council was advised the ALA Executive Board approved the ALA's FY 2027 Budget on June 26.

Notable actions taken by Council included a 3-year moratorium on new divisions, roundtables, standing committees, etc. This action continues the work of streamlining the ALA and bringing its expenditures in line with realized revenues. That goal is a work in progress and is expected to continue over the next five years. Council also approved the Librarians' and Library Workers' Bill of Rights Resolution.

Council II:

The Committee on Legislation brought the Resolution on Library Infrastructure as Essential Economic and Civic Infrastructure which was amended to include all libraries despite the quoted report specifying public libraries.

The expected Guidance on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Libraries was presented and resulted in much debate. After the debate – with comments from Councils regarding its purpose as a guide, not a mandate, and the expectation of it to be a living document with continual updated iterations – the guide was approved.

Council quickly approved the Resolution on Library Card Access Policies as a Form of Social Equity.

Council III:

Projected budgets still show a deficit, but the gap is closing. ALA has a 5-year plan to bring expected expenses in line with expected revenue. In order to survive the last six years, it has been necessary to make two large withdrawals from the Future Fund. Continuing to do so is unsustainable. It is vital that members of our profession become and remain members of our national association and contribute to and benefit from our national voice.

Council approved the ALA Monograph Ethics Guidelines, which will be added to the ALA Policy Manual and the new ALA Publications Committee web page when it is developed.

Council approved a Tribute Resolution Honoring Michael Dowling as Director of the International Relations Office. Councilors shared numerous stories about Michael's impact on libraries nationally and internationally.

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Council approved the Resolution Celebrating Staff in Honor of the ALA 150th Anniversary.

Considering the review and debate of the budget and talks had during the Chapter Leaders Forum, I went to the mic and shared the last announcement, which was how we, as members, can move the needle. A Tier 1 membership is \$128 per year, while discounted memberships are available, including those for members making less than \$45,000 per year. Check out more information at <https://www.ala.org/membership/personal-membership>. As a colleague and friend said to me recently, "A membership rate of \$128 is sometimes less than our state association membership rate. It is so worth it to contribute to our national voice. Everything else you get from ALA membership – networking, education, and more – is a bonus." I shared that my thought is that \$128 for the national voice, including ALA's assistance with our local and state issues, is essential and the rest is gravy. As another colleague recently shared with chapter leaders, "At the end of the day, ALA is not a library, it is a member association; and member associations need members for it to be the valuable resource that we need."

Copies of noted documents, in their drafts as presented, were attached to email updates sent to the ArLA listserv during ALA Annual. The ALA will make the final documents available at [ala.org](https://www.ala.org).

Getting Involved

Have you thought about getting involved in the ALA? Now is a great time to show up for our libraries by volunteering to serve on a committee. Learn more at [ala.org/aboutala/getinvolved](https://www.ala.org/aboutala/getinvolved).

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



Book circles at Highland High School Library. See article on Page 26.

Cataloging Issues and Copilot

by **Ronald Russ**

Arkansas State University-Beebe

Our world has been flooded by AI. I've seen a lot of webinars and conference programs on it, and at some point I figured I'd have to take the plunge and see if it will do the jobs that I need to more effectively than I am doing now. I look at it as a tool more than anything else.

Choosing Copilot was simple since ASU-Beebe is a Microsoft campus, and it is available for free with our subscription. I know there are other products out there, but I didn't feel like paying for them out of pocket.

In terms of tasks, I would generally feed it jobs that were mundane in nature. The cataloging work that I do is with electronic resources. I depend a lot on vendor provided MARC records, which means the quality varies quite a bit. I first asked if it could read MARC records, and it told me that it can and mentioned specifics about what it can do. Since it was the first time asking, I wanted to make sure it was up to the task. I then uploaded a MARC record file in .txt format since it doesn't handle uploads in .mrc format. Copilot detected global errors and specific errors and gave me ways to fix them. Some suggestions used MarcEdit, which I tend to use regularly, and some used PowerShell. Admittedly, I was not as familiar with PowerShell, but I asked some questions specifically about that, and since it's a Microsoft product, it should know a fair amount about it. Once I downloaded PowerShell 7, I was able to run the script it suggested, and it did clean the file that I uploaded to Copilot. After reviewing, I converted the text file back to .mrc and uploaded it to our ILS cataloging module successfully. It took me more time than fixing problems individually, but part of that was learning how to best utilize Copilot prompts and learning how to use PowerShell.

Another task I gave it was to fix diacritic errors in a file. There are certain vendors that tend to have more problems with this than others, and fixing errors individually can be a pain. Copilot suggested a way to fix it in MarcEdit where there is a Character Conversion tool that will convert the original format to UTF-8. I ran the conversion and it seemed to fix the diacritic problem, but I reviewed the file before



Russ

uploading it to our ILS.

A tedious task that I usually do twice a year is when ProQuest Ebook Central has many deletes. I must extract the URLs and place them in a text file for our ILS vendor to batch delete. I had already changed the URLs in the file to reflect our library's URL instead of Traveler. I asked Copilot to extract from the 856 field in the text file and create a new text file with just the URL. It was able to do so, but it couldn't write to my local drive; it saved to my OneDrive account. Anyway, I was able to download it and save it locally. I looked it over and it looked OK, so I attached it to my ticket with the ILS vendor. With this fix there was another issue that came up, but it wasn't AI's fault. Some of our URLs in the system are older and were probably not updated to https, but it couldn't have known that since it wasn't given that parameter. If all the URLs had been correct in the list, it most likely would have handled the job faster than I could.

The most involved task I asked Copilot to do was to create MARC records based on information I gave it in an Excel spreadsheet. The issue with this is that not all the information needed for the MARC record was included. Normally, I would have downloaded the records from the vendor, but the process wasn't working. But I was able to download a spreadsheet for the eBooks, so it gave us a starting point. So, we had a back-and-forth discussion on what needed to be added. Because this was done in stages, separate files had to be created and later merged. Copilot seemed to have more of a problem doing this. Part of it had to do with providing validated records. Eventually I told it to put together a draft, and I'd be the one to deal with the validation, which it was able to do. I reviewed the records before uploading them. In this case, it is hard to say whether it would have taken me longer to create each record from scratch or not. I did have to fix some things before uploading like the 008 field. For some reason, the ILS will treat it as a book, unless I change the form in that field to s. Not sure why that is the case. The letter "o" should work. One of these days, I'll have to ask – but maybe not Copilot!

Some takeaways from the experiment: you must be very specific with your prompts. If you are vague or just not specific enough, you will not get the results that you want. There are a lot of back-and-forth conversations, like a reference interview, which, as a librarian, I don't mind! Another issue was the limited number of cataloguing file formats Copilot will recognize. I had to convert files to .txt

to upload, which I can do easily with MarcEdit, but then I just need to convert it back to .mrc before importing to our cataloging database. Finally, this experiment has made me look at dealing with these cataloging issues from a different perspective. One example is with encoding errors. If doing the conversion to UTF-8 resolves most of the diacritic problems, I'll be happy.

AI tools are similar to other tools librarians have used in the past to make their work lives easier. It's no surprise that there's a learning curve, and that

we must "fact check" everything instead of just trusting blindly. The critical thinking element will always be imperative in using any tool – and as with technologies in general – each new generation of tool will continue to improve upon the last one, and will make our lives easier so that we can concentrate on other more complicated tasks.

Ron Russ is the electronic resources and systems librarian at ASU-Beebe's Abington Library.

Book Circles at Highland High

by Ashley Lewis

Highland High School

Highland High School Library hosts four "Book Circles" per school year. Interested students and staff sign up to participate, books are ordered, distributed, and completely read by the time of the meeting. Librarian Ashley Lewis decorates and provides refreshments that are book-themed and credits this to the increase in participation over the last couple of years. "I think

students not only enjoy the book, but also look forward to what the library will look like on Book Circle meeting day." The 2025-2026 4th quarter Book Circle was *The Summer She Went Missing*. It was a twisty summer-vibe mystery that was a HUGE hit with the participants!

Ashley Lewis is the high school librarian at Highland High School south of Hardy in northern Arkansas' Sharp County.



Ashley County Library Opens in New Location

by Holly Gillum

Ashley County Public Library

The Ashley County Library has a new home! In 2024, the Ashley County Library Board was able to purchase a newly available local building for a remodeling and relocation project. The "old library" as it has come to be called, was the original location of the Ashley County Library, founded in 1936. The donated office building grew too small, and the library was briefly relocated to the second floor of the Ashley County Court House.

Later additions to the original building moved the library back to its home on 211 E. Lincoln Street where it served the patrons of Ashley County for the next seventy-seven years.

As much as improvements were wanted and needed, they could not be made feasibly in the original facility. In addition, the space was oddly shaped, limiting the positioning of the stacks and movement of any furniture. A Friends of the Library group was founded in 1984 with the goal of raising funds to build a new library. The organization did not stay active long, but the funds raised were given

to the library and deposited into a CD where it earned interest for the next forty-plus years. Due to this foresight, we were able to purchase and fully renovate the new building debt-free.

Over the years, the library periodically searched for land or buildings for a move. As the library continued to grow, the pressure to move became a constant gnawing. When the “new library” location was posted for sale through a private social media post, Library Director Holly Gillum took action, and a verbal commitment to purchase was made with full permission of the board within twelve hours of the original post.

This commitment began a seventeen-month renovation project that culminated in a grand re-opening in October of 2025. Architect, contractor, designer, and decorator were hats not anticipated to be worn by this library director, but the challenge was met with enthusiasm and support of the library board, library staff, library patrons, and her husband, who did a great deal of the work from tearing out the gym remnants to helping paint, and then moving and installing the shelving from one building to the next. It was truly a labor of love by the entire staff.



Painting in progress. The director and her husband spent Labor Day Weekend 2025 disassembling shelving, loading it on a trailer, moving, unloading, reassembling, and rebuilding it in the new space.

The building had been a local gymnasium for over twenty years, and it has consistently surprised everyone who has visited it post-renovation. The library used this opportunity to downsize the collection in order to present more of a book-store oriented feel with a couple of comfortable seating areas. The collection was also genre grouped to the delight of the patrons. The open floor plan has allowed for movement of furniture to accommodate larger groups than the library has ever been able to host in the past. A small meeting room provides the opportunity for simultaneous programs, and a grant-funded study pod has been in near constant use since its installation.

Dedicated parking and a fenced outdoor area, currently in process of being renovated, just rounds out this new adventure for the Ashley County Library. If you get a chance to make it to Southeast Arkansas, stop in for a visit!

Holly Gillum is the library director at the Ashley County Public Library in Hamburg, Arkansas.



Our beautiful new facility, ready for open house!

SPECIAL LIBRARIES Hidden in Plain Sight:

The Work of Special Librarians

by *Sonya Lemke, Arkansas Colleges of Health Education*

When most people think of a library, they picture bookshelves, quiet spaces, and a circulation desk. I love that image. It is familiar, and it is part of why many of us chose this work, but it only tells part of the story. Over the years, my own library work has also lived in places you will not always find in a stand-alone building, and you may never walk through its doors. Special libraries exist inside hospitals, research organizations, government agencies, law firms, and corporations. Most people do not see special libraries, but they benefit from them every day.



Lemke

More Than a Collection

What makes a special library? In my experience the difference is not just the subject matter it is the level of focus. Special libraries are designed to serve particular groups of people and fulfill distinct objectives. They assist professionals who depend on precise, timely information for their work, rather than serving the general public. That audience might include clinicians, researchers, faculty, administrators, or corporate teams. Questions directed to special libraries are seldom casual; they are typically connected to important decision-making processes.

- What does the latest evidence say about this treatment?
- What research supports this approach?
- How have others addressed this problem?

These are not questions where close enough is good enough. The information must be relevant, reliable, and usable.

A Personal Perspective

My own work has taken place within a biomedical company environment as an embedded librarian, where the library's role is inseparable from how information is used. In that setting, information is not just something you collect; it is something you actively provide, interpret, and apply. A request might begin as a single question, but it rarely stays that simple for long. The question becomes part of

a larger process: shaping a decision, informing a project, or supporting learning.

That shift, from information as a resource to information as a tool, is where special libraries operate every day. It also changes how we work as librarians. We are not simply providing access; we are helping translate information into something meaningful and actionable.

The Work Behind the Click

From the outside, access to information often looks simple: a user clicks a link, logs in, and retrieves what they need. When we do our jobs well, the process should feel seamless. Behind that moment, though, is a complex system most people never have to think about. Special librarians may manage access to specialized databases, curate content within those platforms, negotiate licensing agreements, troubleshoot authentication issues, and make sure users can find what they need without unnecessary barriers.

In corporations, special librarians may hold roles that do not include the word *librarian* at all. Job titles might include knowledge manager, records manager, information analyst, information scientist, or product information specialist.¹ However the position is titled, the work draws on the same core skills: organizing information, improving findability, and helping people use evidence well.

Corporate libraries encourage learning and create opportunities for growth that may not be available elsewhere. They also give employees space to share ideas related to work tasks and special projects. In some organizations, the library supports business needs in areas such as patents, personnel, and safety. These libraries can be vital to research, providing materials on business and marketing, management and professional development, and safety procedures. They help employees build foundational knowledge, locate existing research, and avoid wasting time on unproductive searching. Depending on the organization, services may include access to books, periodicals, patents, and articles, along with broader research and information support.

Small Teams, Broad Impact

Many special libraries operate with limited staff. Some are run by a solo librarian; others function with a small team. That reality means wearing multiple hats. In a single day, it is not unusual to move from teaching a session, to resolving an access issue, to tackling a research question, to working on system improvements. There is no typical day. Priorities shift quickly, and despite their size, these libraries are expected to deliver high-level support. They do so by staying closely aligned with user needs and

focusing on what will have the greatest impact.

Redefining What Library Looks Like

If you were to walk into many special libraries today, you might not immediately recognize them as libraries at all. Traditional markers, rows of books and large physical collections, are often no longer the center of the operation. Much of the collection is digital. Access happens through platforms and systems. Support happens through instruction, consultation, and embedded within units or departments. In certain instances, the library functions more as an entity or resource than a physical location. This shift can make special libraries harder to see while also making them more integrated into the work of their organizations. They are not separate from the mission; they are part of how the mission gets accomplished.

Why It Matters

In a time when information is everywhere, it is easy to assume access alone is enough. It is not. Even with so much information available, it is more important than ever to assess, organize, and use it effectively. I see the need for that work in the questions people bring me. Without guidance and structure, decision-making becomes slower, less consistent, and more vulnerable to error. Special libraries help bridge that gap by bringing structure to information, clarity to questions, and direction to the search process. The work may not always be visible, but its impact is real.

Hidden in plain sight

Most people will never visit a special library. They may never meet a special librarian or fully

understand the systems that support their work. Yet these libraries are all around them, embedded in institutions, supporting professionals, and contributing to outcomes that extend far beyond their walls. They are small, specialized, and often overlooked, and they are also essential. For me, that is what “hidden in plain sight” really means; the work matters, whether anyone stops to notice or not.

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Sonya Lemke is the access and systems librarian at the Arkansas Colleges of Health Education's Taylor Health Sciences Library in Fort Smith, Arkansas.



Photo of workers in cubicles similar to my corporate library environment.

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Confronting Alphabet Soup Syndrome in Libraries and IT: Acronym Overload

by F. Tracy Farmer, Arkansas State University

The world of Information Technology (IT) is saturated with acronyms that are essential to daily communication. Just a few common examples include DNS (Domain Name System), DHCP (Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol), API (Application Program Interface), SSO (Single Sign-on), LDAP (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol), SaaS (Software as a Service), IaaS (Infrastructure



Farmer

as a Service), PaaS (Platform as a Service), MFA (Multi-factor Authentication), and ITSM (IT Service Management). These represent only a fraction of the countless acronyms in IT; the field contains hundreds, if not thousands, of specialized terms. However, IT professionals are not the only ones who rely heavily on acronyms. The library world is equally fond of shorthand. Within libraries, some frequently used acronyms include ILS (Integrated Library System), ERM (Electronic Resource Management), OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog), ILL (Interlibrary Loan), LC (Library of Congress), LCSH (Library of Congress Subject Headings), MeSH (Medical Subject Headings), IR (Institutional Repository), RDA (Resource Description and Access), AACR2 (Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, 2nd edition), and CCC (Copyright Clearance Center). This list, like that in IT, is far from exhaustive. With the rapid rise of artificial intelligence (AI), the proliferation of acronyms is

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only accelerating in both fields.

The Double Challenge for Newcomers

Consider the situation of a system administrator who transitions into a systems librarian role without prior library experience. Already tasked with mastering the vast array of technical acronyms in IT, they must now also navigate an entirely new set of library-specific terms. This dual challenge can quickly lead to confusion, and what is aptly described as Alphabet Soup Syndrome (ASS!), as the individual struggles to keep up with the specialized language of both professions.

Is There a Cure? Preventative Strategies for Alphabet Soup Syndrome

The question arises: Can Alphabet Soup Syndrome be cured? While there is no definitive cure, there are practical steps organizations can take to prevent the syndrome from becoming overwhelming for new and existing employees alike.

Building a Supportive Environment

One effective measure is to develop a living glossary of commonly used acronyms within the organization or department. This shared resource should be easily accessible to all employees – whether as a physical reference in the workplace or, preferably, as a digital document on a network share or wiki. Regularly reviewing and updating the glossary ensures that it remains accurate and comprehensive as new acronyms emerge.

Another best practice is adopting a style guide that requires acronyms to be spelled out and defined upon their first use in any communication. This approach helps prevent confusion and avoids leaving audience members with the "deer in the headlights" look, whether in meetings or written materials.

Fostering a “community of practice” is also crucial. Employees should feel comfortable asking colleagues about unfamiliar acronyms without fear of embarrassment or judgment. Leaders should encourage questions, making it clear that no one is expected to know every acronym, regardless of experience level.

The Call to Action for Libraries

Now is an opportune time for libraries to act in minimizing the impact of Alphabet Soup Syndrome. As Artificial Intelligence continues to introduce new acronyms at a rapid pace, and library resources increasingly incorporate AI features, the risk of acronym overload grows. Libraries, as stewards of information and knowledge, are uniquely positioned to lead efforts that slow the spread of excessive acronyms. If libraries do not take on this responsibility, it is unclear who will.

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

TRAINING: TIPS, TOPICS & TECHNIQUES

There's Always Something New to Learn

by Joanna Warren, University of Central Arkansas

I have worked as a full-time professional librarian for 18 years. I've learned so much along the way and have had the great pleasure of both informally and formally mentoring fellow librarians, staff, and students. So, when I saw an email in Spring 2025 about the new ACRL College Libraries Section mentoring program, I initially didn't think too much about it. "It would be fun to be a mentor," I thought, "but I have this research article that I am really



Warren

wanting to get ready to submit to a journal, and I just don't think I have the mental energy to mentor someone right now." I had been working on that article in fits and starts for a couple of years but kept getting stuck trying to figure out how to interpret my research data and write the methodology section. I also knew that I would be working on my promotion application in the next couple of years (in fact, I just submitted it in September), and having a solo peer-reviewed article on my CV would be very beneficial in that process. I knew that I needed some help from an experienced researcher and publisher, and suddenly a lightbulb came on: I could sign up as a mentee instead!

I asked to be matched with someone to help me get over these final humps to finish the article and to navigate the publishing process, and I was matched with Sarah Barbrow, Assistant Director of the Engineering Library at the University of Michigan. We began meeting on Zoom about once a month after the program started last August and hit the ground running. Sarah was wonderful about breaking up what had seemed like a daunting and nearly impossible task into manageable chunks.

She also helped keep me motivated and focused on my end goal (getting this article published!) by encouraging me along the way. She suggested resources for me to read and consulted with her colleagues when I had questions that she wasn't immediately able to answer. Although writing the article was still a challenging process, Sarah's persistence, encouragement, and confidence in my ultimate success was exactly what I needed to accomplish this goal that seemed so out of reach at the start of the process. I submitted the article to a journal in May and am currently waiting to hear if it has been accepted. I may have been able to finish the article on my own eventually, but this partnership has truly been a game-changer for me. Not only have I accomplished my original goal, but I also met a great colleague in the process.

So, whether you are brand new to librarianship or have been in the field for 20 years or more, remember: you ALWAYS have more to learn! If you have a professional goal you want to pursue and just need a little help to get over a hump, don't be afraid to reach out and ask for help! The CLS mentoring program is starting its second year this fall, and I am happy to report that this year I will be "paying it forward" and serving as a mentor! I look forward to continuing to help both aspiring and current librarians for years to come.

Joanna Warren is a cataloging librarian at the University of Central Arkansas' Torreyson Library in Conway, Arkansas.

Community Resources' Read to Recovery Shelf

by Chloe Kilcrease,

Central Arkansas Library System

No check-out.

No judgment.

No barriers to information.

This spring, the Community Resources Department, a team of social workers at the Central Arkansas Library System (CALS), launched the "Read to Recovery Shelf," a free Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and Mental Health Resource Shelf to share information and support. Funded by a CALS Foundation grant, the collection includes books and educational materials that do not require a library card to take home. The shelf is designed to remove barriers to access, with no expectation that items be returned. However, we encourage patrons to bring them back if they are no longer needed so they can

be shared with others, or to even share the books themselves with others who may benefit from the content.

In addition to books, the shelf offers information about local treatment and recovery services, mental health agencies, community resources, and overdose prevention materials. Located in the Community Resources Lounge on the Lower Level of the Main Library, the shelf is available during Community Resources staff hours and reflects CALS's ongoing commitment to connecting patrons with timely, accessible support.

Chloe Kilcrease, LMSW, is a community resource specialist for the Central Arkansas Library System in Little Rock, Arkansas.



Craighead County Library Receives Awards

by *Vanessa Adams,*

Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library

The Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library received both a Silver ADDY Award and a Judges' Choice Award during the American Advertising Awards hosted by the American Advertising Federation (AAF) of Northeast Arkansas. Conducted annually by the AAF, the local tier of the American Advertising Awards is the first of a three-tier, national competition. Concurrently, across the country, local entrants vie to receive an ADDY Award – recognition as the very best in their markets. At the second tier, local ADDY winners compete against winners from other local clubs in one of 15 district competitions. District ADDY Award winners are then forwarded to the third tier, the national stage of the American

Advertising Awards.

Both honors recognized the library's 2025 "Your Library, Your Story" campaign in the Integrated Brand Identity Campaign category.

The "Your Library, Your Story" campaign was a year-long initiative focused on building a cohesive brand identity that reflects the library's pursuit to serve as a welcoming space where every member of the community can see themselves represented. Through storytelling, visuals, and outreach, the campaign highlighted the many ways the library supports learning, creativity, and connection across Craighead County.

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



Pictured L to R: Vanessa Adams, Library Director; Lauren Rose, Graphic Designer; Rylie Yawson, Marketing & PR Manager; LaTonya Jones, Assistant Director.

Making New Community with Maker Space

by *Chelsey Turner,*

South Arkansas Community College

This summer, the Mahony Family Library at South Arkansas College celebrated the opening of its new Maker Space with a ribbon cutting alongside the El Dorado-Union County

Chamber of Commerce, community leaders, donors, faculty, staff, students, and friends of the college. The celebration marked much more than the opening of a new service. It celebrated the transformation of an existing library space into a place where creativity, collaboration, and hands-on learning can thrive. New flooring gave us the opportunity to rethink how

part of our library could better serve students and the community, allowing us to remove several book stacks and create a collaborative area for tutoring, making, and exploration.

Our Maker Space was made possible through a generous grant from local industry partner LSB, which helped furnish the space, along with grants from the SouthArk Foundation and United Way of Union County, which allowed us to purchase hands-on learning tools and supplies. Together, these investments created an environment where creativity, curiosity, and collaboration can thrive.

The Maker Space is designed to be a place where students and community members can explore new ideas, build practical skills, and discover that learning often happens best by doing. Whether someone is experimenting with robotics, creating with a Cricut, exploring augmented reality, or simply trying something new for the first time, we hope this space inspires confidence, problem-solving, and a lifelong love of learning.

The photos from our ribbon cutting capture that

excitement. They include community members and SouthArk employees exploring the new space and tools, a first look at the Maker Space before guests arrived, and a group of nursing students discovering some of the new technology. Watching people of all ages gather around, ask questions, and immediately begin creating reminded us exactly why this project mattered.

Libraries continue to evolve to meet the needs of their communities, and our Maker Space is one more way the Mahony Family Library is supporting innovation, education, and connection. We are grateful to our donors, community partners, and everyone who celebrated this milestone with us. We cannot wait to see what our students and community members create next.

Chelsey Turner is director of library and academic support at SouthArk's Mahony Family Library in El Dorado, Arkansas.



Nursing students in Maker Space.

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