

ARKANSAS LIBRARIES

SPRING-SUMMER 2025

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Arkansas Library Association

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EXECUTIVE BOARD CANDIDATES

•

CELEBRATING OUR FOREMOTHERS

Arkansas Library Association, 2025

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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-ELECT: Changes for the 2025 ArLA Executive Board

by Janice Weddle

Interim President-Elect and Conference Co-Chair

What an eventful start to 2025 it has been! This year has been full of upheaval, changes, and truly “Turning the Page,” as our 2025 ArLA Conference theme states. This spring, I experienced some professional changes as I moved into a new role at the University of Central Arkansas after several years at Hendrix College. I have found the changes to be both exciting and bittersweet, as turning the page to a new chapter often is. What has helped me most through this transition is focusing anew on why I love librarianship, looking for new opportunities for



Weddle

growth, and appreciating all the wonderful past and present colleagues.

As you will see throughout this issue the ArLA Executive Board has also seen major changes. In July, ArLA President Lynn Valetutti resigned, and Adam Webb became president. Then, ArLA Secretary Melissa Taylor resigned from office as she was leaving the state for a new opportunity. We are grateful for their contributions to ArLA and wish them well!

There were now vacancies in two crucial roles for the Association. ArLA Parliamentarian Dan Boice agreed to serve as secretary pro tem through 2025, and a special election was called this summer to fill the president-elect role. I agreed to run for president-elect in an interim capacity for the rest of 2025 to finish Adam’s term. Adam and I will co-chair this year’s Conference Committee, and I hope you’re as excited as I am for the wonderful sessions and events Adam has been planning all year and which I am excited to help bring to life in Hot Springs this October.

FROM THE EDITOR: Trouble

by Britt Anne Murphy

Library Director, Hendrix College

One of my favorite escapist musicals to watch in the summer is *The Music Man*. This 1962 film is well-known by librarians. Shirley Jones plays Marian Paroo, an unmarried, wizened librarian in a small Iowa town, who is unimpressed by the arrival of Harold Hill (Robert Preston), a salesman infamous for taking advantage of naïve small-town people by convincing them to purchase band instruments and uniforms for a boys’ band that will never play a note. Prof. Hill, whose musical talent stops at whistling (and singing of a sort), plans to skip town after collecting the money.

When I watched the film this summer, what stuck with me was the hook: Prof. Hill had to come up with a reason, a problem, that would be solved by a boys’ band. He identifies the recent arrival of a pool table as the culprit. He then preaches to the town about the “trouble” they have, and sows the seeds that feed the fears of River City parents: idle boys,



Murphy

lured by a sinful pastime, which would lead to foul language, loose women, and sinful pastimes. Sound familiar?

Similar mind games are happening with the fabricated “trouble” in our libraries. I’m unsure of the motivations behind people raising the “alarm” about the “smut” in our collections, but the smokescreen they’ve raised is causing harm not only to Arkansas librarians, but to our youth. While all the moral panic has been focused on youth literature vetted by experts, prompting unconstitutional legislation, budget cuts, and a lot of bad press and harm to what were cherished public institutions, actual pedophiles are hard at work successfully luring children into abusive situations, causing real and permanent harm to children and families.

In the last few months there have been a series of actual bad actors in Arkansas arranging meet-ups through social media with 13-year-old girls, using artificial intelligence (AI) to generate sexual abuse photos of local children, and using their positions as law enforcement officers to stalk minors on Tik Tok. I’ve not seen any legislator whipped up into a frenzy over these truly shocking actions, or get behind legislation or measures to protect minors from such abuse. What would be incredibly helpful to youths would be access to information about sexual abuse, sexual health, and what can put kids in vulnerable positions. Hmm...do you think there might be books about this? Or perhaps educational initiatives to teach kids about digital literacy? Excuse my sarcasm,

but where are those impassioned speeches or surge of support for protecting youth when the harm is real?

This issue of *Arkansas Libraries* gives a broad view of exactly what *is* happening in Arkansas libraries: no plotting or scheming of how we can corrupt children. Just a representation of spring and summer programs at school and public libraries: enthralled children, engaged teens, and a general enthusiasm around building communities awash in every color of the rainbow. We hear about AI from our technology columnist, meet an NWACC librarian, learn about leadership development and communication styles, and are introduced to the acclaimed Arkansas author Ayana Gray.

Importantly, this is our pre-conference issue where ArLA President-elect Adam Webb gives us a peek of all the wonderful sessions, speakers, events, and fun the October conference holds for us. Many of us know Adam, who directs the Garland County Public Library, through his work on intellectual freedom. When ArLA President Lynn Valetutti had to step down this summer, Adam immediately assumed the presidency and has been running ever since to manage a website transfer, arrange meetings, ensure communication channels are functioning, co-chairing the conference committee, being the spokesperson for Arkansas libraries, and managing intellectual freedom advocacy. Luckily, he has Janice Weddle, who was elected president-elect earlier in August, to help out. I'm sending presidential greetings from Adam, who understandably didn't have the bandwidth to write a presidential message for this issue! He mentioned to include a picture of him with the lyrics to "I'm Still Standing" by Elton John. 😊

I'm Still Standing

Elton John

You could never know what it's like
Your blood like winter, freezes just like ice
And there's a cold, lonely light that shines from you
You'll wind up like the wreck you hide behind that
mask you use

And did you think this fool could never win?
Well, look at me, I'm a-coming back again
I got a taste of love in a simple way
And if you need to know, while I'm still standing
You just fade away

Don't you know, I'm still standing better than I ever did?
Looking like a true survivor, feeling like a little kid
I'm still standing after all this time
Picking up the pieces of my life without you on my mind

I'm still standing (yeah-yeah-yeah)
I'm still standing (yeah-yeah-yeah)

Once, I never could hope to win
You startin' down the road, leaving me again
The threats you made were meant to cut me down
And if our love was just a circus, you'd be a clown
by now

You know, I'm still standing better than I ever did
Looking like a true survivor, feeling like a little kid
I'm still standing after all this time
Picking up the pieces of my life without you on my mind

I'm still standing (yeah-yeah-yeah)
I'm still standing (yeah-yeah-yeah)

Don't you know that I'm still standing better than I ever did?
Looking like a true survivor, feeling like a little kid
I'm still standing after all this time
Picking up the pieces of my life without you on my mind

I'm still standing (yeah-yeah-yeah)
I'm still standing (yeah-yeah-yeah)

I'm still standing (yeah-yeah-yeah)
I'm still standing (yeah-yeah-yeah)
I'm still standing (yeah-yeah-yeah)
I'm still standing (yeah-yeah-yeah)



ArLA President Adam Webb.

Turning the Page: Fall Conference Preview

by Adam Webb

ArLA President and Conference Co-Chair

When the dog days of summer set in on our beautiful state, my mind can't help but to turn to thoughts of fall. Don't get me wrong – I am in no way, shape, or form a summer hater. I love the long days and ice cream trucks, jumping into a pool, cookouts (both hosting and attending), my birthday, etc. But the older I get, the more I look forward to cooler weather, Halloween preparations, autumn leaves, playoff baseball, and, of course, the annual Arkansas Library Association Conference!

This year's theme is "Turning the Page." You can interpret that in any number of ways. Maybe we're seeing a turning of the page regarding this latest wave of censorship. The number of challenged titles in 2024 dropped nationwide from the numbers we saw in 2023 and 2022, even if they were the third highest since the American Library Association started keeping those statistics. The Arkansas Legislature proposed a whole slew of anti-library legislation this year, but most of them were either defeated or pulled for interim study. There was even an anti-book ban bill introduced, so maybe there is a turning of the page regarding how libraries are viewed at our state capitol. Meanwhile, Fayetteville Public Library announced the completion of their capital campaign, North Little Rock Public received a lot of attention for their acquisition of the Arkansas Regional Innovation Hub, White County Regional opened their new main library in Searcy, and Central Arkansas Library System is close to completing their grand renovation of their main branch. Suffice to say, we're turning a lot of pages around the state.

We've got a lot of great stuff to look forward to at the conference too, so I hope you will join us in "turning the page" in Hot Springs this October. Below is a preview of what we have in store.

Hotel Information and Registration

Our conference hotel this year is the Embassy Suites by Hilton Hot Springs Hotel & Spa. The conference accommodation rate is \$160/night from October 17 – October 19. You can book your accommodations through the "Book Now!" link on the conference website at <https://arlib.org/2025AnnualConference>.

Registration rates for the conference are below. We are also doing an institutional membership promotion this year where, if you send four employees to conference, you get a fifth employee for free!

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Registration Rates

Members: \$250

Non-Members: \$300

You can register for the conference at the following link: <https://arlib.starchapter.com/meet-reg1.php?id=6>

Friday, October 17

Preconference events

(Note that all preconference events have separate registration required.)

Public Library Director's Workshop

Garland County Library, 10 am–4 pm

The Arkansas State Library will host a workshop for public library directors at the Garland County Library on October 17 from 10 am – 4 pm.

Registration will be available via email from the Arkansas State Library to public library directors.

For more information contact Janine Miller, janine.miller@ade.arkansas.gov.

AI Summit

Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts, 11 am–4 pm

The College and University Librarians of Arkansas (CULAR) community of interest will be hosting an AI summit and unconference at the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts (ASMSA) in downtown Hot Springs on October 17 from 11 am–4 pm at the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts (ASMSA). Enjoy a day of conversation, lunch, and enlightening talks around Artificial Intelligence in Arkansas libraries. You will have an opportunity to meet with fellow librarians who are interested in artificial intelligence in libraries, and discuss how this new technology is impacting our instruction, our work, and our students. As an unconference, this will be a more casual gathering to foster networking, collaboration, and idea-sharing.

Our discussion will kick off with a guest speaker, Jason Coleman, Academic Services Librarian from Kansas State University Libraries, who will discuss ACRL's draft document of AI Competencies for Library Workers. We will follow this with a lunch provided on site, roundtable discussions, and short lightning talks on issues related to AI in libraries. While this unconference is hosted by the College and



University Librarians of Arkansas Community of Interest (CULAR), all library workers are welcome to attend. The registration fee is only \$25 in order to provide attendees lunch. If you are coming to the Arkansas Library Annual Conference, this unconference makes a great appetizer to kick off an amazing weekend in Hot Springs.

***The Librarians* Documentary Film Screening**

The Arlington Hotel, 7 pm

The Hot Springs Documentary Film Institute is proud to screen Oscar-nominated and Peabody Award-winning Director Kim A. Snyder's latest documentary, *The Librarians*, during the 34th annual Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival.

The Librarians is a stirring and timely documentary that pays tribute to the unsung heroes of information and literacy – America's library workers. From Texas to Florida and New Jersey, books about race, certain religions, LGBTQIA+ identities, and sex education are vanishing from shelves – all targeted by organized, dark money political groups. But amid harassment, legal threats and community hostility, many librarians refuse to back down; their fight is not just for books, but for the freedom to access ideas. Snyder's film follows a diverse group of librarians who stand at the front lines of a cultural battleground.

Through intimate interviews and fly-on-the-wall footage, *The Librarians* reveals the evolving role of libraries and the passionate individuals who protect them. From rural towns to urban centers, these stewards of democracy are shown as custodians of books and advocates for equity, education, and free expression.

"I wanted to capture the resilience and bravery of these patriots at a time when their work has never been more crucial," said Snyder. "I hope the film will serve as a catalyst for the civic dialogue Americans are craving to heal our polarized nation."

For more information, visit <https://hsdfi.org/>

Saturday October 18

Professional Headshots

To paraphrase Bruce Springsteen, put your makeup on, fix your hair up pretty, and meet me in the lobby for professional headshots. On Saturday morning from 9 am – 11 am, we will have a photobooth setup where any conference attendee can have professional headshots done! Special thanks to photographer Kacy Earnest Spears for her willingness to make us all look good.

Opening session with Shamichael Hallman

We are pleased to have Shamichael Hallman as our keynote speaker this year. Hallman is author of *Meet Me at the Library: A Place to Foster Social Connection and Promote Democracy* and currently serves as director of Civic Health and Economic Opportunity with the Urban Libraries Council (ULC). In this role he is working to create ULC's upcoming focus on libraries as essential city and county infrastructure including their value as physical spaces, as a connector of diverse lived experiences, and libraries' roles in public safety and public health.

He served as the Senior Library Manager of the historic Cossitt Library of the Memphis Public Library from 2017-2022, where he was tasked with overseeing the multi-million-dollar renovation of this space which reimagined the roles that public libraries could play in their communities. During his tenure with Memphis Public Libraries, the library system was awarded the 2021 National Medal for Museum and Library Science by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and was recognized as the Nation's Most Innovative Public Library by Smithsonian Magazine in November of 2021 – in which Shamichael's team was prominently featured. His 2020 TEDx talk "Reimagining the Public Library to Reconnect the Community" garnered international attention among librarians and social innovators.

Shamichael is a founding member of Libraries as

Bridges; a grassroots collective of libraries seeking to understand the role that public libraries serve in cultivating and enhancing the civic and social life of their communities. He's given library-related talks to universities such as Harvard University and Rutgers University, presented to leading library associations such as Urban Libraries Council, Partners for Rural Impact, the American Library Association, and Library Aid Africa. He has shared his thoughts about libraries to media outlets such as PressReader and Television Ontario's The Agenda with Steve Paikin. Shamichael also has worked with a variety of organizations at the local and state levels to demonstrate how public libraries can play critical roles in accelerating economic growth.

Bookmobile Rodeo

Giddy up, partner! Back by popular demand, ArLA will be hosting a roundup of bookmobiles behind the Convention Center in Baxter Plaza, located at 310 Church St. If your library owns a bookmobile and would like to show it off, contact me soon at president@arlib.org, and we'll see how many we can accommodate! Don't miss this opportunity to network with other outreach colleagues, or get inspired by what other libraries are doing around the state and start planning for your own library's bookmobile.

New(ish) Member Social Hour

Are you new to the Arkansas Library Association? Are you old to the association, but want to introduce yourself to new members? Then join us for the New(ish) Member Social Hour on Saturday, October 18. We promise networking opportunities through fun games with prizes. Exact time and place are TBD, but this event usually occurs over happy hour in the Embassy Suites lounge area in close proximity to the reception area and bar. It is a nice way to cool down and network after the Bookmobile Rodeo, and get ready for the...

ArLA Scholarships & Awards Dinner

This year's awards dinner takes place on Saturday, October 18 at 6:15 pm in Hall D of the Convention Center. Guest tickets will be available for purchase on the website.

The awards dinner will recognize and celebrate our community of librarians with presentations of the ArLA scholarship and the following awards:

- Arkansiana Award – recognizes an author of a book or other work that represents a significant contribution to Arkansas heritage and culture with three categories including adult non-fiction, adult fiction, and juvenile works
- Frances P. Neal Award – recognizes a career of

notable service in librarianship within the state of Arkansas, and is presented to a recent retiree

- Distinguished Service Award – recognizes distinguished service in librarianship such as continuing service to ArLA, outstanding achievement in the field of librarianship, active participation in the field of librarianship, notable published professional writing, etc.
- Bessie D. Moore Trustee Award – recognizes an individual trustee or board who/which has made a significant contribution to the development of a library at the local, regional, or state level
- Lorrie Shuff Paraprofessional Award – recognizes distinguished paraprofessional library service in Arkansas libraries
- Suzanne Spurrier Academic Librarian Award – recognizes an outstanding academic librarian within the state of Arkansas
- Anne 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/Awards.

Trivia Night

Trivia night has become a core event at conference. Don't miss out on this lively event – you know it's a must to form your team early and bring your best game for a night of food, fun, and laughs!



Featured Speaker

**Stephen
Koch**

Co-creator of award-winning
radio program,
Arkansongs



This year, Trivia Night will raise money for LEAF (Library Education & Aid Fund), an ArLA fund which supports libraries undergoing emergencies (such as recent tornadoes), as well as educational initiatives and advocacy efforts. University of Central Arkansas' dynamic librarian duo Amber and Jessica lead the way, so we are confident this will be a night to remember. Trivia is scheduled for Saturday night at 8 pm in the Embassy Suites.

Poster Session Display

Poster sessions will be held in Hall D throughout the conference. Poster session creators will be on hand to discuss their session on Saturday at 2:30 pm.

Sunday, October 19

Annual Business Meeting

Now, for the moment you've all been waiting for...our annual membership meeting is scheduled for Sunday morning at 11am! The Annual Business Meeting is traditionally held at the Annual Conference and this year will be no different. The meeting shall be open to all members of the Association. The privilege of making motions, debating, and voting shall be limited to individual members and affiliate and institutional member representatives. A quorum shall consist of thirty members or ten percent of the total Association membership, whichever is less.

Lunch with Author Stephen Koch Host of Arkansongs

With his left-handed 12-string guitar, Stephen Koch tells the stories of cultural icons such as Rosetta Tharpe and Johnny Cash "with humor and passion." He's shared his knowledge of the Midsouth's music culture at the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame and internationally, gained through decades as host of the syndicated public radio program *Arkansongs*, and as writer/narrator of the PBS documentary *Music In Arkansas Origins: 200 B.C.-1941 A.D.* As the leading scholar on 1940s R&B pioneer Louis Jordan, he's creator of a musical, a

documentary film, and a biography of Jordan, and is also author of *From Almeda To Zilphia: Arkansas Women Who Transformed American Popular Song*. As an illustrator, his work has toured with juried exhibitions; he has long been involved in regional preservation efforts, including launching the Arkansas Music Trail and establishing "memorial highways" with ARDOT for several Arkansas greats, and teaches an Arkansas music course at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Basket Auction Fundraisers

The basket auction 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! Please drop it off as early as possible, no later than Saturday morning. 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. There are many possibilities and themes for making great baskets. In line with the conference theme, many libraries will be eager to get their hands on books this year, think LGBTQ books, graphic novels, or baskets that take advantage of book themes! Proceeds go towards supporting the Arkansas Library Association. Email Britt Anne Murphy for more information or basket ideas: murphyb@hendrix.edu.

Vendors

Don't miss the opportunity to interact with our vendors on Saturday and Sunday. You'll see a return of our essential companies and services that keep our libraries humming, as well as a few new ones, especially from the local area. ArLA is always looking for ways to include vendors, so mention how meaningful it would be to see their participation in person at the ArLA conference! Plus you'll no doubt have chances to enter your name for door prizes, purchase books and other items, and pick up the latest and greatest swag.

Closing Session Panel Discussion
Lauren Comito, Urban Libraries Unite
Alison Macrina, Library Freedom Project

Closing out the conference will be a lively discussion on the future of libraries with Lauren Comito of Urban Libraries Unite and Alison Macrina of the Library Freedom Project. More information on that session to come.

Hot Springs Visitor Highlights

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

Another must-see is the acclaimed Garvan Woodland Garden (www.garvangardens.org), a 210-acre botanical garden located just a short drive from the conference center and hotel. The garden opens daily at 9 am and features dynamic architecture and

majestic botanical landscapes. Be sure to check out the Sunrise Bridge and other overlooks.

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

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 2025 ArLA President and Co-Chair of the Conference Committee, but recently stepped up to fill the president's role.

2025 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 2026. Open positions this year include president-elect (3-year term), SELA representative (2-year term), ALA councilor (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.

Note that we already held a special election for president-elect due to the 2025 president-elect, Adam Webb, stepping up to fill that unexpected vacancy. Janice Weddle, faculty librarian for instruction and

reference at the University of Central Arkansas, was elected to finish out Adam's term as president-elect. By the time this issue reaches your inbox or mailbox, we most likely will have held a special election for secretary for 2026. Additionally, ArLA's elected secretary Melissa Taylor left the state for another position. A special election for a one-year secretary term will be held with the regular election.

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

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

Lacy Wolfe

Hi, I'm Lacy Wolfe, currently serving as Chief Operating Officer at the North Little Rock Public Library System. I earned my MLS from Indiana University in 2011 and spent ten years in academic libraries at Ouachita Baptist University and Henderson State University before returning



Wolfe

to public libraries, where my library journey began. I've served ArLA as ALA Chapter Councilor for two terms and currently co-chair both the Membership and Public Libraries Communities of Interest.

I'm passionate about connecting people to library services and supporting staff at every level. As President-Elect, I want to strengthen member engagement, support leadership development across all types of libraries, and ensure ArLA remains a strong advocate for our profession.

Outside of work, you'll usually find me reading, knitting, hiking, or training for my next 5K.

SELA Representative (2-year term)

LaShonda Campbell



Campbell

LaShonda Campbell serves as the collections development librarian at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. As a passionate advocate for the UAM Taylor Library, she has strengthened the library's resources and services to make it more welcoming for students and faculty.

LaShonda earned a BA in Psychology from Tougaloo College, an MLIS from the University of Denver, and a Juris Doctorate from Mississippi College Law School. She also serves as an adjunct professor for the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at UAM.

LaShonda is actively engaged in ArLA, where she serves as a member of the Awards Committee and Conference Program Subcommittee. She is also the co-chair of SELA's New Members' Roundtable. LaShonda was selected as a 2025 American Library Association (ALA) Emerging Leader (EL) and Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures Division EL Cohort. LaShonda's cohort had the distinct honor of participating in a poster session and presenting their project, *Financial Impact of Key Volunteer Roles in Core: Developing Financial Assistance Programs to Support Volunteerism*, to Core's Board of Directors at the 2025 ALA's Annual Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

LaShonda enjoys traveling with her husband, co-managing the family barbecue business, and spending time with her four daughters and grandkids.

ALA Councilor (3-year term through summer 2028)

Crystal Gates

Crystal R. Gates, CEO/Chief Librarian of the North Little Rock Public Library System, is



Gates

a past president of ArLA and currently serves as ArLA's ALA Councilor and Awards Chair. A dedicated library leader, she actively champions statewide advocacy and legislative engagement in addition to embracing the honor and responsibility of mentoring others. Her professional service includes committee

work in ALA and PLA, serving as Past President of the Southeastern Library Association, and filling in wherever needed for ArLA.

Crystal holds an MLIS from LSU and a Master's in History from Louisiana Tech. She believes libraries are more than books - they are catalysts for creative learning, community connection, and economic development. When taking time away from library work, you may find her resting in nature, reading, or creating new recipes in her kitchen.

Member-at-Large (1-year term)

Jim Curry

Jim Curry has served as a member-at-large of the 2025 ArLA Board and is running for a second term. A graduate of the UA Fayetteville and the UNC Chapel Hill library science program, Jim has served as an Arkansas librarian for the last seven years at the Fayetteville Public Library. This year, Jim graduated from the 38th class



Curry

of the Fayetteville Chamber's leadership program, building on skills he gained as a member of the third cohort of the Arkansas Library Leadership Institute. He also helped start a community advocacy group, NWA Libraries for All, to promote the importance of all libraries in Arkansas. His spare time consists of community events, gaming in all of its forms, and quality time with his family, friends, and doggo.

Member-at-Large (1-year term)

Ashley Cooksey

Ashley J. Cooksey (she/her) is an assistant professor and the program director for the Instructional Technology - Library Media Specialist Master's program at Arkansas Tech University in Russellville. Ashley began her teaching career as a third grade classroom literacy teacher in a small,

rural school. After obtaining her Master's of Education in Instructional Technology - Library Media Specialist K-12, she served as a school librarian for grades 5-8 before moving to a new district to serve as a K-6 elementary school librarian.



Cooksey

Ashley is a past president and current secretary of the Arkansas Association of Instructional Media (AAIM) and a member of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), the Arkansas Library Association (ArLA), and the American Library Association and American Association for School Librarians (ALA/AASL). Ashley was the 2018 recipient of the AASL Social Media Superstar Award as an Advocacy Ambassador and is currently serving on the AASL National School Library Standards review committee. In any spare time that remains, Ashley is also a 200-hour registered yoga teacher.

Member-at-Large (1-year term)

Cassandra Barnett



Barnett

Cassandra Barnett has been a school librarian in both elementary and secondary school libraries for more years than she wants to count. She has presented at state and national conferences on a variety of topics concerning school libraries. An active member of the American Association of School Librarians, she has served on committees both in ALA and AASL, been a member of the AASL Board of Directors, and is a past president of AASL. She is currently the Program Advisor for School Libraries at the Arkansas Department of Education's division of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Member-at-Large (1-year term)

Shawna Thorup

Shawna Thorup has enjoyed ArLA membership for several years as both a public and an academic librarian. She has assisted in planning more than one ArLA conference, served on the awards and nominating committees, and actively participated in what is currently known as RISci, the Reference and Instructional Services Community of Interest. Currently, she edits the Two-Year Colleges column



Thorup

in *Arkansas Libraries*.

Her areas of interest include academic and intellectual freedom, staff/professional development, assessment, information literacy, customer service, and generative AI. Shawna earned a BA in English from the University of California, Berkeley, and an MLIS from UCLA. Since 2016,

she has helped Northwest Arkansas Community College students succeed by serving in a number of roles, including adjunct faculty of English. She was recently named NWACC's library director. With her strong background in reference services and having worked her way up in libraries by starting as a shelver, Shawna would advocate for and represent all types of libraries and library workers if elected as a member-at-large.

Member-at-Large (1-year term)

Kay Strahan

Kay Strahan, MSLIS, AHIP is a dedicated health sciences librarian focused on integrating information literacy and evidence-based practice into curricular instruction. Currently serving as assistant professor and Northwest Campus librarian at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), Kay oversees all library services on the Northwest Campus, collaborating closely with faculty to integrate librarians into curriculum and provide tailored educational support. As a member of professional organizations like the Medical Library Association (MLA), she remains dedicated to fostering continuous learning and skill development among her peers. Passionate about empowering students and researchers, Kay hopes to shape the landscape of librarianship in Arkansas through her involvement in volunteer library organizations.



Strahan

Member-at-Large (1-year term)

J. Jobe

J. Jobe (she/her) "The Rainbows Herself" is a vivacious exultant of color, sound, and movement. She celebrates alma maters Knox College and University of Central Arkansas. Since 2009, she has worked for the Central Arkansas

Library System as the editorial assistant for the online resource *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Since 2014, Jobe has additionally taught CALS writing workshops, from journaling, memoir, writing 101, how to workshop, and various genres to book talks with authors and courses on the ever-popular Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way*, to name a few. Jobe's programs can be found under the CALS Writing Circle umbrella. Her current obsession is leading "The WAY," a workshop group for Writing All Year. She is working on her first book, a memoir, and also loves creating visual art collages and reading tarot. Jobe is out as pansexual polyamorous and is living her best life in a rowdy house full of laughter, love, and light...and cats.



Jobe

Secretary (second year of 2-year term)

Misty Hawkins

An experienced director with a demonstrated history of working in librarianship, Misty is skilled in information seeking, library research, team management, user experience (UX), and information

management. Misty's current position is as library director at the Arkansas River Valley Regional Library System in the greater Fort Smith area. Her educational background includes a Bachelor of Arts focused in History from the University of Arkansas - Fort Smith and a Masters in Library and Information Studies from the University of Oklahoma. Misty's previous work experience is in locally funded public libraries and most recently, a consortium of public libraries funded by local, state, and federal funds. Misty has served on ArLA's Intellectual Freedom committee, and she's a passionate advocate for first amendment rights, often traveling great distances to speak truth to power in the state capitol and defend our community's right to access information.



Hawkins

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.

Executive Orders

*by Dominique Hallett,
Arkansas State University*

In recent months I have been asked, "What is an Executive Order?" more times than I can count! We will explore what an EO is, and also look at related questions. In considering these questions please note: I am not a lawyer; I do not even play one on TV. I am a librarian, which means the information I impart is just that – information, and not a true legal interpretation.



Hallett

What is an Executive Order (EO)?

Executive orders are documents used to direct and govern the actions of government officials and agencies. They can be drafted by federal agencies or by the president and their staff. Only the president can sign these orders. They have the force of law, and they are required to be published in the Federal

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Register and in Title 3 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

According to the Office of the Federal Register (OFR), Executive orders are official documents, numbered consecutively, through which the President of the United States manages the operations of the Federal Government.

The text of Executive orders appears in the daily *Federal Register* as each Executive order is signed by the President and received by the Office of the Federal Register. The text of Executive Orders beginning with Executive Order 7316 of March 13, 1936, also appears in the sequential editions of Title 3 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). (Office of the Federal Register, FAQ's About Executive Orders, <https://www.federalregister.gov/presidential-documents/executive-orders>).

In the same spirit, the Chief Information Officers (CIO) Council states, "An EO is a declaration by the president which has the force of law, usually based on existing statutory powers, and requiring no action

by the Congress. They are numbered consecutively, so executive orders may be referenced by their assigned number, or their topic” (Chief Information Officers Council, 3.1 Executive Orders, <https://www.cio.gov/handbook/other-it-authorities/executive-orders/>).

It is interesting to note that while an executive order is a means through which a president can issue directives to shape policy, the US Constitution does not address executive orders, nor is there a statute that grants a president the power to issue them. The authority under which executive orders are issued is the accepted practice that it is an inherent aspect of presidential power. For a more detailed report on this, check out Congress.gov for the CRS Report “Executive Orders: An Introduction” found at <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R46738>.

How does an EO differ from a proclamation or an executive memorandum?

Above, we discussed executive orders. For the purpose of differentiation, we will now learn how they differ from Presidential Proclamations and Executive Memoranda.

Basically, proclamations deal with the activities of private individuals and do not have the force of law behind them. According to the Federal Register website, “The President of the United States communicates information on holidays, commemorations, special observances, trade, and policy through Proclamations. After the President signs a Proclamation, the White House sends it to the Office of the Federal Register” (<https://www.federalregister.gov/presidential-documents/proclamations>).

Executive memoranda, on the other hand, are much more similar to Executive Orders. According to PBS.org, “An executive memorandum is essentially an executive order. The difference: an executive memorandum does not have an established process for how the president issues it. Memoranda do not have to be submitted to the Federal Register and are therefore harder to track” (Percha, J. 2017, January 27. *Your cheat sheet for executive orders, memorandums and proclamations*. PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/cheat-sheet-executive-orders-memorandums-proclamations>).

Also, for executive memoranda, the Office of Management and Budget does not need to issue a “Budgetary Impact Statement.”

Can executive orders be overturned?

The short answer is yes. Executive orders are subject to judicial review. The courts can overturn executive orders if the executive order is found to be unconstitutional, if it exceeds the president’s

constitutional authority, or if the order violates existing federal laws or regulations. The Federal Judicial Center provides an excellent article on the Judicial Review of Executive Orders at <https://www.fjc.gov/history/administration/judicial-review-executive-orders>.

A president can also revoke or rescind either their own EOs or those of previous presidents. Finally, the other primary way to overturn an EO is through congressional action. Congress can pass a law that either specifically nullifies an EO or a law that contradicts the executive order. In this final case, it is still possible for there to be a presidential veto, which can still be overridden by a 2/3 vote in both the House and Senate.

Six Notable Executive Orders

1. The Emancipation Proclamation – January 1, 1864 (before EOs were numbered)
2. Creation of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) – Executive Order 7034
3. Facilitating the Manhattan Project – Executive Order 8807
4. Japanese-American Concentration Camps – Executive Order 9066
5. Creation of FEMA – Executive Order 12148
6. Closing Guantanamo Bay – Executive Order 13493

Which president issued the most executive orders?

- Ulysses S. Grant – 217 (first to break 100)
- Theodore Roosevelt – 1081 (first to break 1000)
- Franklin D. Roosevelt – 3725 (first to break 3000)

Recent President's Executive Order count

- Jimmy Carter – 320
- Ronald Reagan – 381
- George Bush – 166
- William J. Clinton – 364
- George W. Bush – 291
- Barack Obama – 276
- Donald J. Trump (first term) – 220
- Joseph R. Biden, Jr. 163
- Donald J. Trump (2nd term, January 20, 2025-May 05, 2025) – 147 (this number will likely increase over his 2nd term)

Now, when someone asks you, “What is an executive order?” you have an answer for them. Also, if they want to see the text of a particular executive order, or even a presidential proclamation, go to govinfo.gov and click on “Presidential documents” to see the most recent. For a more expansive search, the search I use is ((collection:FR and mods:granuleClass:PRESDOCU or collection:cpd)), which limits it to the Federal

Register AND (presidential documents OR Compilation of Presidential Documents).

I hope this helps. If anyone has any topics they would like me to cover, email me at dhallett@astate.edu.

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

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Effective AI Governance in Institutions: Balancing Innovation and Risk Management?

by F. Tracy Farmer, Arkansas State University

The decision to implement an artificial intelligence (AI) system within an institution encompasses a multitude of considerations that merit careful examination, especially as the landscape of AI technology is rapidly evolving.



Farmer

Key among these considerations is the appropriate utilization of the AI system and the associated ethical concerns stemming from its application. It is imperative to thoroughly address how AI will be employed and recognize the potential repercussions of its implementation within the institutional framework, not only for current operations but also for future developments and unforeseen consequences. Although no definitive answer exists, multiple factors warrant serious contemplation that could affect both institutional integrity and the broader educational mission.

One prominent concern is the use of public AI services, particularly the free versions of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Claude, which have become widely accessible. A significant issue associated with these platforms is their data handling practices. Specifically, publicly accessible and free generative AI services utilize any data uploaded by users to enhance their language models, which includes the prompts submitted during interactions and the context in which these tools are used. While using these services for general inquiries may not present immediate risks, assuming institutional policies permit such usage, the critical concern arises when sensitive or private information is processed through these platforms. When users upload data containing personally identifiable information (PII), they inadvertently consent to allowing their data to be incorporated into the training datasets of these AI services, thereby risking exposure to unintended

users and potential misuse.

Moreover, the potential for cyber breaches within these services raises further questions about accountability regarding any leaked data. Given the increasing frequency of cyberattacks, institutions must be vigilant in assessing the implications of using public AI services. To mitigate these risks, the establishment of a robust AI governance policy becomes essential and is a proactive measure. If institutional policies permit unrestricted use of public, free AI services, liability for any exposed PII may rest jointly with the service provider and the institution, complicating accountability and response strategies. Conversely, if institutional policy prohibits such services, the institution can impose disciplinary measures on individuals who contravene this guideline, thus creating a culture of awareness regarding AI risks. As institutions weigh the implications of free public services, they must rigorously evaluate the risks against their potential benefits, balancing innovation with safety and ethical considerations.

According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), AI governance is characterized as a function aimed at fostering and executing a risk management culture within organizations involved in developing or deploying AI systems. This governance framework ensures that risks and their potential impacts are systematically identified, assessed, and managed effectively and consistently across all institutional levels. It provides a structural foundation that aligns AI risk management practices with broader organizational policies and strategic objectives, extending beyond AI systems to encompass supply chains, third-party software, hardware systems, data, and internally developed AI applications. This comprehensive approach ensures that the institution is compliant with legal and ethical standards and adaptive to the rapidly changing technological landscape (Tabassi, 2022).

The significance of AI governance cannot be overstated; it is an essential component of contemporary organizational strategy. AI technologies are increasingly embedded in everyday life, and their usage will continue to proliferate, influencing not only academic environments but

also the larger societal context. Students already leverage AI tools like Grammarly to enhance their writing and optimize their academic endeavors, highlighting the need for institutions to effectively understand and guide the use of such technologies. In this context, institutions must take decisive action to formulate clear and coherent policies governing AI usage, ensuring that faculty, staff, and students are adequately informed and prepared to navigate potential pitfalls.

Robust AI governance allows institutions to create, implement, and rigorously enforce practical guidelines that reflect evolving best practices and ethical considerations surrounding AI. While the specific outcomes of AI governance may differ from one institution to another, there are critical components that should be universally addressed, providing a baseline for effective governance and risk management. One fundamental recommendation is the establishment of an AI Governance Committee, which can facilitate collaboration, oversight, and inclusive decision-making. This committee mustn't be ad hoc but a standing body composed of thoughtfully selected individuals who embody a diverse blend of expertise and representation, ensuring a comprehensive perspective.

The proposed composition of this committee should include:

1. Four tenured or tenure-track faculty members:

Selected for their subject matter expertise in AI and related fields, these individuals will provide the academic foundation for the committee's discussions and decisions, ensuring that the latest research and best practices inform decisions.

2. A representative from the institution's legal department:

This individual will ensure compliance with legal standards and safeguard the institution's interests, particularly concerning data privacy laws and regulations.

3. A high-ranking representative from campus leadership:

This member will facilitate strategic direction and support for the committee's initiatives, ensuring alignment with institutional goals and objectives.

4. An expert from the library:

This person will contribute knowledge regarding information resources and data management, aiding in evaluating resources and their implications for AI usage.

5. Appointed representatives:

Including individuals from the Faculty Senate,

Staff Senate, Student Government Association, and the Graduate Student Council will ensure a comprehensive representation of diverse interests within the institution, fostering an inclusive approach to governance.

6. The Chief Information Officer (CIO):

As an ex-officio, non-voting member, the CIO should provide critical strategic insights to bolster the committee's effectiveness, notably on technology-related issues.

Upon the formation of the AI Governance Committee, its primary objective should be to develop and implement a formal Risk Management Guideline for the utilization of AI. These guidelines must critically address inherent issues related to AI systems, ensuring they are designed to be unbiased, transparent, and free from inaccuracies, commonly referred to as hallucinations in AI contexts. It is vital to recognize that the quality of training data significantly influences the accuracy and bias present in AI outputs, aligning with the longstanding principle within computer science known as "garbage in, garbage out" (GIGO). While mitigating this issue may be straightforward, it often requires extensive rectification efforts to ensure data integrity. Thus, thorough vetting, redaction, and sanitization of training data are paramount. Additionally, the guidelines must encompass considerations related to trust, supply chain integrity, and potential vendor concerns, as each factor plays a role in AI systems' overall effectiveness and reliability.

Finally, the committee should implement a formal grievance reporting tool tailored to AI-related concerns. This mechanism will ensure that all stakeholders' voices are acknowledged, respected, and addressed within this critical governance domain, fostering a culture of openness and responsiveness to emerging challenges.

Establishing a robust AI governance framework is a strategic and ethical imperative for higher education institutions as they navigate the complexities and challenges posed by integrating AI technologies. By prioritizing thoughtful governance and proactive measures, institutions can effectively harness the potential of AI while safeguarding their integrity and commitment to their academic mission.

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

UA Little Rock's Library Hosts AI Hackathon

by Michelle Malone

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Earlier in the summer UA Little Rock explored a different kind of hackathon – one that allowed UA Little Rock students to put their skills to work for a good cause: wellness. The “Coding for Wellness Hackathon” allowed students to work together in designing new ways for AI to be a mental health resource. The AI Hackathon camp brought a different offering of happenings to the library, including a loud drum circle, a singing bowl experience, and an art

therapy session for participants!

“We all know that technology is taking over, it’s a part of our everyday lives, so we can find a way to let AI support mental health or help with mental health,” Arkansas Tech computer science junior Malaya Wilburd said. “I feel like that would be very beneficial for us today.”

Photos are provided by Michelle Malone, Ottenheimer Library communication specialist, and Marla Johnson, UA Little Rock’s technology entrepreneur-in-residence.



ALA COUNCILOR'S REPORT: Advocacy, ALA Annual & More by *Crystal Gates*, North Little Rock Public Library System

Advocacy

ALA recently launched a new campaign urging library advocates to engage with elected officials, their communities, and their colleagues. There are several ways to engage 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. You can use the hashtag #ForOurLibraries. 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 <https://www.ala.org/advocacy> and clicking on the "Show Up" graphic.

ALA 2025 Annual @ Philadelphia, PA

Our most recent annual conference was held in Philadelphia, PA on June 26-30, 2025. If you haven't visited the Reading Terminal, I strongly encourage you to do so. ArLA hosted a wonderful dinner at Maggiano's. Thank you to those who joined us. It was great to see everyone!

Council Actions @ Annual

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

During Council I, the following notable actions were taken:

- Approved the end of the Committee Associate Program;
- Approved the end of the Planning and Budget Assembly (PBA); and
- Approved the Reunification of the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA).
- Dan Montgomery, ALA's new Executive Director, joined us and shared his excitement for joining the ALA team and his vision for the future.

During Council II, the following notable actions were taken:

- Approved the Reunification of the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) and the Young Adult Library Services Association

(YALSA);

- Created a working group charged with developing a unified, critically informed ALA position on AI in libraries for council consideration no later than the 2026 Annual Conference;
- Approved updated Core Values Interpretations for sections: Intellectual Freedom; Privacy & Sustainability. Extended interpretation work for Equity & Public Good until the January 2026 Council Meeting; and
- Approved updated Library Bill of Rights Interpretations for sections: User Generated Content in Library Discover Labels; Economic Barriers to Library Access; Access to Resources and Services in the School Library; and a block approval of Sections 15-25.

During Council III, the following notable actions were taken:

- Approved the ALA Strategic Plan, as amended; and
- Approved the memorials and resolutions honoring the following individuals: Steven Kerchoff, Linda Ernst, Maryellen Trautman, Sylvia Knight Norton, Rep. Raul Grijalva, Dr. Gordon Baker, and Dr. Carla Hayden.

Other News

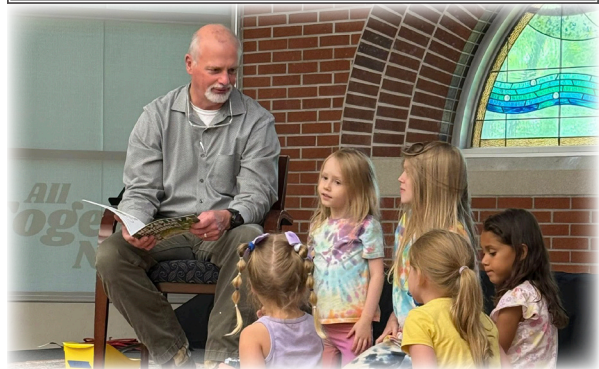
ALA will celebrate 150 years in 2026, with a large celebration being planned for January 2026 in Chicago. Stay tuned at ala.org for more details as they become available. The next Annual Conference will be held in Chicago on June 25-29, 2026.

Have you thought about getting involved in ALA? Now is a great time to show up for our libraries by volunteering on a committee. Learn more at <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.



Gates



Story time at Faulkner County Library.

Arkansas Librarians: Celebrating Our Foremothers

"We give a bit of ourselves with love and affection."

by **Noah Elrod**

Faulkner-Van Buren Regional Library System

In 1959, Frances Potter Neal was the librarian and executive secretary of the Arkansas Library Commission (ALC), predecessor to the Arkansas State Library (*Arkansas Library Association*). Well-regarded among her peers, she made her name as an organizer and literacy advocate. Through her tenure in the ALC, Mrs. Neal planned and oversaw cross-country trips to national library conferences, expanded the ever-growing Bookmobile and Book by Mail programs, and brought dozens of rural librarians together from across the state. This would be quite a feat for many, but this is what Frances was meant for. After all, her family home was once on the land where the current Warren Branch Library sits ("Frances P. Neal, Library Leader, Succumbs at 84").

For her 44th birthday, she was gifted with a one-of-a-kind book.

On a sticky, warm July morning in 1995, I was born to Andrea and Denny Elrod of Batesville, Arkansas. Given the rural nature of North Central Arkansas, I grew up swimming in creeks, making mud pies, and tending scrapes and bruises from the forested land behind my childhood home. As a teenager, I would read any book I could find, mostly fiction, but a special interest in local history would soon bloom like it had for my father years before.

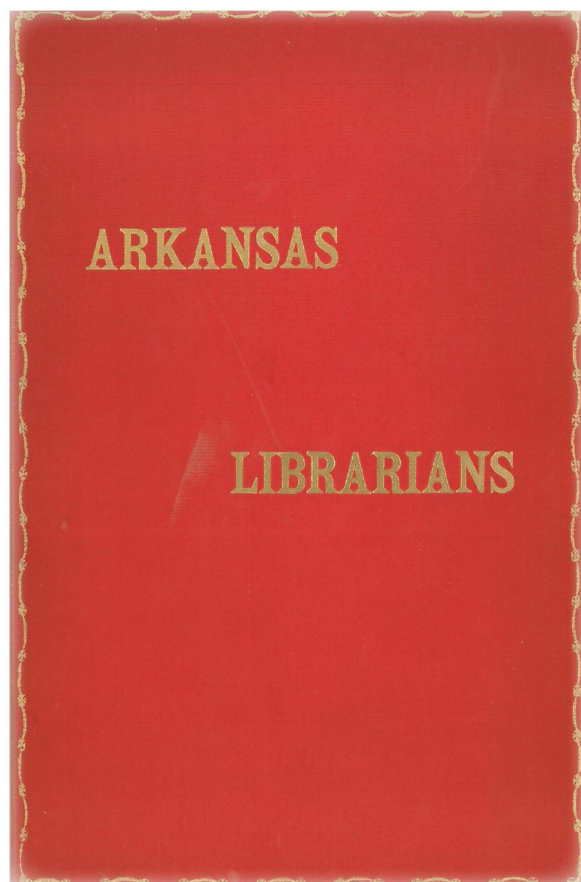
My father, Denny, started a local history blog when I was a middle school student. His focus was on the natural and genealogical history of Izard County, the land in which he and I both were raised. As a result, I learned how to find and share stories. Of course, as an appropriately rebellious teenager, I wasn't quite as keen on following in my dad's



"Tour to San Francisco, 1958. Front of Marion Hotel." Librarians secure Arkansas Library Association banner to the side of a tour bus. Left to right: Jackie Poe, ALC; Flo Gordon, ALC; Aylene Ragland, Fort Smith; Frances Neal, ALC.

footsteps.

I preferred using my skills to search for Sears Honor-Bilt kit homes until I was hired in 2024 as a circulation clerk at the Conway branch of the Faulkner-Van Buren Regional Library System (FVBRLS). Up until this point, I had been a carhop, nurse's assistant, and baker – far from the book sorting and reader-advising duties of the public library. Once I made my way to FVBRLS, my area of research centered around the architectural history of Faulkner County. Buoyed by a vast selection of local research materials, I quickly found an interest



Cover of Arkansas Librarians. The cover is bright red with embossed gold text and border. Titled Arkansas Librarians, the book details the lives and accomplishments of librarians across the state of Arkansas in 1959. Some pages are creased; some are stained. Most are written on typewriters while others are carefully handwritten. Various pages are typed on stationery from that librarian's employer, often a larger library system, as smaller libraries did not have the means for fancy letterhead. One thing was certain: this was a one-of-a-kind find.

in the works of Silas Owens, Sr.

Mr. Owens was a renowned African American mixed-masonry builder in Central Arkansas in the 1930s–1960s (“Silas Owens [1907–1960]”). His style of architecture boasted herringbone-style sandstone exteriors and homey, craftsman interiors. The newest branch of FVBRLS located in Guy is a former Church of Christ built by Owens and remodeled to once again serve the citizens. In Twin Groves, Silas built a community center which, over half a century later, is now the home of the Ozark Foothills African American History Museum and a branch location of the Faulkner County Library (*Silas Owens – Twin Groves*).

In the process of searching for more information about Mr. Owens and his works, I began sifting through stacks of material in the archival cabinets of our Arkansas Room. Tucked away under a few thick binders of circa-1980 Garden Club meeting notes was a red book with gold embossed details. How it was obtained was unknown, but in 2024 when it was uncovered, it was a treasure trove of lost information.

“She found books for little Susie, for the rock-hound, for the ballad singer, for the garden clubbers, for the old lady whose days were lonely,” writes Mrs. Ernest Halter about Mrs. Reid.

Next to stylized ball-point pen illustrations, Gladys Louise Krone writes of a life growing up next to her public library in Fort Smith. Later, she would become the head librarian of the Carnegie City Library in Fort Smith. There is also the story of Ruth McFadyen Cunningham, who in 1959 was the Bookmobile Librarian for the North Arkansas Regional Library located in Harrison (Adams et al.).

Over the last few months, I have been researching the origin and journey of Arkansas Librarians. Though my search has yielded small returns, I remain devoted to unravelling the mystery of how and why this beautiful tribute to librarianship and record-keeping ended up in the archives of the Faulkner County Library. In the meantime, I hope to share and celebrate with you the recurring themes, constant battles, and, most importantly, lives of our predecessors.

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Noah began working as a circulation clerk for Faulkner County Library in Conway in February 2024. Until 2019, he had lived and worked in Izard County. As a child Noah loved stories, but never dreamed he'd end up surrounded by so many. Noah is incredibly grateful for the opportunity to provide care and knowledge to the community he serves.

TRAINING: TIPS, TOPICS & TECHNIQUES

Empowering Library Teams Through Leadership Development

by *Lacy Wolfe*, North Little Rock Public Library System

We often think of leadership development

as something that happens at conferences or through formal coursework. But it can - and should - happen regularly, informally, and on the job. When you create space for staff to reflect, share, and try new approaches, you unlock leadership potential at every level.

Strong leadership is critical to the success, adaptability, and morale of library teams. But how do we nurture those skills in a way that's approachable and sustainable - especially in a field where time and staffing are limited? At the North Little Rock Public Library System (NLRPLS), we've created a flexible, discussion-driven leadership development framework that fosters growth, confidence, and a stronger team culture without requiring large budgets or extensive training time.

Why Leadership Development Matters

In libraries, strong leadership is no longer confined to administration. Every staff member, whether managing a department or helping a patron at the front desk, plays a leadership role in creating a welcoming, responsive, and resilient library. We've seen firsthand how leadership development helps retain and motivate staff, increases confidence, and builds a culture of shared ownership.

Leadership is not just about preparing people

for promotions. It's about helping staff members see themselves as problem-solvers, collaborators, and decision-makers. It's also a way to acknowledge that learning and growth are part of everyone's job - not just something you do when you reach a certain title.

A Framework that Fits

I worked with departmental managers to design our leadership development program to be **time-efficient, low-commitment, and practical**. The structure was simple:

- A six-month timeline
- One one-hour session per week
- Space in each meeting for staff to bring up real library issues
- Curated resources for reading, listening, or viewing outside of meetings

This was the ideal plan – but in practice, we adjusted as needed. We occasionally skipped meetings due to library closures, holidays, or other scheduling conflicts. At times, we paused the series altogether to focus on more immediate needs, such as developing new onboarding materials. The flexibility of the framework allowed us to restart when the timing was right, and it still provided a strong foundation for leadership growth.

Rather than rigid training, we built something lightweight, reflective, and rooted in the everyday work of the library.

Curating Resources that Resonate

One of the keys to our program's success was using a wide variety of engaging, bite-sized resources. We drew from TED Talks, podcasts, articles, blog posts, book chapters, and case studies. Staff appreciated having options that were accessible and could be completed on their own schedule.

Some examples of content that resonated include:

- "The Self-Determined Middle Manager" by Kristine Condic
- "Time Management Skills: A Checklist" from *College and Research Libraries News*
- "The Tao of No" by Warren Graham
- "How to Delegate Effectively" by Lauren Landry
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Wolfe

- TED Talk: “Why You Think You’re Right – Even If You’re Wrong” by Julia Galef
- “ALA’s Core Competencies of Librarianship” paired with manager-developed competencies
- The “Library Leadership Podcast”

These resources opened up discussions on real challenges while offering tools staff could immediately try in their work.

Grounding Topics in Reality

We organized topics into four broad themes:

1. **Personal Growth:** resilience, adaptability, confidence, and vision
2. **Management Essentials:** time management, conflict resolution, and communication
3. **Core Leadership Skills:** delegation, decision-making, and motivation
4. **Team Development:** coaching, inclusion, and building trust

Rather than dictating topics, we allowed many to emerge organically from the daily work of the library. This made each discussion feel immediately relevant and practical.

Measuring Impact Through Reflection

While we didn’t consistently include formal reflection activities in each session, I see great value in incorporating them more intentionally moving forward. Reflection encourages deeper engagement and helps participants connect leadership concepts to their day-to-day work.

In future sessions, I plan to use simple prompts like:

- What part of today’s discussion was most useful? Least useful?
- What’s one idea you’ll apply this week?
- What topics would you like to explore next?

We could also use a basic leadership self-assessment at times, inviting staff to rate their confidence in areas such as decision-making,



delegation, conflict resolution, and motivation. This tool provides a useful starting point for personal growth and could be even more effective when paired with regular reflection. I encourage others implementing similar programs to build in time for this kind of self-evaluation.

Tips for Implementation

If you're looking to build a leadership development program at your library, here are a few lessons we learned:

- **Start small.** A short, focused format can still be powerful.
- **Use real library challenges** as discussion starters.
- **Keep resources short and relevant** – you don’t need formal training programs to build skills.
- **Include time for reflection.** It deepens learning and helps staff see progress.
- **Encourage openness and flexibility.** Leadership looks different for everyone.
- **Model the behavior** you want to foster – curiosity, humility, and action.

One particularly meaningful activity could be asking teams to identify shared values together. This kind of collective reflection strengthens trust and creates a foundation for future collaboration.

Final Takeaways

Leadership isn’t a destination – it’s a skill set that grows over time with practice, feedback, and support. By embedding development into our weekly rhythms, we’re building a stronger, more resilient library team that’s better equipped to serve our community and support each other.

This article is adapted from a presentation given at the Southeastern Library Association/Louisiana Library Association Joint Conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in March 2025.

Lacy Wolfe is chief operations officer of the North Little Rock Public Library System in North Little Rock, Arkansas. She serves as member-at-large for the Arkansas Library Association Executive Board and co-chairs the Membership Committee.

ADMINISTRATION & MANAGEMENT: Communication Matters

by April Sheppard, Arkansas State University

The greatest challenge in leadership, whether you're leading from the top or the middle, new to leadership or a seasoned veteran, is communication. We communicate every day: talking with coworkers, calling loved ones, posting online, texting family, and sending memes to friends. And yet, even though we should be pros at communicating, the majority of personnel problems administrators face in the library stem from either a lack of communication or miscommunication.

Lack of communication is not always our fault. Sometimes we don't know things ourselves. But even then, being open and honest is important. It's ok to say that we don't know something or that we need to ask around and find out, and need to be able to do so without throwing our own administrators under the bus to make conversations easier for us. It's a small change structurally to say, "I don't have that information yet," instead of, "They won't tell me," but it makes a difference morale-wise. If we do have factual information and we're able to share, we need to do so – even if it's bad, but especially when it's good. The goal is not to share rumors, generate fear, or get hopes up. It's about putting everyone on equal footing and ensuring that everyone has a voice and the opportunity to ask clarifying questions.

While a lack of communication is definitely problematic, in my experience, the greater problem is often miscommunication. It's easy to see when something is missing; it's much harder to notice when things aren't meshing, especially when we get lost in our own roles or thoughts. For example, those of us in administrative roles may have worked in libraries long enough that we regularly use jargon and acronyms that new employees may not yet know (or we hang on to outdated terms!). And as much as it may pain us to admit it, we do pick up "administrative speak" from institutional leaders. One day, we're vibing at the service desk, "ironically" using all the current slang. Until eventually, we find ourselves talking about "synergy"



Sheppard

and "rightsizing," and alienating our employees.

One of the many roles that administrators need to master is the ability to get everyone "talking the same language." It is our role to ensure that everyone has the same access to available information, the same definitions, and the same understanding of our library's missions, values, and goals. Equally important is that we help bridge communication across different communication styles and help our employees identify and appreciate the different styles and their strengths. Based on research from Pierre Casse, the four communication styles are:

- **Action-oriented:** People with this style are often pragmatic and direct, focusing on results, efficiency, and productivity. They thrive in change and can quickly jump from idea to idea. To others, they may seem energetic or impatient. The best way to communicate with action-oriented people is to be brief, focus on results first, state recommendations, emphasize the practicality of ideas, and use visual aids.
- **Process-oriented:** People with this style focus on facts, procedures, planning, and analysis. They often process things systematically and logically. To others, they may seem cautious or controlling. The best way to communicate with process-oriented people is to be precise, focus on facts, present ideas in a logical order, break down recommendations, and provide alternatives with pros and cons.
- **People-oriented:** People with this style often focus on relationships with others, such as teamwork, motivation, and cooperation. They are perceptive and empathetic to the needs of those around them. To others, they may appear emotional or sensitive. The best way to communicate with people-oriented people is to start with small talk before discussion, focus on connecting ideas and people, show how the idea has worked in the past, and show support from others. An informal writing style is often preferred.
- **Idea-oriented:** People with this style crave creativity and independence. They focus on cutting-edge ideas, new ways of doing things, and out-of-the-box thinking. To others, they may appear unrealistic or difficult to understand. The best way to communicate with an idea-oriented person is to allow time for discussion, be patient if they go off-topic, stress the uniqueness of your idea and its future impact, and try to relate the discussion to broader concepts.

Being aware of one's communication style is important. As someone who is equally action- and idea-oriented, I realize that, if I'm not careful, I can

come in like a wrecking ball. My nature is quick, decisive, and creative. I don't want to hear, "that's how it's always been done." I want action NOW, even if we have to do it in a completely new way. After all, change is exciting. And no surprise, as someone who scores lowest in process, I often find details boring. I care about the destination, not so much the journey. Despite my communication style, though, I work just fine with people who are more process- or people-oriented because I adjust how I communicate with them to better fit their needs. (I also watch for any signs of others being overwhelmed so I know when I'm too much.) In group settings, I try to bridge the communication styles through prompting. For example, encouraging someone to explain how they did something for the process-oriented people, or helping relate a discussion to a broader topic or something that we've done in the past for those more people- or idea-oriented.

If you want to learn more about your communication style, there are lots of online tests. However, I feel like the self-assessments based on Pierre Casse's research (see citation below) provided me with the most accurate results of my style. The Ecology of Design in Human Systems has a good self-assessment exercise at <https://tinyurl.com/yxvwbvyy>.

Casse, P. (1981). *Training for the cross-cultural mind: A handbook for cross-cultural trainers and consultants* (2nd ed.). Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research.

April Sheppard is associate dean of the library at Arkansas State University Jonesboro. She currently serves as secretary for the academic community of interest, CULAR, and for the Arkansas academic library consortium, ARKLink.

ADVOCACY ARKANSAS: Advocacy 101: Beginning at the Beginning, Again

by Allie Stevens Gosselink

Hello, wonderful colleagues, from your new Advocacy columnist for the foreseeable future. As we exit a legislative session packed with bills that affected our work in myriad ways, and in which we were called upon to be vocal in our advocacy for everything from community gardens to the State Library itself, I will admit to being tired. I know many of you are, too. Something I have learned to do when I feel burnout and the shadow of apathy chasing me is to go back and retrace my steps. Sometimes that looks like reviewing an old planner, or re-reading things I've written that I'm proud of, and sometimes it looks like going back over the basics of a topic and seeing how my new perspective layers on my previous knowledge. To that end, I began to prepare for this column by revisiting some basic questions, like what even is advocacy, really, and how does it work in the context of my life every day?

There are advocacy toolkits from nearly every



Gosselink

library-adjacent association, website pages full of advocacy resources, paid and free professional development opportunities improving our library advocacy skills, and frankly, so many mentions of the concept in my email inbox that it begins to lose meaning as a word and just becomes a jumble of letters pretty quickly. I won't recount that here. Definitions of advocacy from the usual dictionaries include language about recommending, defending, or even pleading for a cause, all of which go a step beyond mere "support," and the support here can come in many different varieties, arguably the most important of which is financial.

I've found there's a thin line, though, between advocating for better funding for what I (and you) know are vital, precious public services and sounding like a broken record about the details of a legal/ethical/financial situation that the people around me do not have the same... we'll call it *enthusiasm* for, even when those people *do* support libraries and intellectual freedom wholeheartedly. I'm sure most of you have also had the experience of seeing someone's eyes glaze over when you start talking about library stuff again. To be clear, I'll never stop talking about the importance of intellectual freedom and libraries of all types to all the people around me, but I've also found myself wondering how I could use my energy more effectively and sustainably as we move through these turbulent times. I've spent years working to create positivity around library interactions for my community, and it seems counterproductive to just feed all that back

into the outrage machine, even if that is often the path of least resistance. I want every community member who sees the value in what we do on our side, though, and sometimes that means using “less is more” strategically when it comes to advocacy conversations.

Which, honestly, has turned out to be a good idea to sit with (for me, at least) because rehashing the problems over and over isn’t the same as moving toward a solution anyway, and time is short, and the to-do list is never-ending. I’ve begun to think of advocacy in the same bucket as leadership – the goal is not to be the leader in every situation, but to help others develop leadership skills to increase the impact. The goal isn’t just to be a champion for libraries; it’s to turn every library patron and grown-up library kid into another library champion in their own lives. As good as our work is, it does not speak for itself, but neither are ours the only voices. Our voices are, however, particularly well-informed, and many of us are likely sitting at the intersection of multiple library connections. I work as a public library director, but I have two kids who attend public school. My voice as a parent, in support of a diverse, contemporary collection that provides my children with intellectual freedom in their school, has a different sort of power than my voice as an employee of a library, as do academic and school librarians showing up to support their rights as patrons of public libraries. Library advocacy opportunities outside of our particular sphere happen so often, and it makes a strong statement to show up

before there’s a problem to express appreciation for our colleagues across the often-siloed divisions of our profession.

Speaking of advocacy opportunities, the Intellectual Freedom Committee will be launching a helpline soon that will connect librarians across the state facing any sort of censorship or challenge to intellectual freedom with knowledgeable, trained volunteers who will be equipped to provide confidential support and advice. We are seeking volunteers, and we also need everyone to help us spread the word about the helpline so that every Arkansas librarian knows we are there for them. For more information, or to volunteer to join our network, please come to the committee meeting at ArLA’s annual conference or shoot me an email anytime. The Intellectual Freedom Committee regularly meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 1pm (no meeting in July). All ArLA members are invited to join us.

It feels more important than ever that we continue to show up for our communities and for each other, and I’m grateful as always to be part of the compassionate, capable company of Arkansas’s library world. I am looking forward to reconnecting in person at the conference in October!

Allie Stevens Gosselink is director of the Calhoun County Library & Museum in Hampton, Arkansas and a member of ArLA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee.

ALPS AT WORK: ALPS InfoBits 2025

by Jasmine Jobe

Hi, I’m Jobe, from the CALS EOA. That’s the Central Arkansas Library System’s Encyclopedia of Arkansas. When I’m not doing my job as editorial assistant, I’m providing EOA programming at the Roberts Library and all across the branches. I’ve done everything from collage



Jobe

art to live lizards, plus plenty of presentations on notable Black Arkansans, Arkansan women, LGBTQ+ folks, artists, scientists, musicians, business owners, and more. But perhaps my favorite part of the job is getting to offer writing

programs as part of the CALS Writing Circle. My BFA and MFA are in creative writing, so that’s where I’m most at home. Now I’m the ALPS chair and I get to tell you all about the great event we held in May, InfoBits 2025! I’m obsessed with rainbows, so the “Color Your World” SRC theme was perfect timing. FYI, we hold InfoBits every year in mid-May, so mark your calendars now to get a jumpstart on next year’s festivities!

On Friday, May 16, our morning started at 9:00 am with registration, socializing, donuts, and coffee from Community Bakery, a locally owned business.

At 9:30 am, we started announcements with Membership Committee Co-Chair Lacy Wolfe, who talked about ArLA’s mentorship program and the upcoming annual ArLA Conference in October. Next, we heard our guest speaker, Jennifer Chilcoat, Director of the Arkansas State Library. She talked about “What the Arkansas State Library Does and Why it Matters.”



InfoBits 2025

FRI | 16 | MAY



Hillary Rodham Clinton
Children's Library &
Learning Center
4800 W 10th St, Little
Rock AR 72204

Session 1 at 10:30 am was a choice between offerings: “AI Power: Transforming K-6 Learning” with Lavioris Martin or “Release, Relate, Renew: Mindful Practices for Library Workers” with Candace Latrese Owens, which was a yoga and meditation session.

At 11:40 am we gathered for lunch, provided by Certified Pies, a local Black-owned pizza place, and we settled in with our lemonade and sweet tea to listen to our second guest speaker, Judy Calhoun, recently retired from being director for the Southeast Arkansas Regional Library. She spoke about the



A yoga and meditation session.

importance of hope and “Finding the Light in Times of Darkness.”

At 12:45 pm, attendees had the choice for SESSION 2 between “Easy Strategic Plan on a \$0 Budget” presented by Kari Lapp, or “25 Kids and Counting: Working with Student Workers” with Amy DeVooght.

Session 3 started at 1:50 pm. The choices were “A Series of Unfortunate Call Numbers” with Jeannie Luu or “ChatGPT Unleashed: Exploring AI’s Potential for Innovation and Efficiency in Libraries” with Leland Goston.

At 2:55 pm, we gathered for final announcements and the dispersal of prizes! So many generous attendees provided gift baskets for the raffle, and I was so thrilled with all the offerings! No event would be complete without last-minute tech issues, a million questions for our indispensable venue branch manager, and tons of behind-the-scenes work, but overall it seemed to go very well, and I hope our 60+ attendees had as good a time as I did! Until next year, folks. Cheers, Jobe

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



Final announcements.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES: Welcome to the School Libraries Column!

by *Leslie Switzer, Crossett High School*

When I was an elementary librarian, I came across a book called *Class Trip*. However, the barcode label was positioned in such a way that it covered the “Cl” in “Class”. The book appeared to have been checked out many times, and I can just imagine the giggles from students. I don’t know how no one had noticed this before, but I moved the barcode so the entire title was visible. Since that day, I am extremely careful with barcode placement.

Whether you’re new to the job or a seasoned professional, librarians are never short on stories. I asked school librarians on the AAIM listserv to share their favorite memories of being a school librarian. Unfortunately, I asked during summer break and only received a few responses, but those replies are a

reminder of why we do what we do.

I know there are a lot more stories out there. What story do you tell when someone asks you why you became a librarian? Do you have a heart-warming story about finally reaching a difficult student (or administrator or co-worker)? What things have you learned along the way that you weren’t taught in your library program?

We’re delighted to invite Arkansas school librarians to contribute to this column, and to feature a diverse set of voices. If you have stories (or photos) to share, please respond directly to me (leslie.switzer@crossettschools.org), so they can be included in future issues. Let’s remind each other WHY we do what we do.

Leslie Switzer is a librarian and Language Arts teacher at Crossett High School in Crossett, Arkansas and serves as the associate editor for school libraries.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES: From Lecturns to Storytime: A Journey from Academic to Elementary Librarianship

by *Lavoris Martin, Coleman Elementary*

After more than 25 years in academic librarianship – working at both a traditional four-year university and a historically Black college and university – I never imagined I would find myself reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* aloud to a room full of kindergartners, their eyes wide with wonder and their hands fluttering like butterflies. And yet, here I am – a newly minted elementary school librarian. And it’s been one of the most rewarding, surprising chapters of my career so far.

My roots are in higher education. I pursued my library science degree with college students in mind, imagining myself guiding research, supporting academic success, and navigating databases in campus libraries. I never expected to find myself surrounded by picture books, storytime rugs, and the endless curiosity of young readers but I’m so glad



Martin

I did. Over the years, I built information literacy programs, supported faculty research, curated diverse collections, and presented at regional and national conferences. And still, as much as I found meaning and challenge in academic librarianship, there was a quiet pull I couldn’t ignore one that grew stronger with time. I started to realize I wanted to connect with students before they ever stepped onto a college campus. I wanted to help spark a love for reading and learning right at the beginning of their journey, when curiosity is still wide open.

That calling is what led me to an elementary school library a place where those first sparks can turn into something lasting. I wanted to help create a love of reading and learning at the beginning of their journey. That calling brought me to an elementary school library.

A World Apart – And Not So Far

The transition from academic to school librarianship was both dramatic and surprisingly natural. Gone were the quiet study zones and citation workshops. In the place of information literacy workshops and quiet study zone were storytime rugs, colorful displays, and the delightful chaos of book fairs. But what I soon realized is that the core of librarianship – connection, curiosity, and access – remained the same.

At first, I wasn’t sure how my academic experience would translate. But I quickly found that many of the skills I honed in higher education

were equally valuable here. Teaching is still central. I teach different content to a different audience. Reader's advisory for second graders requires as much care and intentionality as it does for undergrads, if not more. And collection development for a school library involves just as much research, balance, and thought as any academic library purchase plan. But the most profound difference? The immediacy of impact.

Planting Seeds for a Lifetime of Literacy

Working with young students has opened my eyes to just how foundational early literacy experiences are. At this age, students aren't just learning to read they're learning what a library is. They're discovering that books can be mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. They're figuring out that libraries are places where they belong.

One of the most fulfilling parts of my new role has been planning and leading field trips. We've visited our local public library, as well as the Clinton Presidential Library. Watching my students step into those spaces some for the first time reminded me why I became a librarian in the first place. Their excitement, their questions, their awe: it was like seeing the library through brand-new eyes.

Some students looked up at me, eyes wide, and asked, "Do we need a password?" or "Do we have to pay to get into the library?" Others leaned in and whispered, almost in disbelief, "Wait – the books are really free to take home?" Moments like these stopped me in my tracks. These moments were powerful reminders that my job isn't just about teaching reading skills, it's about showing students what access, belonging, and possibility can look like. It's about helping them understand what a library truly is – a welcoming place to explore, respect, and fall in love with.

Lessons I've Carried with Me

If you're an academic librarian considering a career shift, or even just curious, I want to say this: the transition is not only possible, it's profoundly enriching. I've brought years of instructional design experience, comfort with public speaking, a strong foundation in reference work, and a commitment to equitable access. Those skills did not disappear in the elementary setting – they evolved.

I've learned how to break down big, complicated ideas into stories and lessons that make sense to little minds. I've discovered the joy in crafting bulletin boards and door displays that catch kids' eyes and spark their curiosity. And yes, I've become pretty good at managing a line of excited kids – all clamoring for the same copy of *Dog*



Man. But maybe the biggest lesson of all has been understanding what it means to be a child's very first librarian. There's a kind of magic in watching a child truly connect with a book for the very first time – the way their face lights up when a story finally speaks to them, especially those kids who didn't think they liked reading at all. These moments might never make it into a conference presentation or an academic journal, but to me, they are some of the most powerful and meaningful experiences a librarian can have.

A Full-Circle Career

In some ways, I feel like I've come full circle. I spent decades helping students succeed in college. Now, I'm helping prepare them to get there. I'm building a foundation of love of reading, a sense of curiosity, and a familiarity with library spaces that I hope will stay with them for a lifetime.

Librarianship is a vast and varied field. No matter where we work – whether it's a busy public library, a quiet academic library, or a lively school media center – we're all connected by the same core beliefs: that everyone deserves access to knowledge, that education changes lives, and that libraries empower communities. Moving from academic to school librarianship didn't change who I am as a librarian, it only opened up new parts of me. If you've ever been curious about working with younger students, I encourage you to follow that curiosity. You might just discover, like I did, that this next chapter brings unexpected joys – and that all the experience you've built along the way is not only useful, but truly priceless.

Lavoris Martin, MSCST, MSLS, MLSTEd, is the librarian at Coleman Elementary, part of the Watson Chapel School District in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

ARKANSAS BOOKS & AUTHORS

Ayana Gray

by **Jasmine Jobe**, Bobby L. Roberts Library of Arkansas History & Art

New York Times bestselling author Ayana Gray writes young adult and adult speculative fiction. Her work has been praised by *Kirkus Reviews* and *Publishers Weekly*, among others. Gray loves monsters, mythology, and magic.



Jobe

Lillian Ayana Gray was born March 13, 1993, in Atlanta, Georgia, to her mother, Rhonda, and her father, Russ. She has a younger brother, Corey, and a younger sister, Ashley. Gray grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, where her maternal grandparents helped raise her for the first five years of her life. In 2006, when Gray was thirteen, her father got a new job and the family moved to Little Rock (Pulaski County). She attended Pulaski Academy. There, she wrote an article on female infanticide and sex selective abortion, using India and China as her references. The 26-page research paper with its 32-item bibliography was so well-written that it was published in the *Concord Review*.

Gray attended the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville (Washington County). During her senior year, she was able to do a one-month study abroad in Ghana, following the path of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This had a powerful impact on her. She also refers to her time in a special college course, Political Violence, as thought-provoking, and having influenced her deeper understanding of good, evil, and power. She originally intended to become an immigration or civil rights lawyer, but became disillusioned with the U.S. justice system. She started writing “just for fun.” She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in political science and African and African-American Studies in 2015.

She lived with her parents in Little Rock briefly and worked for the University of Arkansas’s Division of University Advancement. Not sure what to do next, she worked as a nanny for a year in Brisbane and Sydney, Australia. She moved back to the states and worked in North Little Rock (Pulaski County) briefly, but then moved for a job at the University of Florida at Gainesville.

In Florida, Gray didn’t know anyone locally and got involved with the online writing community

instead. She found out about #DVPit, which was created to give marginalized, underrepresented voices an opportunity to elevate their projects, and used their upcoming event as her personal deadline. Gray pitched her first book on Twitter, calling one of her main characters “Black Arya Stark.”

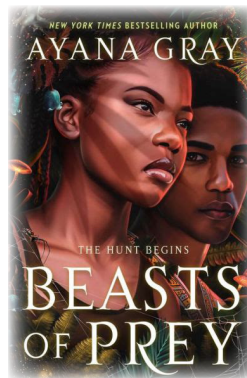
From 2015 to 2019, she wrote and sold her book in the midst of the pandemic and civil unrest. “There were people protesting outside my window,” says Gray. She got married in 2019, but she and her spouse Dan were separated for a year due to the immigration process. She wanted to join the protests, but also didn’t want to get sick. Her dad told her, “Your power is in your pen,” and she realized that her writing would be her form of protest. She worked on revision for a year with her agent before finding her editor and publisher. *Beasts of Prey* entered the bestseller list at #4 and has been translated into 11 languages. Gray was inspired by the story of the Tsavo man-eaters – two male lions who hunted together, killing railroad workers in Kenya and Uganda – presented in the movie *The Ghost and the Darkness*.

Gray wrote the young adult trilogy: *Beasts of Prey* (2021), *Beasts of Ruin* (2022), and *Beasts of War* (2024). They were published by Putnam Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Penguin Random House. The books are set in a Pan-African fantasy setting and center around two Black teens, Koffi and Ekon. Gray has talked about how, as a kid, she loved fantasy novels and wanted to see herself

reflected in those stories, and imagined herself and her friends in those settings. She also loved Greco-Roman mythology and drew that pantheon as Black people: Black Zeus and Black Athena. Her stories are “inspired by heavily researched traditional mythologies across the African continent,” because she didn’t know until she was an adult that Africa had its own mythologies. She’s placed a lot of Easter eggs in her work: kids could research the names of



Gray



monsters or the names of authors mentioned and realize she's pulling from real African stories and histories. She also chose to use the Swahili language rather than making one up. When her book first got popular, it was compared to Black Panther. Gray says she wrote her books in part so that Black kids could see themselves reflected on the page as main characters, unapologetic about being Black.

Her fourth novel, *I, Medusa*, is written for adults and is forthcoming. Her debut novel is being adapted by Netflix for film. She and her spouse currently live in Little Rock (Pulaski County).

For additional information:

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

YOUTH SERVICES

Summer Reading & Summer Feeding

by *Mary Spears Polk*, *Faulkner County Library*

Most Arkansas librarians are aware that Arkansas has consistently ranked number one or two for the past several years in food insecurity generally, and particularly food insecurity for children. In November of 2024, Governor Sanders issued an executive order instructing state agencies to assess their departments for anything that exacerbates or contributes to food insecurity in Arkansas.

It is impossible to work in a public service profession in our state and not encounter the impact of food insecurity. Educators know hungry students are students who struggle to learn. Public schools provide educational, nutritional, and other support services when school is in session. For decades



Polk

public libraries have been stepping up to prevent learning loss over the summer break when public schools are not in session, and many also step up to prevent childhood hunger in the summer through feeding programs.

In Arkansas where library wages are low and there is often no room in the budget for a feeding program or even a summer reading program, how can small, rural libraries support students' nutritional summer needs at a similar level to the way we are addressing their summer literacy needs?



Press conference announcing summer programs at Faulkner County Library.

I work for a nine-location regional library system that covers two counties in central Arkansas, and before that I worked in early childhood education. In our library system, we have years of experience feeding children in large communities (60-70k) and small communities (146-6200). We also have experience working with public assistance programs like the USDA and other community partners like churches. Based on our years of experience, here are some ideas to ponder if you are considering a nutrition support program or want to make changes to your existing one.

1. It doesn't have to be a meal.

Can you put out a small basket of individual bags of Goldfish crackers with a few cups that can be filled at the water fountain? Can you get those donated?

2. Something is better than nothing.

You may only be able to put out 10 Goldfish bags a day. That's okay. Do your best to collect data on supply and demand and adjust as you learn and as your resources fluctuate. It also doesn't have to be every day. We run our biggest nutrition program just three days per week during the summer.

3. Finding the right partnership "fit" can make or break a program.

Sometimes a \$500 gift card from a Friends group or a bank can get you through the summer. Sometimes you need a partnership where one party is responsible for purchasing, prepping, and delivering and the other party is responsible for the venue, marketing, and fund-raising. Finding a partner whose mission aligns with your library's mission is crucial. We found a partner, First United Methodist Church-Conway, who were open to trying a food program that aligned with our Youth Services Department commitment to

dignity and choice (see number 5 below).

- 4. Controversial take but sometimes fresh food might not always be the best choice.** Children experiencing food insecurity have not always had enough exposure to fresh fruits and vegetables to find them appealing. Plus, is that banana going to get all bruised up if a patron saves it for later or takes it home to a younger sibling? Offer both shelf stable and fresh if possible, but if not possible go with shelf stable.

5. Everyone deserves as much dignity and choice as possible.

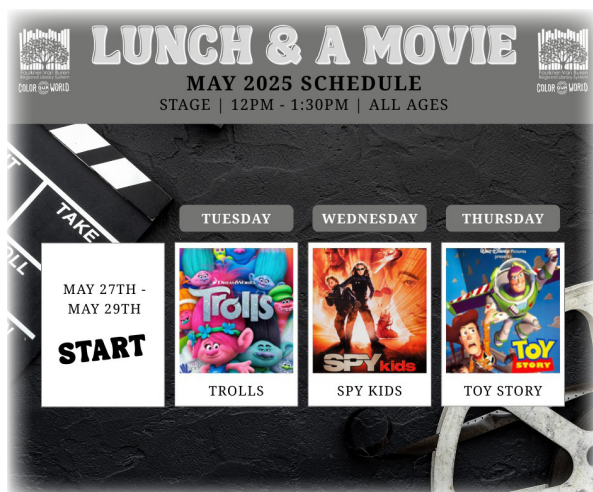
Stop policing food as much as you possibly can. Can you set the basket of Goldfish bags out with a sign that reads, "Hungry? Take a snack!" and leave it alone until you close? The "Lunch & Movie" program at our largest library in Conway does not ask qualifying questions. If you ask for a sack lunch, and we have one to give, it is yours. The program mission is to serve children who are out of school and struggling without school nutrition program support. We market as carefully as we can to reach our intended demographic. Most of our adult unhoused patrons want the children to eat first and will wait to see if there are any lunches left over. If you are looking for community partners, find ones that embrace the same philosophy as you.

6. Another controversial idea...designate space(s) that are food friendly in your building.

In some libraries children and families will be there all day during the summer. Your library has food, air conditioning, rest rooms, and no one has to pay to be there. People experiencing food insecurity are going to save food for later; maybe you will find them eating a granola bar they saved from lunch in the stacks. Telling this patron that they cannot eat that granola bar in the stack could lead to conflict. Creating spaces that are safe and easy to eat in, but away from the stacks, helps. Food messes will happen, but the pay off in library engagement might be worth it.

Anecdotally, it appears that the success of the Lunch & Movie program at the Faulkner County Library-Conway has been a significant contributor to growth in summer program participation, and the perception of the library as a trusted and valuable part of the community. In April, at the 2025 Toad Suck Daze press conference, the Conway Chamber of Commerce announced it would be financially underwriting and assisting with food donations for summer 2025.

Food is a basic human need, and libraries are
Arkansas Libraries, Spring-Summer 2025 29



not in the business of supplying basic human needs for our communities. However, libraries are not the primary drivers for literacy in our communities (shout out to public schools!) either, but libraries do play a very significant literacy support role especially through summer reading programs. Personally, summer nutrition support programs at libraries just make sense to me. If we are doing summer reading, what can we do for summer feeding?

Mary Spears Polk is the Youth Services manager for the Faulkner County Library and the 2025 ArLA Youth Services Community of Interest Chair. She loves wild things and named one of her sons Max, but wonders if anyone out there named a son Shel after Mr. Silverstein.

TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

Improving Web Accessibility: NWACC Library's Review with Springshare and Practical Setup for Your Own Site

by Autumn Roberts, Northwest Arkansas Community College

Ensuring website accessibility is essential for libraries.

Libraries have long been dedicated to making their physical spaces accessible to patrons of all abilities and backgrounds. However, with the increasing importance of e-resources and digital services, our commitment to accessibility needs to be reflected in our digital environments as well. We use continuous process improvement at NorthWest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) Library and recently turned our attention to evaluating our digital spaces.



Roberts

We discovered that Springshare, our website platform, recently began offering website accessibility reviews. Having had positive experiences with Springshare consulting and the budgetary allowance, we took advantage of the opportunity. We hoped to gain insights into our website's accessibility and recommendations that would enable us to better serve our community. NWACC was, in fact, Springshare's first customer for this service.

Why an Accessibility Review?

There were many driving factors to conducting an accessibility review, including the need to support our student population and comply with our institution's push toward accessibility. In Fall 2024, NWACC's student population consisted of 8,412 students, with 2,781 (33% of total enrollment) of those students being exclusively online. Additionally, many of our students are enrolled in our concurrent high school program and/or need accommodation.

With such a diverse range of experiences and abilities, we wanted our students to access our online resources with little to no issues.

NWACC has recently prioritized digital accessibility for our students. This shift in focus is a part of a strategy to enhance student experience and ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is undergoing a significant update related to digital accessibility. Specifically, Title II of the ADA, which applies to state and local governments, will require them to ensure their websites and mobile apps are accessible to people with disabilities. This means complying with a specific set of accessibility guidelines, WCAG 2.1 Level AA, by April 2026 for entities with populations of 50,000 or more, and by April 2027 for smaller entities (see <https://www.ada.gov/resources/2024-03-08-web-rule/>). While NWACC has until April 2027, the library prioritized identifying and making needed changes now.

Given our lack of time and expertise on the subject matter and prior positive experience with their consulting services to design our webpage, choosing Springshare to conduct an accessibility review was ideal for us. Springshare's extensive knowledge and systematic approach to website accessibility and intimate knowledge of our site's underlying structure allowed us to continue focusing on our core responsibilities while ensuring that our web pages were meeting accessibility standards.

Review Coverage and Content

Springshare's accessibility review service includes an assessment of our header and footer codes, the homepage, and ten guide pages of our choice. Springshare's consulting team would then analyze these materials and develop a detailed report highlighting any issues or considerations for improvement.

Selecting only ten pages to review was exceptionally challenging for us, especially since we have well over 2,500 pages throughout our website. Each librarian was requested to select pages that they

believed warranted review. From those selections, the library director and I evaluated the pages based on usage statistics, common elements, and pages we felt needed improvement, ultimately narrowing down our final choices.

Findings

The process took four weeks. At about the midpoint, Springshare provided a detailed report. This report included an explainer summary, scope of the evaluation, tools and methodology used, our audit results, and audit details for each provided page. The report found that the supplied pages were, “Well-formed, scoring in the high 90s for accessibility and best practices.” The review included evaluations using web-based accessibility and developer tools, assessing the page content, readability and comprehensiveness of language, features, HTML structural elements, ARIA labels, and color contrast.

Identified Issues

Although our pages scored high, there was still room for improvement. The report identified 15 errors, 29 alerts, and 6 best practice considerations across all 13 items reviewed. Most errors were related to the lack of alternative text, while the alerts included more varied issues such as font sizing and improper heading levels. Best practice considerations included avoiding the use of iframe for materials since keyboards can get stuck, not using images to convey content unless there are text equivalents, enlarging footer text, and slowing down gallery automatic rotation speeds. This was all explained to us during a one-hour meeting with the Springshare representative to discuss their findings.

Recommendations

Springshare gave us actionable recommendations and the tools to address the issues in our guides. We will be able to prioritize fixing errors, addressing alerts, and implementing best practices to enhance our website for student accessibility.

Reflection and Future Steps

After completing the accessibility review, we felt that the time and expense were well worth it. We felt empowered and knowledgeable about what to prioritize when making our current pages more suitable for our community’s usage. Additionally, we felt a sense of vindication, knowing our current guide template was consistent and accessible for our users.

Looking ahead, our goal is to use the insights gained from this experience to continually improve our digital environment. We will begin by making the recommended changes to the reviewed pages and then move on to our other current guides and pages



across our website. Additionally, we will train our librarians on the findings of the accessibility report and how to avoid similar mistakes in the future. This training will ensure that all staff members are equipped with the knowledge and skills to maintain and enhance the accessibility of our digital resources.

Conduct Your Own Website Accessibility Review

In an ideal world, every library would have the funding and ability to hire a consulting team to conduct an accessibility report. Even so, there are a plethora of resources readily available for conducting your own accessibility report.

To start, familiarize yourself with the Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) (<https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/>) and conduct research on best practices for creating accessible webpages. Follow a checklist for your accessibility review, like the WebAIM WCAG 2 checklist (<https://webaim.org/standards/wcag/checklist>). Find an open access automated testing tool, like WAVE (<https://wave.webaim.org/>) or AChecker (<https://achecks.org/checker/index.php>), to validate your website code and identify basic accessibility issues.

Conduct manual tests, such as testing keyboard navigation and screen reader compatibility, and make sure embedded videos have closed captions on. For moving elements, like carousels, focus on giving users adequate time to read the content and do not design the content in ways that are known to cause seizures or physical reactions. Design your pages with users in mind by utilizing plain language and having the webpages appear and act in a predictable manner.

Improving website accessibility is an ongoing job that takes time and dedication, but with the right tools, all libraries can achieve meaningful results in their digital spaces. Conducting your own review and implementing best practices will be a significant step towards creating inclusive and accessible environments for all users.

Autumn Roberts is the systems librarian at NorthWest Arkansas Community College.

SPECIAL LIBRARIES

The Dissolution of the Special Libraries Association: A Reflection

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

Over the thirty years I have been working in libraries, the Special Libraries Association (SLA) has always been there. True, SLA had identity struggles for most of that time, but I did not think that they would reach this point. On March 26, 2025, SLA announced in a press release its decision to dissolve the association. SLA has been one of the oldest library associations, with its origins dating back to 1909 and its international scope lengthier than IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions). Dissolution will not happen overnight, as their board will create a dissolution plan for membership vote in June; and then there is the amount of time it will take for legal notifications and distribution of assets. There will be an SLA for the next year, and beyond that, there may be an iteration of SLA as part of another library association. We will have to wait and see.



O'Connell

In my first librarian-level job right after graduate school, I was an “Information Specialist” in an “Information Resource Center” that was part of a national trade association. This was the late 1990s, and after a year I moved on to become a reference librarian in the largest museum complex in the world. I had the opportunity to attend the SLA annual conference two times when it was held in my home city. However, I never became an SLA member, and I think that my story may not be an uncommon one for overall SLA membership. Although there was a longstanding art section in SLA, I chose to become a member of the Art Libraries Society of North America. It was more specialized to my professional needs and goals, and it had a local chapter that made professional involvement easy. When I think of other special libraries and librarians, such as medical, law, and music, I consider that they also have more focused associations. Financial issues seemed to have spanned decades. SLA had sold their headquarters building in Washington, DC in the early 2000s for a cheaper location in Virginia, and then



AT THE ARKANSAS STATE LIBRARY

they sold that building about ten years later. There are a number of reasons for membership lag, but likely the pandemic was a final financial straw from which SLA could not recover.

Also in the early 2000s, I remember debates over whether the Special Libraries Association should change its name, removing “library/libraries” from its branding. Corporate, NGO, and even some government libraries, had stopped calling themselves “libraries” after all. If they had not done so, then their staff were titled “Information Professionals” or “Knowledge Professionals” and not “Librarians.” As to federal government libraries, by the late 1990s many of them had outsourced their staff to library-focused temporary and employment agencies, with the exception of the federal government libraries that were also large research libraries; such as the National Library of Medicine, the National Agriculture Library, Smithsonian Libraries and Archives, and of course, the Library of Congress. Was SLA still relevant to them? On one hand, keeping “libraries” in the name of, at that time, an almost century-old international organization kept alive the professional values, training, and educational background of its members. On the other, focusing on “information” in the corporate world could also muddy the waters with corporate IT departments. Who are we, and where do we belong? Ultimately, “SLA” became just that – putting its initials in the forefront, as that is how many members referred to it anyway.

Existential questions aside, what I will remember most about SLA and special libraries in general is this: whenever I found something innovative being proposed somewhere in library literature, I knew for certain that it had already been implemented in many special libraries—and likely had been for some time. For the future of SLA, let’s see what happens. Lastly, for more information and to follow what is occurring with the SLA dissolution, please see: <https://sla.org/page/httpsslaorgpageSLADissolutionInformation>.

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

FACES OF ARKANSAS LIBRARIES

From Curiosity to Connection: An Interview with Heather McCain, Outreach Librarian

by Nakeli Hendrix, Bentonville Public Library

For Heather McCain, a curious mind and love of helping others learn led her to a career in librarianship. Now serving as outreach librarian at Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC), she brings energy and passion to students and the campus community every day.

Heather grew up in Anahuac, Texas, a town not too far from Houston known as the “Alligator Capital of Texas.” In Anahuac, the public library was a special place for her. “I remember discovering the shelf of *Clifford the Big Red Dog* books at the Chambers County Public Library,” she says. “I was four years old and felt like I’d found treasure!” Though much of her childhood was spent offline and outdoors, Heather loved bringing home a stack of books every week. As a child, her career aspirations shifted often – veterinarian, fashion designer, and more. But what tied those dreams together was an abiding curiosity about the world. “As a librarian, I get to be curious about many topics and how they interconnect,” she says.

In college, Heather majored in mathematics and worked as a tutor. After graduation, she veered into oceanography research for a year before coming back to math. She saw herself staying in the STEM fields, but a part of her missed her tutoring days. “I missed that human connection I found in tutoring,” she explains. During this time, she substituted as a high school librarian. Librarianship, she soon discovered, provided the perfect balance: “It’s incredibly rewarding to help students become empowered learners.”

She ultimately earned her MLIS from Texas Woman’s University, but this was during the height



McCain

of the pandemic in 2020 when few libraries were hiring. She ended up teaching high school mathematics for two years before being hired at NWACC.

Today,

no two days look exactly alike. A typical day might include staffing the reference desk, lesson planning, teaching workshops, supporting peer tutors, promoting library events on social media, and collaborating with fellow librarians.

One of her proudest accomplishments is helping launch and grow the NWACC Learning Commons, a shared space housing the Math Center, Writing Center, and Peer Tutoring program.

“We opened the space in January 2024, and it’s been incredibly rewarding to help train our tutors and create a unified academic support experience,” she says.

Heather is part of the library’s instruction team and collaborates with faculty to integrate library resources into coursework. She teaches one-shot instruction sessions, embeds in courses, creates digital learning materials, and helps shape the library collection. She sees her role as helping faculty and students alike connect with information resources. “Opportunities often grow out of face-to-face connections – new faculty orientations and word of mouth are important,” she says.

As for the library’s role on campus, she embraces its identity as a community hub. Recently, library staff re-examined their mission and vision. They interviewed stakeholders and found that people viewed the library not only as a place of learning, but also of community connection.

“Being the original ‘third space’ will continue to be crucial,” she says. “Ultimately, the library is a place of connection: to each other, to ideas, and to opportunities.”

Outside of work, Heather enjoys sewing, painting, spending time with family and friends, and training for a half-marathon with her boyfriend. When asked for book recommendations, she shares two favorites: *The Song of the Lark* by Willa Cather – “one of the best depictions of the sacrifices made in pursuit of art” – and the *Cormoran Strike* detective novels by J.K. Rowling. “Book 7 is due this fall!” she adds.

From her early days tutoring math to her current role fostering community in the Learning Commons, Heather’s career has always been about helping others learn and grow. “I love that I get to help people tackle problems and explore the world,” she says.

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

Read Like You're in a Wolf Pack

School librarians have found creative and resourceful ways to reach their patrons who may not be able to get to the public library in the summer. Heather Hughes from Lake Hamilton School District keeps reading excitement alive all summer, thanks to their bookmobile, the Wolf Pack Reading Den bus, affectionately named after their mascot, the Wolves. Just about every week in June and July, Lake Hamilton staff volunteer to go around for a day to six different stops checking out books and giving away snacks to students. Hughes commented, "We had 63 patrons visit us on June 10. One of our community members, Hunters Feeding the Hungry, donated beef sticks for us to give out along with our summer snacks and we also gave out some fun bubbles. They had 57 patrons last Tuesday when they gave out Play-Doh to each visiting patron." Enjoy some pictures from their June 10 visits!

If you're in the Hot Springs area, be sure to catch the Wolf Pack bus this summer. Hughes said, "Swing by for crafts, treats, and stories that will keep your

child's imagination engaged and their reading skills growing all summer long. We can't wait to see you there!"

Wolf Pack Reading Den Bus Schedule

Mark your calendars and plan to join us for themed activities, crafts, and of course, lots of great books!

Summer 2025 Dates & Themes

- ✦ June 10 – Bubbles & Books
- ✦ June 17 – Playdoh & Plots
- ✦ June 24 – Chalk the Chapter
- ✦ July 1 – Lemonade & Literature
- ✦ July 8 – Feathers & Fiction
- ✦ July 15 – S'more Stories

Stop Schedule

- 🕒 10:00–10:30 a.m. — Pearcy Baptist Church
- 🕒 10:45–11:15 a.m. — Corner of Marion Anderson & Hwy 70
- 🕒 11:30–12:00 p.m. — Harps, Albert Pike
- 🕒 12:15–1:00 p.m. — Elkhorn Loop
- 🕒 1:20–1:40 p.m. — First Baptist Church, Royal
- 🕒 2:00–2:30 p.m. — Piney Grove Methodist Church



Popular Programs Spring Up at Pope County Libraries

by Mary Ella Yamashita, Pope County Library System



Pope County Library Genealogy and Arkansas History Department staff members Leslie and Morgan collected oral histories at the River Valley Arts Center pARTy in the Park on May 31. Leslie and Morgan are collecting oral histories in honor of America 250. Local author T.L. Simpson joined them to read from his new YA novel, Cope Field.



One of our most popular recent programs was Princess Storytime with Princess Beauty from Happily Ever After Princess Parties. Princess Beauty made her appearance in May at the Russellville branch.



Atkins Centennial Library staff member Lynda with the Pokey Little Puppy, who visited in March. Dover Public Library staff members Annabelle and Kim with Zoom Squirrel, who visited in early June. Pope County Public Library partners with local independent bookseller Dog Ear Books to bring kids' book character costumes to Pope County quarterly.

Summer Happenings at SouthArk!

by Lauri Wilson

South Arkansas College

Breakout Boxes

Our summer nursing students crushed it with Breakout EDU – and this time, the library brought the challenge straight to their classroom! From decoding clues to cracking locks, they put their teamwork and critical thinking to the test, and nailed it!



Lunch Lecture

We had a wonderful turnout for our June Lunch Lecture, and we want to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who joined us. We're grateful to guest speaker Gay Bechtelheimer, artist, arts advocate, and educator, for sharing her knowledge and insight into the life and artwork of Walter Anderson. Bechtelheimer's special lunch lecture dove deep into Anderson's visionary connection to nature and the singular legacy he left behind in watercolors, prints,



and murals. Anderson's work is currently on display at the South Arkansas Arts Center through July 30th. The Walter Inglis Anderson exhibit, entitled "The South's Most Elusive Artist" was on display at the South Arkansas Arts Center from May 16, 2025- July 30, 2025.

Tutoring Finds a New Home

This spring, tutoring moved to its new home at the Mahony Family Library. At SouthArk, tutoring works, and it's free. When our students need a study boost, our tutors are here for more than just formulas and facts. Whether a student is breaking down tough reading, writing a paper, or trying to think through an assignment critically, SouthArk tutoring has their back. "At SouthArk, tutoring is more than just



academic help – it's a reminder that with faith, hard work, and a strong support system, any challenge can be overcome," comments student Mashammon Burgie who is pictured with tutor Valerie Galbraith.

New Favorite Spot

SouthArk students have found a new favorite spot with comfy chairs, good conversation, and space to think. Library staff encourage students to come and hang out, whether they're prepping for finals or just need a moment to recharge.

Lauri Wilson is library technician at South Arkansas College's Mahony Family Library located in El Dorado, Arkansas.



Arkansas Libraries

Volume 81, 2024 Index

compiled by Joanna Warren,

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

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Karafit, Chrissy, Joanna Warren, and Amber Wilson. Bear Biographies: sharing lived experiences and encouraging open dialogue. 1/2:28-31.

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McCain, Heather, Rachel Baack, Autumn Roberts and Shawna Thorup. United we onboard: lessons learned from a collaborative onboarding process. 1/2:52-54.

Murphy, Britt Anne. Library heroes. 3/4:2.

Murphy, Britt Anne. Tell your story. 1/2:3.

New column introduction, by Allie Stevens. 3/4:47-48.

The next chapter: ArLA 2024 Annual Conference, by Lynn Valetutti. 3/4:12-15.

The next chapter: fall conference preview, by Lynn Valetutti. 1/2:4-8.

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O'Connell, Karen. The Library of Congress Center for the Book Affiliates network. 3/4:46-47.

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Pattison, Darcy. Talk to the scientist! The ultimate primary source. 1/2:42-44.

Phillips, Cindy King. The story of a storyteller. 1/2:34-36.

Prize-winning youth books announced, by Cassandra Barnet. 1/2:32-33.

Public and Reference Services. 1/2:12-14.

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Report from strategic planning. 1/2:47-52.

Riedmueller, Jessica. 2024 ArLA Bylaws proposed changes summary. 1/2: 14-24.

Roberts, Autumn, Rachel Baack, Heather McCain, and Shawna Thorup. United we onboard: lessons learned from a collaborative onboarding process. 1/2:52-54.

Roper, Grace. Constitutional law —Librarians are not babysitters: enacting legislation to curtail unconstitutional book bans. 3/4:16-30.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES. 1/2:31-32, 32-33

SCIENTISTS. 1/2:42-44.

SEIDEL, KIRSTEN. 3/4:37.

Shankles, Rachel. COSLLE Summer Conference Report. 3/4:6-7.

Special Libraries. 3/4:46-47.

Stewart, Beth and Jasmine Jobe. Arkansas books and authors. 1/2:37-40; 3/4:39-44.

Stevens, Allie. New column introduction. 3/4:47-48.

The story of a storyteller, by Cindy King Phillips. 1/2:34-36.

STORYTELLING. 1/2:34-36.

Talk to the scientist! The ultimate primary source, by Darcy Pattison. 1/2:42-44.

Technology and Innovation. 1/2:46-47; 3/4:7-10.

Tell your story, by Britt Anne Murphy. 1/2:3.

Thorup, Shawna. Good in a crisis. 3/4:45-46.

Thorup, Shawna. Roberts, Autumn, Rachel Baack, Heather McCain, and Autumn Roberts. United we onboard: lessons learned from a collaborative onboarding process. 1/2:52-54.

TORREYSON LIBRARY (UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS). 1/2:28-31

Training: Tips, Topics and Techniques. 1/2:28-31

TWO YEAR COLLEGES. 1/2:52-54; 3/4:45-46.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. 3/4:4-5.

United we onboard: lessons learned from a collaborative onboarding process, by Rachel Baack, Heather McCain, Autumn Roberts and Shawna Thorup. 1/2:52-54.

Valetutti, Lynn. The next chapter: ArLA 2024 Annual Conference. 3/4:12-15.

Valetutti, Lynn. The next chapter: fall conference preview. 1/2:4-8.

Vanlandingham, Taylor. Be a light in your next chapter. 3/4:2.

Vanlandingham, Taylor. On to the next chapter. 1/2:2.

A virtual escape room and a round robin: creating meaningful engagement for hundreds of freshmen (on short notice), by Amelia Baker and Whitney Hammes. 1/2:12-14.

Warren, Joanna. Arkansas Libraries v. 80, 2023 Index. 1/2:56-58.

Warren, Joanna, Chrissy Karafit, and Amber Wilson. Bear Biographies: sharing lived experiences and encouraging open dialogue. 1/2:28-31.

Web 3.0 – The next frontier in the evolution of the internet: are the growing pains worth it? by F. Tracy Farmer. 3/4:7-10.

What's in a (library) name? 1/2:25.

What's up? Docs. 1/2:40-41; 3/4:4-5.

What is...the library? Using Jeopardy in the library First Year Experience course: how gaming helped cement the library as a necessary guest lecturer,

by Chelsea Young. 1/2:26.
Wilson, Amber, Chrissy Karafit, and Joanna Warren.
Bear Biographies: sharing lived experiences and
encouraging open dialogue. 1/2:28-31.
Wolfe, Lacy and Judy Calhoun. 2024 ArLA award &
scholarship nominations. 1/2:41-42.
Young, Chelsea. What is...the library? Using
Jeopardy in the library First Year Experience
course: how gaming helped cement the library as
a necessary guest lecturer. 1/2:26.
Youth Services. 3/4:47-48.

AROUND ARKANSAS:

by *Heather Hays*, Associate Editor

The award winners are posted on the AR
Choice Book Award website along with this
year's nominees: Arkansas Choice Book
Awards - Arkansas State Library (<https://library.arkansas.gov/programs/book-awards/>)

- 2024 Arkansas Diamond Primary Award Winner:
Norman Didn't Do It!: (Yes, He Did) written and
illustrated by Ryan Higgins
- 2024 Charlie May Simon Award Winner:
Allergic: A Graphic Novel written by Megan
Wagner and illustrated by Michelle Mee Nutter

The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville will
be submitting a letter of intent to offer a Master
of Library and Information Studies (MLIS).
The program will seek accreditation with the
American Library Association in the future and is
intended to help students develop essential skills in
librarianship, archival management, and associated
technology.

The Arkansas community of library workers
celebrated the well-deserved retirement of Debbie
Hall from the Arkansas State Library on April
30, 2025. Debbie has worked for ASL for almost
40 years, initially as a reference librarian, and
eventually as a manager of grants and special
projects. Debbie received her MLS from the
University of Alabama.

Fun was had at the ArLA PD event at the North
Little Rock Innovation Hub and afterwards at the
Travs game in NLR. During the afternoon of June
20, Arkansas library workers got a tour of the
Innovation Hub, and then did our own crafting with
circuit paper, followed by lightening talks from
librarians across the state. Sadly, the Travs lost to the

BOOK REVIEWS:

Connor, Quinn. Cicadas sing of summer graves.
1/2:37-38.
Jones-Branch, Cherisse. Better living by their own
bootstraps: black women's activism in rural
Arkansas, 1914-1965. 1/2:38-40.
Selby, Mike. Freedom libraries: the untold story of
libraries for African Americans in the South.
3/4:39-40.

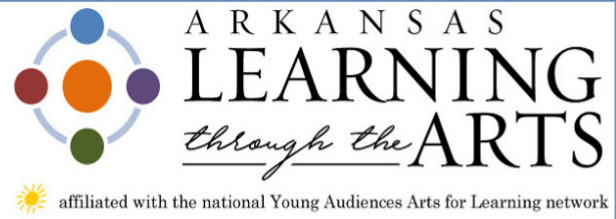
Wichita Wind Surge.

ArLA has a new president. Former President
Lynn Valetutti had to step down in July, so since
we were halfway through the year, President-
elect Adam Webb stepped up into the presidential
role, leaving a vacancy in the president-elect
position. After a special election, ArLA members
elected Janice Weddle to be president-elect for
the remainder of 2025. Adam will co-chair the
Conference Committee with Janice. We are grateful
to Lynn's leadership and dedication to ArLA over
the past several years.

ArLA Secretary Melissa Taylor had to leave
her position to take a new job in a different state.
Parliamentarian Dan Boice has stepped into that role
for the remainder of the year. ArLA will include a
one-year term for secretary on the ballot to finish
out Melissa's two-year term. We'll then elect a new
secretary for a normal two-year term (2027-2028)
next fall.

The ArLA listserv, ARKLIB-L, is up and
running! After a messy transition to Google
workspace and a new website, almost all the tweaks
and bugs have been eradicated. Send your message
to the same email address as before: arklib-l@arlib.org. We are incredibly grateful to ArLA Webmaster
Oliver Jennings and his team for all the work he has
poured into getting things up and running!

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



ABOUT US

Founded in 2012, Arkansas Learning Through the Arts places professional teaching artists across the state to deliver literacy-based arts residencies. We provide youth programming for learners PK-12.

Library workshops start at \$200/hour

Additional travel fees may apply depending on location.

Artists are available for afternoon or weekend workshops. Extended residencies are available for summer reading.



Available state wide.



altta.org

Visit our website to view our roster of teaching artists and available programs. Contact our staff today to schedule a residency in any Pre-K through 12th-grade setting today.

A CREATIVE APPROACH TO ARTS-INTEGRATION

ALTTA Teaching Artists bring all disciplines of the arts to the classroom, from African Drumming to Shakespearean Acting. Visual, literary, and performing arts are represented across 13 teaching artists and 60+ programs.



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*The 2025 ArLA Conference: Turning the Page (see preview
beginning on p. 4).*

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