the Crab

The Digital Magazine *of the* Maryland Library Association
Volume 57, Number 1• Fall, 2026

SHARE *the* KNOWLEDGE!



Training, Tours, and More…
Discover Maryland's Court Law Libraries!

33

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During the school year, students from Northwestern High School come twice a week to the Bladensburg Branch Library of PGCMLS as part of their work assignment. The tasks for these students vary depending on their abilities. Some of the students can cut and fold paper, while some do not have that ability. Each student is unique in their way of learning and working.

Training, Tours, and More: Discover Maryland's Court Law Libraries! 33

Maryland's public library staff play a crucial role in providing their communities with trustworthy and reliable sources of information. This includes information about the law and common areas of legal practice: consumer law, employment law, family law, and landlord-tenant law, to name a few. Patrons facing a complex legal system often visit their local library for help locating reputable resources.

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Editors' Note

AshLee Bass, Southern Maryland Regional Library Association
Leah Snow, Western Maryland Regional Library

Happy autumn, *Crab* readers!

There is something special about fall. The air gets cooler, the leaves begin to change, and we find ourselves looking for places that feel a little more like home. For us, libraries have always been one of those places. They are more than shelves filled with books or quiet rooms meant for studying. Libraries are places where people come together, where stories are shared, and where everyone has the chance to feel like they belong.

Being part of a library means being part of something bigger than yourself. It means being surrounded by people who share a love for learning, creativity, and community. It means finding comfort in the familiar, discovering something new, and knowing that there is always a place for you, no matter what season of life you are in.

As the world outside begins to change with the season, libraries remind us of the importance of having a place to return to. They offer warmth on the coldest days, inspiration when we need it most, and connections that can last long after we leave their doors. Whether you come to read, learn, volunteer, meet new people, or simply enjoy a quiet moment, there is something meaningful about being part of a space that welcomes everyone.

We are excited to present this issue with our first editors' note as your new co-editors. We want to recognize Julie Fitzpatrick and Bucky Edgett for the tremendous help and support they gave us during our transition with the previous Summer issue. We also want to thank those in MLA and our copy editors who shared their insights and support with us while we learned the ropes.



It's always heartwarming to see the influence and impact that Maryland libraries have on their communities. From our features this issue, we see how libraries like Prince George's County Memorial Library System partner with their local high schools, and how those like Charles County Public Library are able to provide service to their homebound residents.

Not only are Maryland libraries supporting their communities, but they are also supporting one another. In this issue, you'll learn how the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library is supporting Maryland public libraries through webinars, resources, and tours. Be sure to also check out the announcement for the 2027 MLA|DLA Conference, and mark your calendars for December if you're interested in proposing a new MLA Affinity Network.

And remember that *the Crab* is published for you, our library professionals, but it is also shaped by you! Your voices, experiences, and news matter, and we welcome your contributions. We encourage you to submit articles and features highlighting the work you do, the ideas you explore, the programs you lead, the lessons you teach, and the insights you gain across academic, public, school, and special libraries. Every story has value, and even the smallest idea can spark inspiration and connection throughout Maryland's library community. Have an idea but not sure how it might fit into *the Crab*? We'd love to hear about it! We accept submissions and questions at any time, and we can be reached at mla.crab.editor@gmail.com.

We hope you enjoy this fall issue and consider *the Crab* a place to share your experiences, celebrate your work, and contribute to the ongoing conversation among library professionals across the state. We look forward to hearing from you!

President's Message

Conni Strittmatter, MLA President, Baltimore County Public Library



Happy Fall to everyone in Maryland Library land!

I hope you had a great summer, whether it was a season busy with summer reading or a season of downtime and relaxation. I, for one, am pleased to move on from the summer. Fall is by far my favorite time of year. I can't wait for pumpkins and soups and sweaters and post-season baseball.

Fall is also the start of spooky season. MLA has had a recent tradition of getting involved in spooky season in a few exciting ways. We had our second annual limited edition Halloween-themed merch for sale, for one. It's delightful! And we also continued our tradition of tabling at the International Poe Fest in Baltimore. I had the pleasure of working the table in early October.

People stopped by to talk to us about so many things. Some wanted to learn how to get a library card. Others wanted to thank us for the work we do in the community. Many came to say hi because they or their family members work in a library-related field. While others had genuine questions about the state of libraries today—How are libraries evolving in this world of ever-changing and growing technology? Are libraries doing okay in this current political climate? Thanks to the excellent Support Maryland Libraries page on the MLA site, we were able to point these people to ways they can learn more and advocate for libraries during this ever-changing time.

One person who stopped by our table was working on a story about the value of places like the Poe House. If you hadn't heard, the Poe House is going through some difficult times due to significant demolition and construction in their area (which will hopefully be followed by an expansion of the museum). The Maryland Library Association has a strong connection to the Poe House. We helped advocate for that location to become a literary landmark in January 2020—Maryland's first! When she asked why, from a library worker's perspective, we should preserve places like the Poe House for people to visit, I shared with her the concept of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors, coined by Rudine Sims Bishop. We discussed the ways that places like the Poe House and other museums, libraries, and archives provide those opportunities to connect with yourself and others through experiences, literature, and connections to resources.

Every time I have the opportunity to share these metaphors, I walk away with a renewed sense of purpose around the work all of us do. Whether you're cataloging materials, helping customers on the floor, curating a collection, teaching information literacy and research sessions to students, or coordinating services behind the scenes, you are helping provide opportunities for mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors to those in your community. And the Maryland Library Association is here to help provide the training, networking, and advocacy necessary so you can keep doing that good work! ■

Vice President's Message

Ashley Teagle, Southern Maryland Regional Library Association



It's fall, y'all!

I AM SIPPING ON ICED, PUMPKIN-SPICED LATTES while taking in the rich colors of a Maryland fall. As I wrote this, my biggest struggle was the fact that it was hot outside but cold in my office—that counts as sweater weather, right?

Fall has been a great season to be out and about in library land to see what is next for libraries. First was September's Association for Rural and Small Libraries annual conference in Montgomery, Alabama, where I learned about the importance of a well-planned onboarding experience for employees, neuro-inclusive strategies to support staff, and how to be a better facilitator.

Next was the Urban Libraries Council's Leadership Forum in Las Vegas where I learned how to talk more about the value of the library and less about what the library does. Past MLA Conference speaker Dr. Cyndee Landrum was there to talk about leadership and vision, putting a futurist spin on the conversation about literacy.

That made a nice segue to the Maryland State Library Agency's (MSLA) Literacy Summit where I learned about the state of literacy right here in Maryland. I got to be a fly on the wall and hear about all the great work Maryland libraries are already doing to support literacy.

Then it was Banned Books Week, and I know I do not need to tell this audience to read more books! I hope you all spent the week (and every day, really) reading the books that help you to feel seen and heard.

As I have now had some time to reflect on all the learning I have been doing, I am going back to MLA's strategic vision to see where MLA fits within the following conversations:

Collaborate

MLA has been doing amazing work building our membership and creating opportunities for development. This year's MLLI Committee is being co-chaired by an academic librarian and a public librarian. I love seeing library workers from different work experiences come together to do something great! As we consider the future of libraries, I wonder what partnerships MLA will pursue next? Who else in the state shares our values? Who can help us think ahead to what is next for our state?

Advocate

As MSLA continues the conversation about literacy, I believe MLA's Legislative Panel will be an important partner for championing the cause of literacy. In another great example of collaboration, MLA's Legislative Panel includes representation from school, public, academic, and even a couple of our special libraries.

Educate

You do not have to go far to receive high-quality professional development! The MLA Conference Committee has been soliciting program proposals, and I cannot wait to see our own library experts share their knowledge in May. While I love seeing what other states are doing, I cannot deny that Maryland is home to many innovative and community-centered libraries.

But you don't need to wait until May to get involved with MLA! The Maryland Library Association is a volunteer-run organization, and we need you to help us continue to be successful. Join an interest group or an affinity group. If one does not exist yet that catches your eye, ask me how you can propose a new one. MLA has been so valuable to me, helping me create my library village that keeps me encouraged and inspired. I hope you find your village, too, as an MLA member. ■

Report from MLA's ALA Chapter Councilor

William K. Wallace, Wicomico Public Library

A New ALA At-Large Councilor

This summer, I officially began my term as one of ALA's At-Large Councilors. I am still new enough to the role that I do not have a long list of Council actions to write about. My first official Council session was the special session this summer. So rather than pretend I have years of Council experience to draw on, I thought it might be more useful to talk about how I see the role and what I hope to bring to it.

At its core, Council is where ALA makes policy, checks whether the Association is living up to those policies, and decides what structures or groups are needed for ALA to do its work. As an At-Large Councilor, I am not there to speak for every library worker in Maryland, or even to suggest that I can represent everyone's experiences. I am there as someone whose own perspective has been shaped by working in Maryland libraries, and I hope to bring some of those practical, everyday realities into the national conversation.

I also come to this role as Chair of the Maryland Library Association's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Panel which has influenced how I think about policy. I tend to think of policy less as a set of statements and more as something that either helps people or it does not. The words matter, but so do the decisions, expectations, and habits that follow them.

That is the kind of equity work I am interested in: work that is grounded in daily practice and that makes our profession more inclusive in ways people can actually feel. I hope to bring that perspective to my work on Council and to support efforts that make our professional associations more accessible, equitable, and useful to the people they serve.

I use a quote from William Durant in my email signature that says— in part— that the purpose of life is "to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well."

I do not pretend that serving on Council is going to change the world, but I do think steady, thoughtful work can matter. For me, this opportunity is another way to try to be useful, to listen, and to contribute where I can. And as I get started, I am always interested in hearing from MLA members. If there are things you think your ALA Councilors should be paying attention to, I would genuinely like to hear them. You can reach out to me via MLA Connect. ■

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Denise Brown, Founder and CEO of the Caregiving Years Training Academy. Photo by: Shirley Liu.

Libraries Serve as Essential Lifelines for Caregivers

LaShawn Myles, Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled

"There are only four kinds of people in this world: those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers, and those who will need caregivers. Caregiving is universal."

—Rosalynn Carter, Former First Lady of the United States

What is caregiving? Simply put, a caregiver provides support for the needs or concerns of someone experiencing short- or long-term limitations from an illness, injury, or disability. While "family caregiver" traditionally referred to those supporting relatives, it equally applies to chosen families such as neighbors or close friends.

Caregiving encompasses a wide range of responsibilities and relationships, extending from child-rearing and sibling care to assisting aging family members. The 2025 edition of Caregiving in the US, released by AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving, states these key facts:

- One in every four adults is a caregiver. Of these, 94% care for adults, and one in three is under age 50. Caregivers are increasingly diverse across race, income, and generation. 29% are sandwich generation caregivers, supporting both children and adults.
- Over 40% of caregivers now provide high-intensity care. Many perform complex medical tasks like administering injections or managing equipment, yet only 22% receive training.
- One in five caregivers report poor health; a quarter are taking on debt due to caregiving. Half report negative financial impact due to caregiving, and one in five cannot afford basic needs like food.
- Seven in ten family caregivers are employed, but many face disruptions and lack access to supportive benefits, especially the 18 million hourly wage workers.

With these critical insights, an essential question emerges: who steps up to care for the caregiver? How do libraries serve as vital hubs offering assistance and resources to individuals who continuously care for a family member or friend? The Maryland Inclusion and Accessibility Community of Practice (CoP) will examine this topic during our next Lunch and Learn Series: Building Bridges of Care: Creating Library Programs and Services for Family Caregivers.

During this session, Denise Brown, Founder and CEO of the Caregiving Years Training Academy, will explore strategic ways libraries can serve as a vital support system for family caregivers. Be part of the discussion! Participate virtually on Wednesday, November 18 at 2:00 p.m. You can register at https://marylandlibraries.libcal.com/event/17787526. If you are unable to attend, the session will be uploaded to Niche Academy for future review. ■

Save the Date Call for New MLA Affinity Networks Coming in December!

William K. Wallace, Wicomico Public Library

Are you looking to build a community with colleagues across the state?

The Maryland Library Association will officially send out a call for new Affinity Networks this December.

Start brainstorming your ideas now, so you are ready when submissions open!

What is an Affinity Network (AN)?

Affinity Networks are identity-based spaces intended to build connection, support, and shared understanding among MLA members who hold a common identity.

Submission & Leadership Commitment

When you submit a proposal for a new AN, you are indicating your willingness to serve as the initial facilitator for a minimum of one year and also as a member of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Panel.

Current MLA Affinity Networks:

Black in the Stacks AN
Fat Library Workers AN
Latine AN
Neurodivergent AN

Keep an eye out for full submission details in December! ■

2027 MLA|DLA Conference Announcement

Mike Kiel, Robert L. Bogomolny Library

The 2027 MLA/DLA Conference Committee has been hard at work this year starting in July. We've reviewed all the evidence from our very successful conference earlier this year in May and have deduced that the theme for the 2027 conference will be: "The Plot Thickens!" Look for more information in the next issue of *the Crab*. Our social committee is in the middle of their crack investigation into a number of new and exciting ideas, and the call for proposals was open when *the Crab* went to press. We hope you'll join us library workers from all over Maryland, Delaware, and beyond May 5 through 7 in Cambridge, Maryland as we crack the case and have the best conference yet! ■



Photo courtesy https://taxrebate.org.uk

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The Library, *Delivered*

How CCPL Brings Books and Connection to Homebound Residents

Ashley Littleton, Charles County Public Library

FOR MANY READERS, a trip to the library is part of the joy of finding their next book. There are shelves to browse, new items to discover, and library staff ready to help them find just the right read. But what happens when getting to the library is no longer easy or simply isn't possible?

Charles County Public Library's Homebound Delivery service brings that library experience directly to residents who may have difficulty visiting a branch because of illness, injury, disability, recovery, mobility limitations, or other circumstances. The free service provides regular monthly deliveries of library materials to eligible Charles County residents, helping ensure that a change in mobility doesn't mean losing a connection to the library.



Angela Mroz, Outreach Associate, delivers a stack of books to a Homebound Delivery service patron.
Photo courtesy Alyssa James.

"The library is a connection to stories, information, and the community. Homebound Delivery allows us to make that connection possible for Charles County residents who may not be able to visit us in person," said Annie Adams, Outreach Supervisor.

More Than a Delivery

Homebound Delivery is designed to be personal. Participants can work with CCPL Outreach staff to select materials based on their interests and reading preferences, bringing a little bit of the browsing experience at a library home with them.

Whether someone loves mysteries, biographies, romance, history, or discovering something completely new, library staff can help connect them with materials they will enjoy. Homebound customers can receive up to 10 items at a time, with options including books, large-print books, audiobooks on CD, and DVDs. Staff can also provide help accessing eBooks and digital audiobooks.

Who Can Use Homebound Delivery?

The service is available to Charles County residents whose circumstances make visiting the library difficult. This includes people with temporary or permanent medical conditions, individuals who are unable to leave home because of illness, injury, or disability, and residents of assisted living, nursing, or retirement communities.

That means Homebound Delivery isn't necessarily only a long-term service. Someone recovering from an injury or illness may find themselves temporarily unable to make their usual library visits.

Getting started is simple. Residents can review the service guidelines and complete an application online, on paper, or with assistance from CCPL staff. Once an application has been reviewed, Outreach staff contact the applicant and arrange regular monthly visits.

Staying Connected to Their Library

Books may be what arrives at the door, but homebound delivery represents something larger: the idea that access to the library shouldn't depend on someone's ability to physically walk through its doors.

For residents who once visited regularly, those deliveries can help maintain a familiar connection. For someone discovering the service for the first time, it can open another way to read, listen, watch, learn, and explore from home.

And sometimes, knowing that the library still belongs to you, even when you can't come to it, matters just as much as what's inside the delivery bag.

To learn more about CCPL's Homebound Delivery service, including eligibility guidelines and how to apply, visit ccplonline.org/homebound or contact Outreach Services at mobilelibrary@ccplonline.org.

Haunted Laboratory
at the Berlin Branch Library

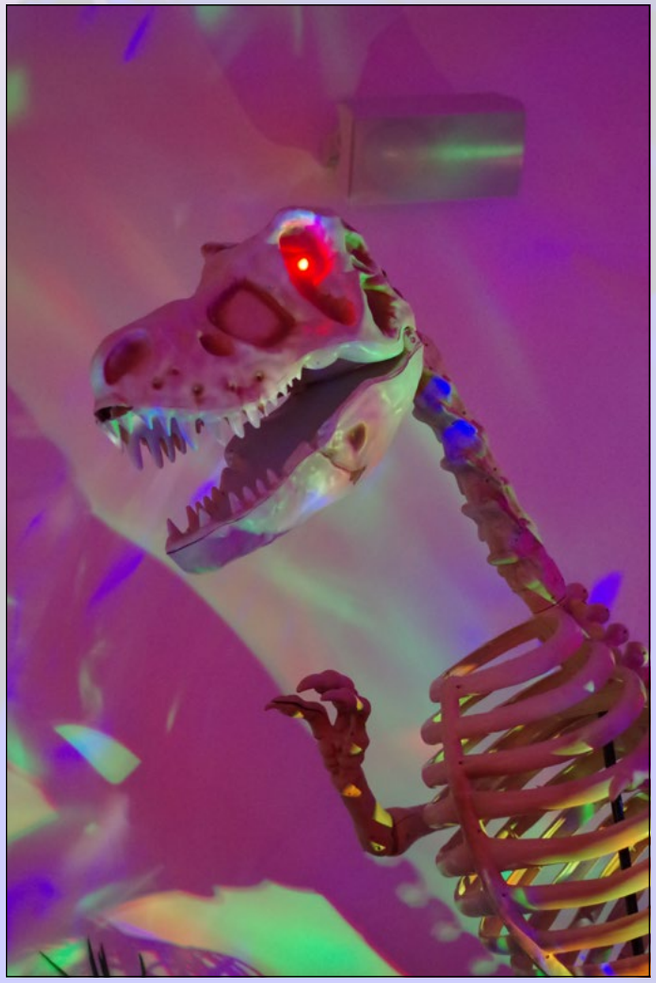
Lexi Orf, Worcester County Library
Photos courtesy of Michael Carmean, Worcester County Library

EVERY OCTOBER, *something strange happens* at the Berlin Branch Library in Worcester County. Assistant Branch Manager Dave Nedrow transforms the community room into a "Haunted Laboratory," creating an elaborate Halloween experience for library visitors.

The transformation takes several weeks to plan and set up. Once complete, visitors enter a world filled with werewolves, spiders, skeletons, dinosaurs, aliens, zombies, and other spooky surprises. But the laboratory wouldn't be complete without its resident mad scientist. Nedrow himself transforms into Doctor Maddockter, welcoming brave visitors into his laboratory and greeting those daring enough to say hello.

Walk the road to the mad doctor's lair;
You'll see many things to give you a scare:
A dinosaur here! An alien there!
A zombie horde! Walk on by—if you dare!
They're coming to get you, the monsters you dread;
The ones you have nightmares of, in your bed!
But this is no dream, it's a real horror story.
It's Doctor Maddockter's Haunted Laboratory!

THE DOCTOR WILL SEE YOU NOW.



Continue reading for a gallery of pictures of the event. ▸



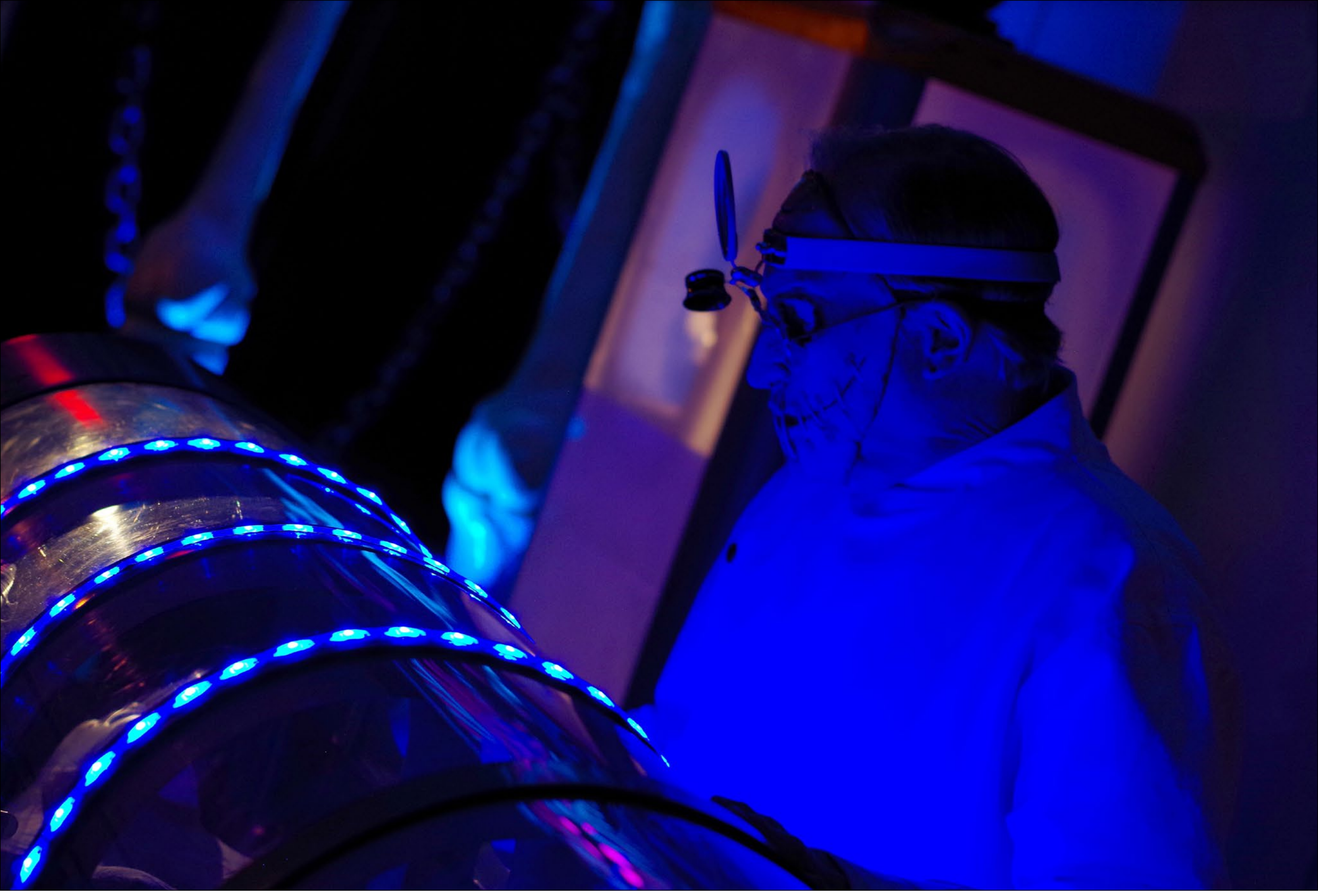

CUIDADO
CAUTION
Empire











America 250 Celebrations Continue with National Voter Registration Day and Constitution Day

Andie Craley, Harford Community College Library
Committee members: Laura Burke (Student Life), Andie Craley, Lois Entner, Jen Hart, Julie Mancine, Chandler Sagal (Student Life), Amna Zigic

HARFORD COMMUNITY COLLEGE (HCC) LIBRARY continued its celebration of America 250 while partnering with the Student Life department on campus. Student Life held National Voter Registration Day on Tuesday, September 15 during the campus' annual OwlFest which connects students with campus resources, clubs, organizations, and services and has an array of fun interactive activities. Harford County Board of Elections and the League of Women Voters were on hand to help students register to vote. Then, on Thursday, September 17 on the library patio, Student Life and the library collaborated on Constitution Day to celebrate the 239th signing of the U.S. Constitution by the Constitutional Convention. See the Constitution Day and America 250 resources at https://harford.libguides.com/Constitution_Day and https://harford.libguides.com/america250.

During Constitution Day, we held various tactile activities. Student Life sponsored red, white, and blue snow cones, a festive snack mix, and a fun historical trivia quiz to challenge the students to earn some swag. The library held its third round of "Revolutionary Stitches!", a "make and take" homespun fun activity to learn about handcrafting in the time of the early colonies and the revolution. Participants enjoyed embroidery, crochet, knitting, weaving on cardboard looms, and learning about drop spindle spinning. We also enjoyed a visit from a founding father passing out pocket Constitutions, with big thanks again to Behavioral & Social Sciences Assistant Professor Jon Carpenter! Students signed a poster copy of the U.S. Constitution and were able to add their input on a white board detailing how they would amend the Constitution. We added one more crowdsourcing activity as a trial run, where volunteers dropped in and transcribed original historical documents to help improve their discovery in the Library of Congress' By the People database at https://crowd.loc.gov/. We also had several displays and tables of free goodies and resources from the Government Publishing Office and National Voter Registration Day, as well as patriotic cookies inside the library.

Harford Community College Library was designated into the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) on June 1, 1967, just 10 years after then-Harford Junior College was established. Due to several Maryland redistricting events, Harford Community College Library now serves the First Congressional District along with one other depository library at Salisbury University, making HCC Library the closest depository library for Harford, Cecil, and northern Baltimore counties. In October 2024, the Government Publishing Office named HCC Library as the 2024 Depository Library of the Year. Next year, during Constitution Day 2027, Harford Community College will celebrate its 60th anniversary as a FDLP library.

Harford Community College Library is one of 52 Federal depository libraries in the region of Maryland, Delaware, and Washington D.C., all covered by the regional depository library at McKeldin Library at University of Maryland College Park. HCC Library is now the only community college federal depository library in this region. The library is also one of seven community college depository libraries in the Northeast National Collection Service Area (NCSA). In June 2026, Technical Services & Government Information Librarian and FDLP Depository Library Coordinator Andie Craley began a three-year term on the Depository Library Council. For more information about Harford Community College Library's involvement in the Federal Depository Library Program, see our Federal Depository Library Program webpage and our Government Information at HCC Library LibGuide.

Continue reading for a gallery of pictures of the event. ▸



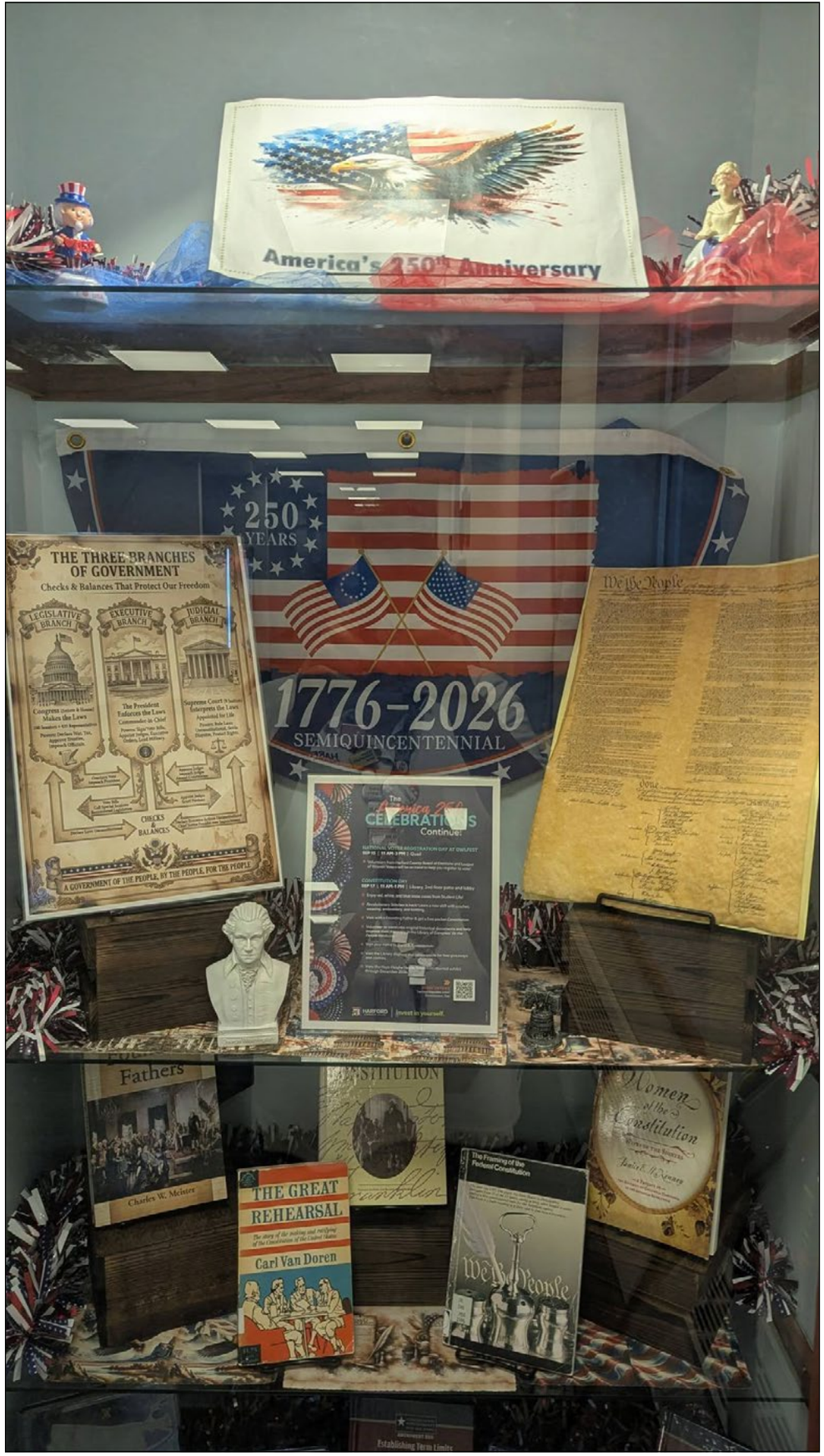


Student and Student Success and Outreach Librarian Amna Zigic.
Photo courtesy of Alexandra Way, Office of Communications.

Technical Services & Government Information Andie Craley & BSS Adjunct Faculty Jon Carpenter.
Photo courtesy of AnnMarie Profili, Professor Paralegal Studies.



Andie Craley and students.
Photo courtesy of Alexandra Way, Office of Communications.



Library display.
Photo courtesy of Andie Craley.



Students at Student Life trivia table with Student Engagement Specialist Laura Burke and at crochet table with Student Success and Outreach Librarian Amna Zigic.
Photo courtesy of Andie Craley.



Students signing U.S. Constitution and with Student Engagement Specialist Laura Burke.
Photo courtesy of Andie Craley.



Students enjoying snow cones from Dining Services.
Photo courtesy of Andie Craley.



More students at Student Life trivia table with Student Engagement Specialist Laura Burke and at crochet table with Student Success and Outreach Librarian Amna Zigic.
Photo courtesy of Andie Craley.



Library table of goodies and cookies.
Photo courtesy of Andie Craley.



Examples of Revolutionary Stitches embroidery.
Photo courtesy of Andie Craley.



Examples of Revolutionary Stitches knitting, crochet, and weaving. Photo courtesy of Andie Craley.

CRI Students at PGCMLS

Nancy Love, Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS)

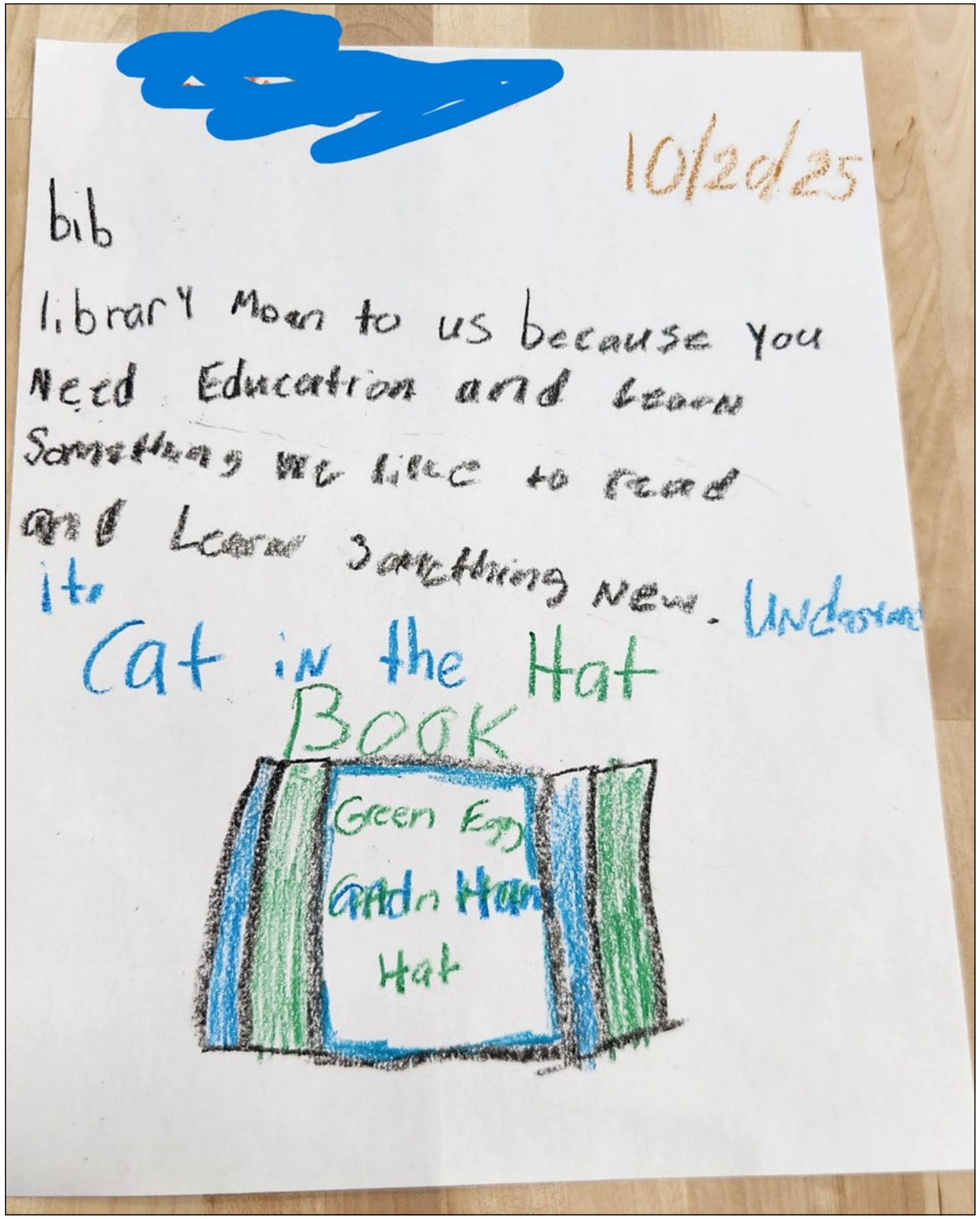
DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR, students from Northwestern High School come twice a week to the Bladensburg Branch Library of PGCMLS as part of their work assignment. The tasks for these students vary depending on their abilities. Some of the students can cut and fold paper, while some do not have that ability. Each student is unique in their way of learning and working. Examples of some of the tasks we have them do are wiping down tables and chairs in our meeting room, pulling the red dots off the new books, pulling old, faded labels off books/DVDs, doing sample crafts, cleaning whiteboards, and cutting scrap paper.

Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) has several high schools that participate in Community Referenced Instruction (CRI). PGCPS provides specially designed instruction for students with significant cognitive disabilities who require specialized instruction based on alternate academic achievement standards and assessments. These students are aged 18-21 with varied abilities.

Each year— usually during National Volunteer Appreciation Week in April— I have a small ceremony for all of the CRI students recognizing their service. They each get a group card signed by all the staff members at the branch, a certificate of appreciation, a pencil and pad, and a rubber bracelet that has an inspirational quote on it. Branch staff help provide snacks and juice for the students. One year, the teacher came back to me and said that one student's mother framed the certificate and placed it on the mantle. Another year, after a student graduated and started working, the employer called the school and said how impressed they were with her work ethic saying, "She comes in, clocks in, and immediately gets to work doing her assigned task." The teacher at Northwestern High School passed this on to me: "Ms. Nancy, it's because of what you taught her to do. So, thank you for working with our CRI students." This comment showed me what we as a library can do to help our students in the community.

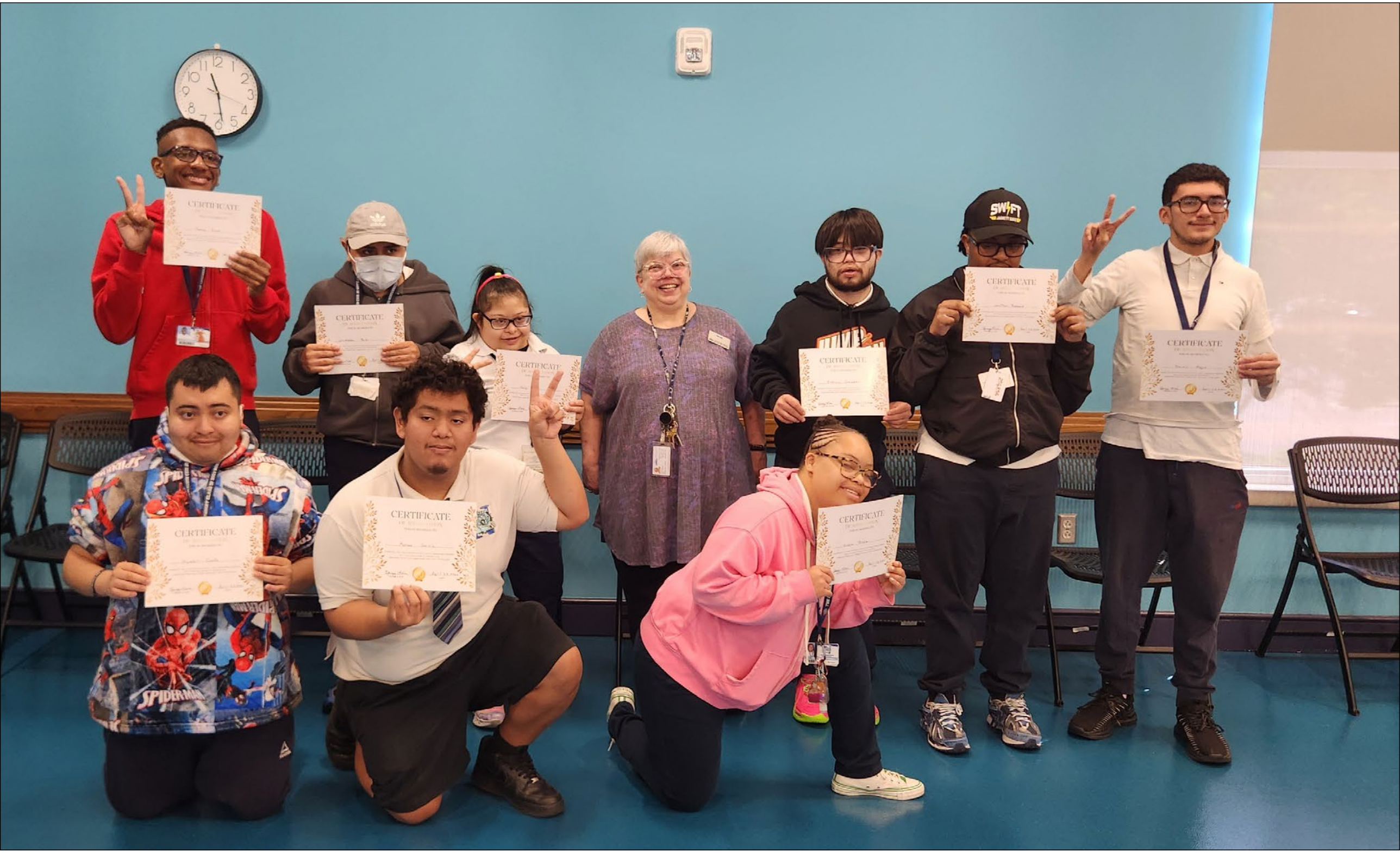
It is so rewarding to me to work with these students. The students greet me with fist bumps, hugs, or high fives each time they come to the branch. After being gone for a week on spring break, one student ran up to me saying, "Ms. Nancy, I missed you!" and gave me a big hug.

These community partnerships create a powerful mutual benefit, enriching the lives of the students while providing invaluable support and connection to our library staff and patrons.



One student's response to "Why I love the library."
Photo courtesy of Nancy Love.

Continue reading for pictures of the event.



CRI students celebrating with Ms. Nancy after getting their certificates of appreciation. Photo courtesy of Nleya Sifanele.



CRI students celebrating with Ms. Nancy after getting their certificates of appreciation.
Photo courtesy of Nancy Love.

Training, Tours, and More: Discover Maryland's Court Law Libraries!

Audrey Dingler, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library

Maryland's public library staff play a crucial role in providing their communities with trustworthy and reliable sources of information. This includes information about the law and common areas of legal practice: consumer law, employment law, family law, and landlord-tenant law, to name a few. Patrons facing a complex legal system often visit their local library for help locating reputable resources. When patrons approach the reference desk with questions about the law, staff want to be helpful, but the act of providing quality legal information isn't always a straightforward path. Fortunately, you don't have to navigate the world of legal reference alone.



The Thurgood Marshall State Law Library is located on the first floor of the Robert C. Murphy Courts of Appeal Building (pictured) at 361 Rowe Boulevard in Annapolis. Photo courtesy Maryland Judiciary.

The Thurgood Marshall State Law Library and Maryland's circuit court law libraries offer a variety of resources and services to help library workers confidently support patrons. Below you'll find information on an upcoming legal reference training session, an updated legal reference tool, and details on requesting a tour of the State Law Library for you and your colleagues.

Upcoming Legal Reference Training: Law on the Frontlines

Law on the Frontlines ("Frontlines") is a continuing education initiative that empowers library staff to provide quality legal reference services in their communities. Each *Frontlines* session addresses the role of public libraries in advancing access to justice, best-practice tips, legal information resources, basics on the structure of law, and where to refer patrons. During the sessions, attendees are presented with sample scenarios and are given the opportunity to put their reference skills to work in a practice setting.

The next *Frontlines* session will be held on Wednesday, December 9, 2026, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET on Zoom. This session, Navigating the Law: Consumer Law, will provide an overview of common consumer law topics, including debt collection, credit issues, and consumer protection. To register, click the link provided above or visit the For Librarians page on the State Law Library's website.

Frontlines training is made possible through an institutional partnership with the State Law Library, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, and the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors. For each completed live training, a Certificate of Completion for CEUs will be provided.

An Updated Resource from the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors: Recommended Titles for the Core Collection

Beyond training, the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors provides access to the new and improved list of Recommended Titles for the Core Collection. This list can be used to connect patrons to reliable self-help titles and legal treatises. Organized in alphabetical order by topic, most of the titles in this list are Maryland-specific, cite to case law, and, when appropriate, contain sample forms. Think of this list as a stepping-stone for finding comprehensive legal information.

For details about resources available at your local circuit court (including databases, print materials, and titles from this list) reach out to your local circuit court law library! Information on court law library access can be found at mdcourts.gov/ccll.

Requesting a Tour of the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library

Library staff interested in arranging a tour are encouraged to contact the State Law Library. For more information on the Library's special collections and tour procedures, visit the Library Tours page on the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library's website. To arrange a tour, call the reference desk at 410-260-1430 or email at lawlibrary@mdcourts.gov.

Whether you are new to legal reference or simply looking to expand your ▸

knowledge of resources available to you and your patrons, we welcome library staff to tour the State Law Library!

The Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, a unit of the Maryland Judiciary, serves the needs of Maryland's government and citizens by building and preserving collections of legal information resources, promoting access to these collections, and creating educational opportunities that enhance the understanding of legal information. The State Law Library is located on the first floor of the Robert C. Murphy Courts of Appeal Building, at 361 Rowe Boulevard in Annapolis. The Library is open from 8:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. ■

LAW ON THE FRONTLINES:

Legal Reference for Public Libraries

LAW ON THE FRONTLINES: NAVIGATING THE LAW – CONSUMER LAW

This course provides an overview of common consumer law topics, including debt collection, credit issues, consumer protection, and points to reliable resources to help inform the public.

Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2026

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Virtual - Zoom



Law on the Frontlines is brought to you by the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, and the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors.

LAW ON THE FRONTLINES
Legal Reference for Public Libraries

MARYLAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

mdlib.org
mla@mdlib.org

Want to get more involved with MLA? Check out some of our Caucuses, Divisions, Committees, and Interest Groups!

CAUCUS

Black Caucus of the Maryland Library Association (BCMLA)

DIVISIONS

Adult Services and Reference Division

Association of College and Research Libraries, MD

Leadership Development Division

Support Staff Division

Youth Services Division

COMMITTEES & PANELS

Awards Committee

Intellectual Freedom Panel

Legislative Panel

Marketing Committee

Maryland Author Award Committee

Professional Development Panel

INTEREST GROUPS

Emerging Adults Interest Group

Future of Libraries Interest Group

LGBTQ+ Interest Group

Library Advocacy Interest Group

Maryland Adult Programming Interest Group

Materials Interest Group

Outreach Services Interest Group

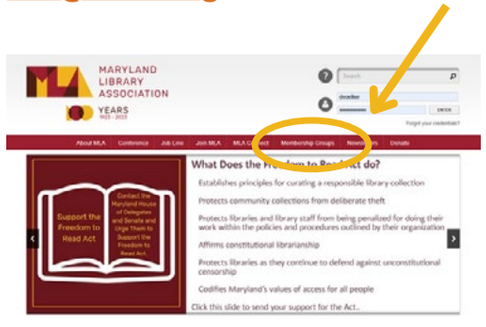
Readers' Advisory Interest Group

Sustainability Interest Group

Technical Services Interest Group

Teen Interest Group

With your MLA membership, you can join our groups at any time on the MLA website or by emailing mla@mdlib.org.



News from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL-MD)

ASSOCIATION of COLLEGE and RESEARCH LIBRARIES, MD

Hayley Holloway & Gaby Messinger, Robert L. Bogomolny Library
Photos courtesy of Gabriella Messinger

AI Literacy is a hot topic for academic libraries at the moment, with more librarians thinking about ways we can create engaging lessons and activities that also highlight the flaws of relying too heavily on AI tools for reliable information. Together, as University of Baltimore Reference & Instruction Librarians, Hayley Holloway and Gaby Messinger, we've been experimenting with AI recipes to teach our students about the information that AI tools create.

The premise of the activity is simple but effective: have a Generative AI tool create a cake recipe, then bake the cake according to that recipe and see if it tastes good. The inspiration for this activity came from a 2022 New York Times Cooking video called "Can A.I. Generate the Perfect Thanksgiving?" where chef Priya Krishna used ChatGPT to create a Thanksgiving menu, which she then prepared and served to other NYT cooking staff. We decided to have an asynchronous class attempt to make their own Thanksgiving menu using Gen AI tools. Then, the idea to try and bake one of the recipes and report back to the class began to take shape.

After a disastrous first attempt in 2023 with a white chocolate raspberry cake, we decided to take on this activity again in 2024 for an in-person Introduction to Information Literacy class, a credit-bearing course that we co-teach. In this iteration, we had the students select the Gen AI tool we would use, the flavor of cake, the type of frosting, the form of cake (cupcakes, layer cake, etc.), and toppings. We then had the students workshop a prompt to make the recipe and enter it into the Gen AI tool that was chosen. After checking with the students to see if they were happy with the generated recipe, we baked the cake outside of class time following the recipe's instructions exactly.

This has led to certain questionable baking decisions, such as using two full bottles of food coloring for a red velvet cake, pouring hot glaze frosting onto a warm cake which caused all the frosting to run off the cake, and using heavy cream instead of milk for frosting which gave it a sour, tangy taste. Over the years, the cakes have been unpredictable in their quality, ranging from tasteless but edible to downright awful, but the lesson generally remains the same: while the information the AI tool generated looked like a perfectly fine recipe, in practice, it made a pretty mediocre cake.

This approach keeps students excited and engaged, and trying the cake is always a fun day in class. This allows us to reinforce the idea that just because the information from generative AI looks correct, doesn't mean that it should be blindly trusted, in a way that will stay with the students long after the semester is over. ■

Continue reading for a gallery of pictures of the cake events! ▸



Hayley with the 2023 white chocolate raspberry cake.



Hayley and Gaby with the 2025 chocolate cake with vanilla frosting and Oreo toppings.



The cake from 2026: a vanilla cake with cookies and cream frosting with whipped cream, chocolate sprinkles, and Oreos for toppings



ASRD Corner

Melissa Lauber, Charles County Public Library

As I sat and typed this, September was moving fast into October, so Happy Fall Everyone! ASRD, or Adult Services and Reference Division, is busy with planning both virtual and in-person programs for the year. For those who may not be as familiar with ASRD as PSD (Public Service Division), we are the same group, we just underwent a name change in late 2025/early 2026.

Our division is all about serving our patrons or communities, from new and interesting services or one-of-a-kind programs. We sponsor stand-alone programs as well as many programs during the MLA/DLA Annual Conference, and many of our members serve on the conference committee. We would love to hear from all of you about what kinds of programs ASRD should offer in the future.

As a division we meet quarterly in September, December, March, and June on the first Thursday of those months. We choose various different locations so that we can see what the different library branches of the state have to offer. We also have the option for members to join us online for our meetings. The June meeting is totally online to allow for Summer Reading preparations.

During the MLA/DLA Annual Conference, we hold an ASRD Meet Up, which allows anyone interested in our division to meet up with us and learn more about us in a more relaxed environment. We look forward to seeing you at one of our meetings or at the Annual Conference!

Please join us for our Programming Unconference on December 8 at the Abingdon Branch of the Harford County Public Library from 1:00 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. We are bringing back this fan favorite, as there are always new ideas and things to discuss!

To find out more about us, first log into your Info Hub account and add ASRD to your lists/committees: https://www.mdlib.org/divisions/#. Then, check out the ASRD Division page on MLA Connect: https://mla.junolive.com/main/community/groups/158938.



Banner art courtesy Vecteezy.com

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Panel

Word on the Street: What Do Asset-Based and Deficit-Based Thinking Mean for Libraries?

Cassandra Miller, Baltimore County Public Library

When we think about the communities that libraries serve, we usually begin with needs. Who needs help finding housing? Who needs support learning English? Which teens are struggling in school? Which older adults need help with technology? Identifying needs is an important part of library service. Problems arise when needs become the main way we understand a person or community. That is where deficit-based thinking can creep in.

Deficit-based thinking happens when we describe people mainly in terms of what they need, what they lack, or what we believe they are unable to do. Over time, that can influence how we see both individuals and entire communities. Asset-based thinking encourages us to take a broader view. Instead of concentrating only on what a customer needs, we also consider the knowledge, experience, skills, and relationships they already have. What might we miss about this person if we focus only on the problem in front of us?

This distinction is especially useful when thinking about library service to people experiencing homelessness. We may know that a customer needs access to a computer, a place to charge a phone, information about housing, or somewhere safe to spend the day. These are all real and important needs. But if that is all we see, we are seeing only one part of the person in front of us.

An asset-based approach reminds us that a person's hardship is not their entire story. A customer experiencing homelessness may have spent months navigating transportation systems and social services. They may have strong ties within the community, know where to find resources, or regularly help someone else figure out where to go. They may have work experience, hobbies, expertise, and interests we know nothing about. Sometimes they may simply be at the library to read the newspaper, watch a movie, attend a program, or use Wi-Fi.

Deficit thinking can also influence library services in less obvious ways. The American Library Association points out barriers that may have a disproportionate effect on people experiencing poverty or homelessness, such as permanent-address requirements, fines and fees, limited outreach, and staff assumptions or discomfort. ALA also advises libraries to review policies on personal belongings, hygiene, identification, and technology use to see whether they create unnecessary barriers.

So how might asset-based thinking appear in practice within libraries?

Customer Service

Start by finding out what the customer wants to achieve.

When someone asks for help, we can sometimes jump ahead to identifying everything else we think they need. An asset-based approach gives the customer more control over that interaction. Ask what they are trying to do and listen to the answer. Offer options instead of deciding what the solution should be. For example, a customer experiencing homelessness who asks to use a computer may only need to use a computer. If they ▸

also want information about housing or other services, we can help with that, but not every interaction needs to become an intervention.

Programs and Outreach: Involve communities in shaping the service.

Deficit thinking can show up when we create programs around what we believe a community is missing without first asking what people actually want. Asset-based approaches give community members a say in shaping the work. For teen librarians, that could mean asking teens to help plan activities or identify what they want from the library. When serving New American communities, it might mean working with immigrant organizations to understand community priorities rather than assuming we already know what is needed. When developing services for people experiencing homelessness, it means listening to people with lived experience and taking their ideas seriously.

Policies and Practices: Look at the assumptions behind the rule.

Library policies usually exist for legitimate operational reasons, but it is still worth asking who they may affect in ways we did not intend. Does a library card policy assume everyone has a permanent address? Does a rule about personal belongings create particular difficulties for someone who has nowhere else to store what they own? Are we responding to an actual behavior problem, or are we reacting to someone's appearance or circumstances? These questions do not mean abandoning rules. They help us make sure our rules address the issues they were designed to solve and are applied equitably.

This way of thinking extends well beyond homelessness. When working with teens, concerns about behavior can sometimes overshadow what young people contribute to the library. With New Americans, we may focus so much on language barriers that we overlook the knowledge and experience customers bring. When serving disabled customers, it is easy to begin with accommodations rather than the person's goals, preferences, and expertise. The needs in each situation may be real, but they are only part of the picture.

Good library service requires us to understand what people need. Asset-based thinking asks us to notice more than that. What do people already know? What can they do? What relationships, experiences, and ideas are they bringing into the library? Asking those questions gives us a fuller picture of the communities we serve.

Do you have a term you'd like us to explore in future columns? Share your suggestions with us!

You can send your suggestions to camiller@bcpl.net. ■

Maryland Library Association's
Future of Libraries Interest Group

Library Matrix Activity: Libraries and the Political Environment

Tracy Miller, Harford County Public Library

At the 2026 MLA Conference, the Future of Libraries Interest Group sponsored a "Library Matrix" activity. It was based on a technique created by futurist Leah Zaidel. The activity is described on her website: https://medium.com/predict/how-to-navigate-change-the-change-matrix-e6b83fc0203a. I also talked about using this activity in your personal life in *the Crab* earlier this year.

This method is a way to create possible future scenarios. Those scenarios can help you imagine various futures and think through how you would respond to them. Scenario planning can lead to improved decision-making now by ensuring that you are thinking through consequences against a range of possibilities.

For this activity, we chose three topics for participants to focus on: AI, the political environment, and climate change. You can see the full results here: https://tracyhmiller.github.io/library-matrices/political.html.

Starting in this issue of *the Crab*, I'm sharing the themes that emerged from the matrix activity. This quarter, we are focusing on the political environment. Remember that to create the matrix, we are working with the intersection of two axes: one axis is that libraries thrive or libraries suffer. The other axis, in this case, is that the political environment improves or worsens.

Politics Improve/Libraries Suffer

A commenter speculated that this could happen because after a library-unfriendly administration is replaced, there is so much that needs to be fixed that there is no money left for libraries. Or people might be so invested in technology and individual pursuits that libraries would become irrelevant.

*If this situation happened, how could we **improve** the outcome for libraries?*

Commenters recommended advocacy: talking to local politicians and rallying support for bills that are library-focused. Another idea was to join our local schools in advocacy and offering experiential learning for students.

Politics Worsen/Libraries Suffer

This is the worst-case scenario, and it is depressingly easy to imagine. Commenters suggested that there would be even less funding for libraries. Libraries might have to reduce hours and services and could even close. Censorship efforts would increase. Libraries could even become tools for propaganda or anti-propaganda.

*How can we **prevent** this outcome from happening?*

Politics Worsen/Libraries Thrive

This is such an interesting scenario to consider. We tend to think that how the political environment goes will affect us in tandem, but does that have to be true? Participants considered that people may recognize the benefits of libraries in a tumultuous political environment. Also, if there is economic strain, people may have an increased need for the services that libraries offer.

*In a situation like this, how can libraries **contribute** to their communities?*

Library workers might be moved to enter political conversations or even run for office. People who want instruction on civics and civic literacy education might become an important part of what libraries do. Citizens who are in a state of unrest need library services and seek them out, especially if there is widespread economic need as well.

Politics Improve/Libraries Thrive

This is the dream! What would that look like? Our participants suggested that libraries would be recognized as important infrastructure and funded accordingly. Support for libraries would become a key political issue for candidates. Citizens would have meaningful work, adequate income, and free time to explore all that the library has to offer!

*How can we **achieve** this vision?*



Intellectual Freedom Panel

Intellectual Freedom Panel News

Andrea Boothby Rice, Washington College

As I wrote this short update as this year's IFP Chair, we were celebrating the annual Banned Books Week. This year's theme, Let Books Be, highlighted the ongoing, pervasive attack on library collections, their employees, and intellectual freedom. ALA's call to Let Books Be is not solely that collections should be left alone, unchallenged, but one of action. Let Books Be Read, Written, and Taught. To this librarian, it is a call to action for those who feel safe and secure in doing so. A call that asks us to continue doing the work of standing up for our communities and ensuring that no one person or group silences another.

Dr. Emily Knox writes that Intellectual Freedom is necessary to human dignity and flourishing. While censorship is, as she puts it, insidious, it is also futile. "Human beings almost always find a way to express themselves, and find the information they need or want, no matter what barriers are put in front of them." I would add that we also watch out for each other and work to ensure this right is attainable for all. That work is done on the front lines by library workers day in and day out to enable flourishing in our communities and beyond.

Areas of Concern/Watch

ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom has received reports of bots scraping their catalogs. Concerns of this activity include misrepresentation of collections and the impact of search stats for the validity of library data: https://www.oif.ala.org/bots-attacking-scraping-library-catalogs/

Somerset County School Board's library policy was paused by the Maryland State Superintendent for a 60-day review, which was extended on October 2, by the State Board of Education: https://marylandmatters.org/2026/09/03/somerset-county-schools-book-policy-faces-new-state-board-challenge/.

Honoring Transgender Day of Remembrance as Information Professionals

Melanie Norberto, Carroll County Public Library

The Current Climate

As 2026 marches towards its end, many in the library sphere brace themselves for the next annual report of book challenges and bans across the country. In 2025, ALA reported that 5,665 titles were banned from libraries, which meant that 66% of book challenges resulted in successful bans. According to the Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF), "This is both the highest number of titles censored in one year and the highest rate of challenges resulting in censorship since OIF began compiling censorship data in 1990."

Despite Maryland's efforts in passing the Freedom to Read Act, the wave of censorship continues crashing against the shores of intellectual freedom and libraries as institutions. Since the spring, Somerset County schools have made an effort to restrict access to diverse book titles.

In many places, Banned Books Week has been quietly rebranded as Freedom to Read Week, if it is still observed at all. Library staff and administrators worry about handing patrons a list of titles to challenge, and some staff self-censor orders and displays due to fear of backlash and funding cuts.

For years now, the OIF has reported that many of the most-challenged books on library shelves center on LGBTQ+ themes, stories, and issues. Take, for example, *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe. This graphic memoir, centering on the author's personal journey as a nonbinary, asexual person, has been in the top five banned books every year since 2021. Eir story and stories like Eir's are often challenged or banned for representing a very vulnerable population in our communities in ways that comparable works without queer themes are not.

Across the United States, there has been a sharp rise in anti-trans legislation. Even here in Maryland, the 2026 legislative session saw bills in both the State House (HB0063) and Senate (SB0050) targeting the miniscule number of trans girl athletes. Thankfully, both bills were defeated, but transphobic politicians and persons will continue to push to erode and erase the rights and public presence of transgender people, especially transgender women.

In 2026 alone, Trans Legislation Tracker, an independent research group, has marked 834 anti-trans bills across 43 states.

The trend of book bans and anti-trans legislation are not discrete; they are intertwined. It is our responsibility as library staff to listen to and uplift the transgender members of our staff and our communities. It is our duty to fight for them and stand with them in the ongoing war against censorship.

What is Transgender Day of Remembrance?

November 20 each year marks Transgender Day of Remembrance, when we honor and remember those who lost their lives to anti-trans violence. The observance began in 1999 when transgender rights activist Gwendolyn Ann Smith organized a vigil to honor Rita Hester, a woman who was murdered the year prior.

Transgender folks from every walk of life are targeted by anti-trans violence, workplace discrimination, and legal persecution. However, trans people of color and transgender women are disproportionately harassed and killed (GLAAD). Transgender women of color are the most vulnerable group.

On Transgender Day of Remembrance, we honor our fallen transgender sisters, brothers, and siblings with vigils, marches, art displays, and poetry readings. We also celebrate transgender joy and progress while remembering those we have lost.

This observation is not only about grieving the dead. It is also a call to arms to fight for the living and to keep the lights on.

What Can Libraries Do?

As information professionals, it is our job to provide resources to our students, patrons, and clients. We must speak up about maintaining a diverse collection of titles, including those that represent and uplift transgender and gender-expansive people of all ages.

For those on the ordering and/or cataloging side, I encourage you to seek out gender-expansive stories that were written by queer authors and to make sure their bibliographic records are tagged in a consistent, searchable manner.

If your library permits it, put up a display for Transgender Day of Remembrance. ▸

If your library does not, consider adding books with trans stories to other displays when they match the theme. For instance, you could add Alex Gino's *Melissa* to a juvenile display about theatre. Romances like *A Lady for a Duke* by Alexis Hall or *Love & Other Disasters* by Anita Kelly would fit right in with historical romance and cooking romance displays.

Finally, consider deprioritizing "Harry Potter" programming at your library.

For those who may be unaware, author J.K. Rowling has been very vocally disparaging of transgender people, specifically targeting trans women; she has financially backed multiple anti-trans legislations and initiatives in the U.K. (source). Some of those initiatives have drastically impacted transgender rights in public, in schools, and in medicine (source). In 2023, she helped launch a trans-exclusionary, rape crisis center in Edinburgh after taking issue with the government-run Edinburgh crisis center, then helmed by a transgender woman. Rowling's organization was labeled an "anti-rights" group by Amnesty International UK in a report that was removed when Rowling threatened legal action (source).

The "Harry Potter" books continue to enjoy consistent circulation and popularity in libraries, and the new television show will likely lead to a resurgence in demand. Libraries still need to carry these books for our patrons. Libraries can, however, do less "Harry Potter" programming. For many in the queer community, celebration of Rowling's franchise can make people feel unsafe and unwelcome.

We encourage libraries to move towards literary programming that highlights the works of trans allies like Rick Riordan, author of the "Percy Jackson" universe, and K.A. Applegate, author of the "Animorphs" series as well as *The One and Only Ivan*.

Embrace Trans Stories

Another thing library staff can do is learn more about the transgender community by reading fiction, nonfiction, graphic novels, and more written by trans folx about their struggles and triumphs. Here are some personal favorites from members of the LGBTQ+ Interest Group:

Adult

The Dandelion and The Thistle by Pip Dolyn
A Lady for a Duke by Alexis Hall
Ship Happens by Mason Deaver
Us, a graphic novel by Sara Soler
The Bride Was a Boy, a manga memoir by Chii (rated 13+, but more likely to appeal to adults)

Teen

Cemetery Boys, a YA paranormal romance by Aiden Thomas
The Passing Playbook, a YA contemporary romance by Isaac Fitzsimons
Pet by Akwaeke Emezi
Girlmode, a YA graphic novel by Magdalene Visaggio and Paulina Ganucheau
Love Me for Who I Am, a teen manga series by Kata Konayama

Juvenile

The Ink Witch by Steph Cherrywell
Realmsweep, an upcoming novel by H.E. Edgmon
A World Worth Saving by Kyle Lukoff
The Deep & Dark Blue, a juvenile graphic novel by Niki Smith
Lunar Boy, a juvenile graphic novel by Jes & Cin Wibowo

Show Up for the Trans Community in Maryland

Finally, I encourage you to attend one of the many events across Maryland for Transgender Day of Remembrance. I have confirmed the following events, though more may pop up between the time I am drafting this and November 20.

Upcoming Events to Attend

The Frederick Center

Transgender Day of Remembrance event on Friday, November 20, 2026, starting at 6:30 p.m. at The Frederick Center located at 5 East 2nd Street, Frederick, MD, 21701.

Montgomery County Pride Center

Transgender Day of Remembrance and Resilience on Friday, November 20, 2026, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the MoCo Pride Center located at 4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, MD, 20814.

Suggested Sources for Further Information

ALA OIF: https://www.ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10

BBC About Amnesty's Removal of the Anti-Rights Report: https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdrvk32y2ypo

GLAAD: https://glaad.org/tdor/

GLAAD for Journalists: https://glaad.org/publications/tdorkit/

GLAAD on JK Rowling: https://glaad.org/gap/jk-rowling/

Glamour's Timeline of Rowling's Online Transphobia: https://www.glamour.com/story/a-complete-breakdown-of-the-jk-rowling-transgender-comments-controversy

Maryland Association of School Librarians on Somerset County: https://www.maslmd.org/index.php?option=com_dailyplanetblog&view=entry&year=2025&month=03&day ▶

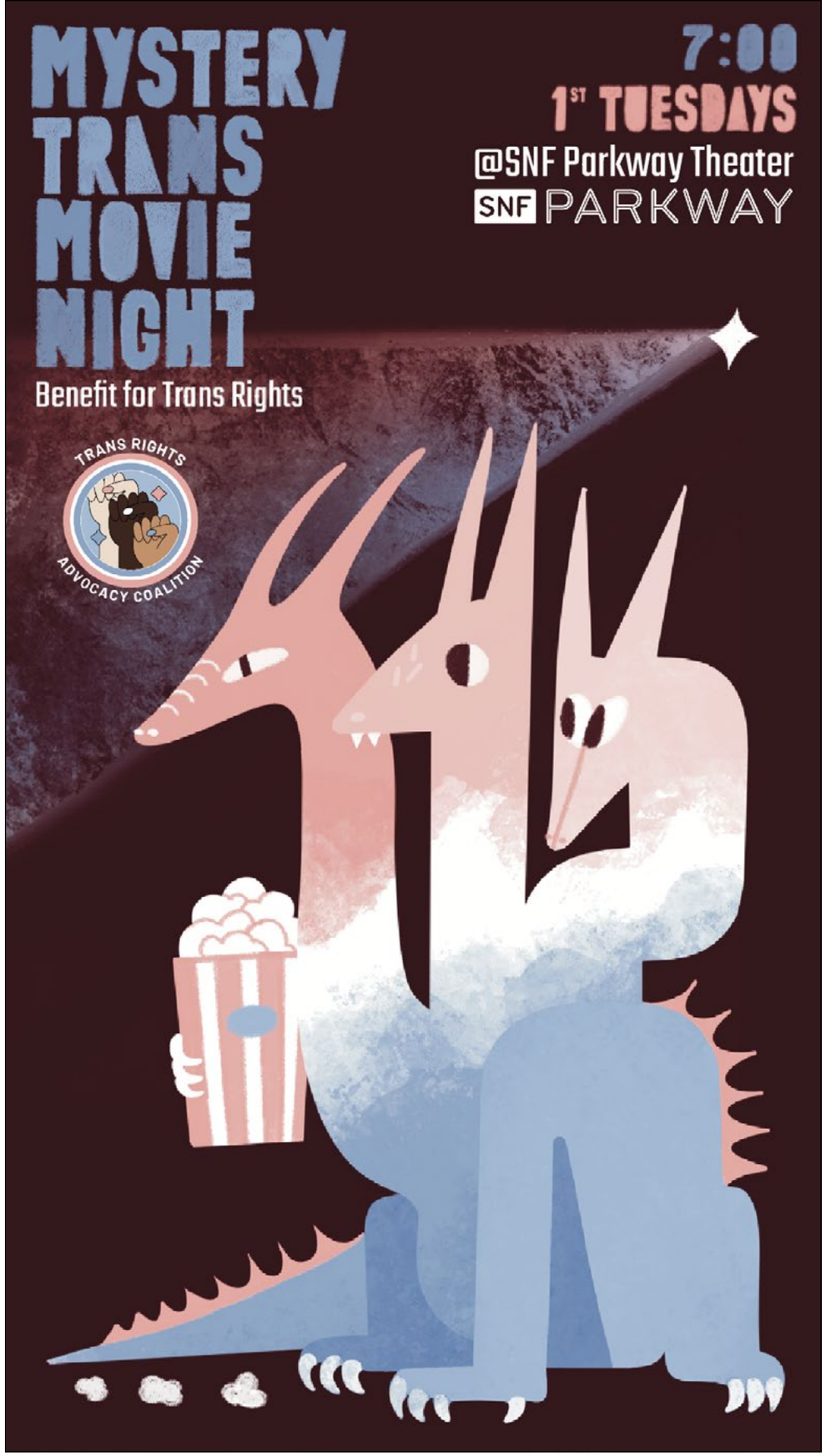
=31&id=55:advocacy-alert-somerset-county

Maryland Legislation House: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/hb0063?ys=2026rs

Maryland Legislation Senate: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/sb0050?ys=2026rs

Trans Legislation Tracker: https://translegislation.com/







Materials Interest Group

Putting the Collection at the Center
Programming for a Book-Centered Library

Laura Bandoch, Harford County Public Library

Library programming has expanded dramatically in the past two decades. Libraries host technology workshops, craft programs, performances, gaming events, community conversations, and countless other activities. That variety is a strength. But amid all the possibilities, it is worth asking: What makes a library program a library program? Why is this program something the library is offering, rather than another community group?

One answer is the collection.

Books, audiobooks, DVDs, graphic novels, magazines, and other circulating materials are not simply resources waiting on shelves. They can be the starting point, the subject, and the activities themselves. When programs are intentionally connected to the physical collection, the library creates a bridge between programming and one of its most visible assets.

The key is to make the collection part of the event—not merely something available somewhere in the building. Here are some options for your upcoming program planning:

- Consider an Audiobook Walk. Participants meet at the library, choose from a selection of audiobooks available through the library (perhaps a Playaway or an E-Audiobook), and set out together on a designated walking route. Everyone listens independently with headphones while staff lead the group along the route. At the end, participants return to the library for refreshments and a brief conversation about what they listened to.
- A Silent Book Rave offers another way to make reading itself a social activity. Participants arrive with a book—or choose one from a curated collection display. Lo-fi music can be played at a low volume. The lights are dimmed and everyone spends the first part reading silently. There can be refreshments and conversation at the end.
- "Speed Dating with Books" allows participants to rotate through tables every five minutes, sampling books from different genres. The samples could include quotes, character trees, or perhaps something edible that is essential to the book. At the end, everyone identifies the titles they want to borrow.

The collection does not have to compete with programming for attention in marketing. It can be programming. This approach also gives library events something difficult to replicate elsewhere. A community organization can host a craft night. A bookstore can host an author event. A café can host a reading group. But a library can invite people to gather, explore thousands of circulating items, discover something unexpected, and walk out with that discovery in their hands. ■

OutRAIGeous Reviews

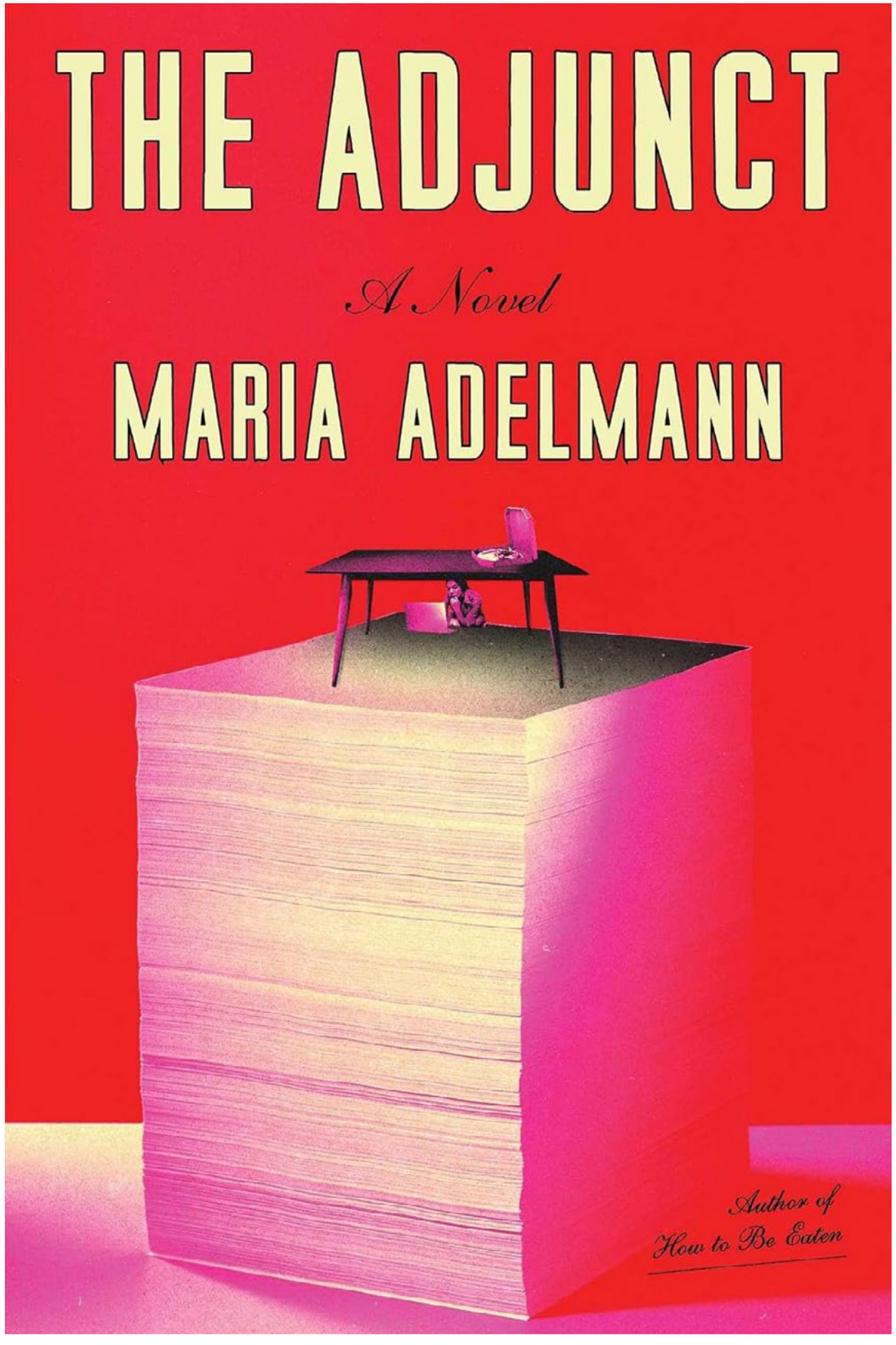
Books recommended by members of the Reader's Advisory Interest Group

The Adjunct by Maria Adelmann (Scribner, 2026)

Review by Witt Salley

Sam has a doctorate, five courses to teach, an aching tooth, and no job security. She shuttles between a public university and a private college in Baltimore, trying to keep up with grading, side jobs, and applications for more stable work. When her former graduate adviser, Tom Sternberg, publishes a novel that appears to recast their complicated past, his literary comeback threatens to make her life someone else's story. Sam teaches a course on campus novels while discovering how little control she has over her place in one. Her caustic, self-questioning narration makes academic absurdities funny even as their consequences become increasingly painful.

As a public librarian and adjunct writing instructor, I recognized Sam's frustration and her stubborn hope that an earnest student might learn to appreciate a well-placed comma. Adelmann lets impatience and tenderness coexist, making Sam an engaging, sometimes exasperating companion. Sam also struggles to find language that fits her sexuality. Libraries have a practical place in her life: she borrows a Chromebook for job applications and reads and writes at Enoch Pratt. Sexual frankness and mounting financial anxiety give the comedy an uneasy edge. I recommend *The Adjunct* to readers who enjoy sharp workplace satire and complicated characters. The novel invites discussion of class and desire while asking who gets to tell a story and who gets believed.



This Kingdom Will Not Kill Me ("Maggie the Undying," Book 1) by Ilona Andrews (Tor, 2026)

Review by Rohini Gupta

This book is brilliant.

Let me ask you a question: Have you ever loved a book so much that you've reread it over and over again, memorized every character, every betrayal, every heartbreaking twist… and desperately wished you could jump into the story yourself? Well, that's exactly what happens in *This Kingdom Will Not Kill Me.*

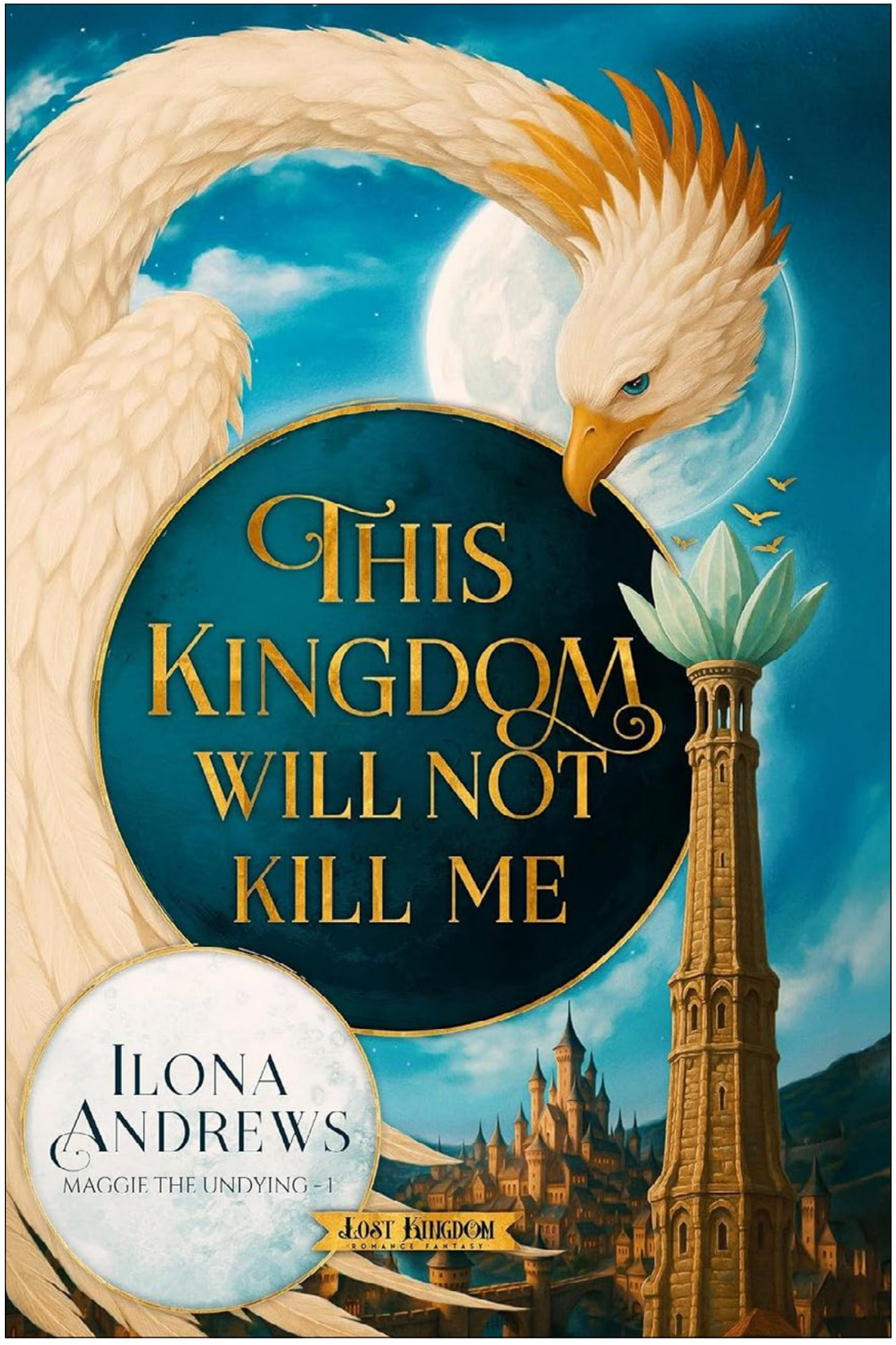
Our main character, Maggie, the Undying, wakes up cold, filthy, and naked in a gutter. Not the best start to a day. But things get even stranger when she realizes she's in Kair Toren, a city she knows intimately. Why? Because she's spent years obsessively reading a famous unfinished fantasy series set there.

Maggie isn't just in another world. She's inside the world of her favorite books. And here's the catch: she knows exactly how this story unfolds. She knows which heroes will fall and which villains are lurking in the shadows. And she knows that the kingdom of Rellas is headed toward a devastating, cataclysmic war.

What follows is everything I want in epic fantasy: dangerous warlords, political intrigue, brutal battles, and a romance that smolders. The pacing is relentless. I love that this novel taps into the wildly popular concept of Isekai, a Japanese storytelling genre whose name literally means "another world." In Isekai stories, or portal fantasy, an ordinary person is transported into a different realm and must survive.

"Ilona Andrews" is actually a husband-and-wife writing team—Ilona is a native-born Russian, while Gordon served as a communications sergeant in the U.S. Army. Their website is a treasure trove for fans, filled with bonus scenes, extra chapters, publishing insights, vellum stickers, and all sorts of delightful behind-the-scenes content for those of us who love to nerd out over books.

What makes *This Kingdom Will Not Kill Me* so special is that it asks a fascinating question: If you knew how the story ended, could you change it? And if you tried, what would it cost? *Outlander* meets *Game of Thrones* in *This Kingdom Will Not Kill Me*.



The Frozen People by Elly Griffiths (Pamela Dorman Books, 2025)

Review by Lynne Yardumian

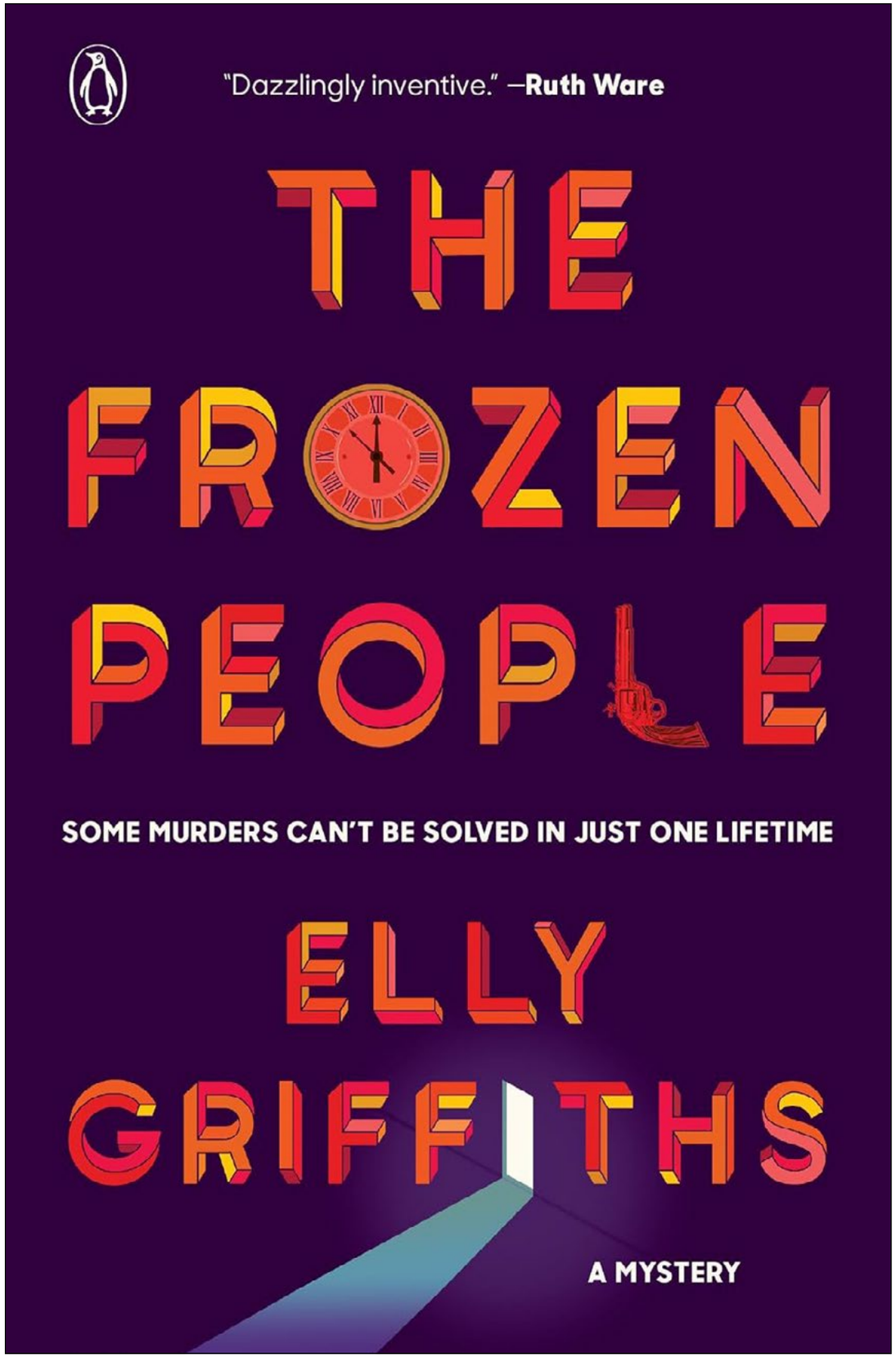
What if you could solve cold cases, not by doing research, but by traveling back in time and observing the crime itself? When the Department of Logistics, a new government agency, is formed in the United Kingdom, a team of police officers and forensics experts are tasked with solving old crimes. The rules are simple:

1. Watch
2. Bear Witness
3. Don't Interact
4. Stay Safe

Ali Dawson has always followed the creed, but things change when she is sent back further in time than any agent before her. Trapped in London in 1850, she must navigate unfamiliar language, clothing, and social customs, all while trying to clear the family name of a politician with sights set on becoming Prime Minister. Will Ali manage to solve her case and come back to the present, or will she be forced to live her days as one of the frozen people she used to merely observe?

Elly Griffiths weaves criminal procedural with historical fiction (and just a touch of political intrigue) in this sci-fi mystery drama. Told through multiple narratives, this addictive story is hard to put down. If you enjoy dynamic characters who overcome adversity, while making the world a safer place, you'll adore *The Frozen People*, and eagerly await its sequel, *The Killing Time*, which comes out November 17, 2026.

A must-read for fans of Kelley Armstrong's *A Rip Through Time* and Jodi Taylor's series The Chronicles of St. Mary's.



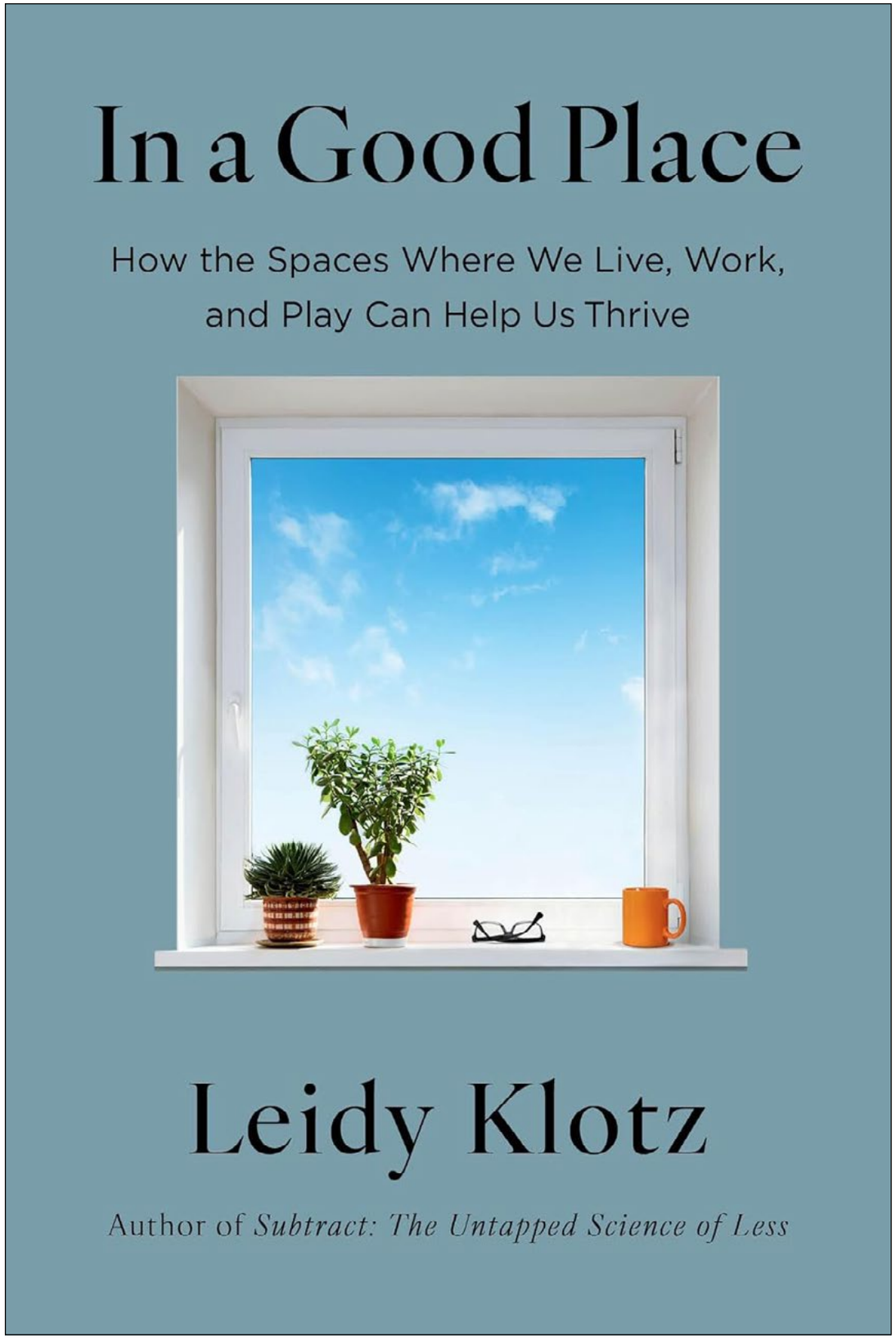
In a Good Place: How the Spaces Where We Live, Work, and Play Can Help Us Thrive by Leidy Klotz (Little, Brown Spark, 2026)

Review by Leslie Salley

Improving the places we use every day can seem to require more money, expertise, or permission than we have. Leidy Klotz's *In a Good Place* explains how our surroundings influence daily life and shows that we may have more power to shape them than we assume. A behavioral scientist and engineering professor, Klotz draws on research and personal stories to examine how places affect three needs: agency, competence, and connection.

The book is most persuasive when Klotz connects research to daily choices. His "space before screen" practice asks readers to notice and appreciate their surroundings before turning to a phone. He calls the choices that remain when one part of a setting cannot be changed "adjacent freedoms." As a Maryland educator pursuing school librarianship, I kept thinking about a student entering a school library for the first time. A clear sign can help that student navigate independently. A movable chair or quiet place can offer choice and a sense of welcome. The framework asks readers to consider how a space works and feels, not merely how it looks.

Klotz acknowledges that readers cannot control every shared setting but gives less attention to changes that require funding or administrative action. His clear explanations make the research approachable, and his emphasis on small shifts keeps the book practical. I recommend *In a Good Place* to readers interested in how places shape behavior and well-being.



The Society for Soulless Girls by Laura Steven (Delacorte Press, 2023)

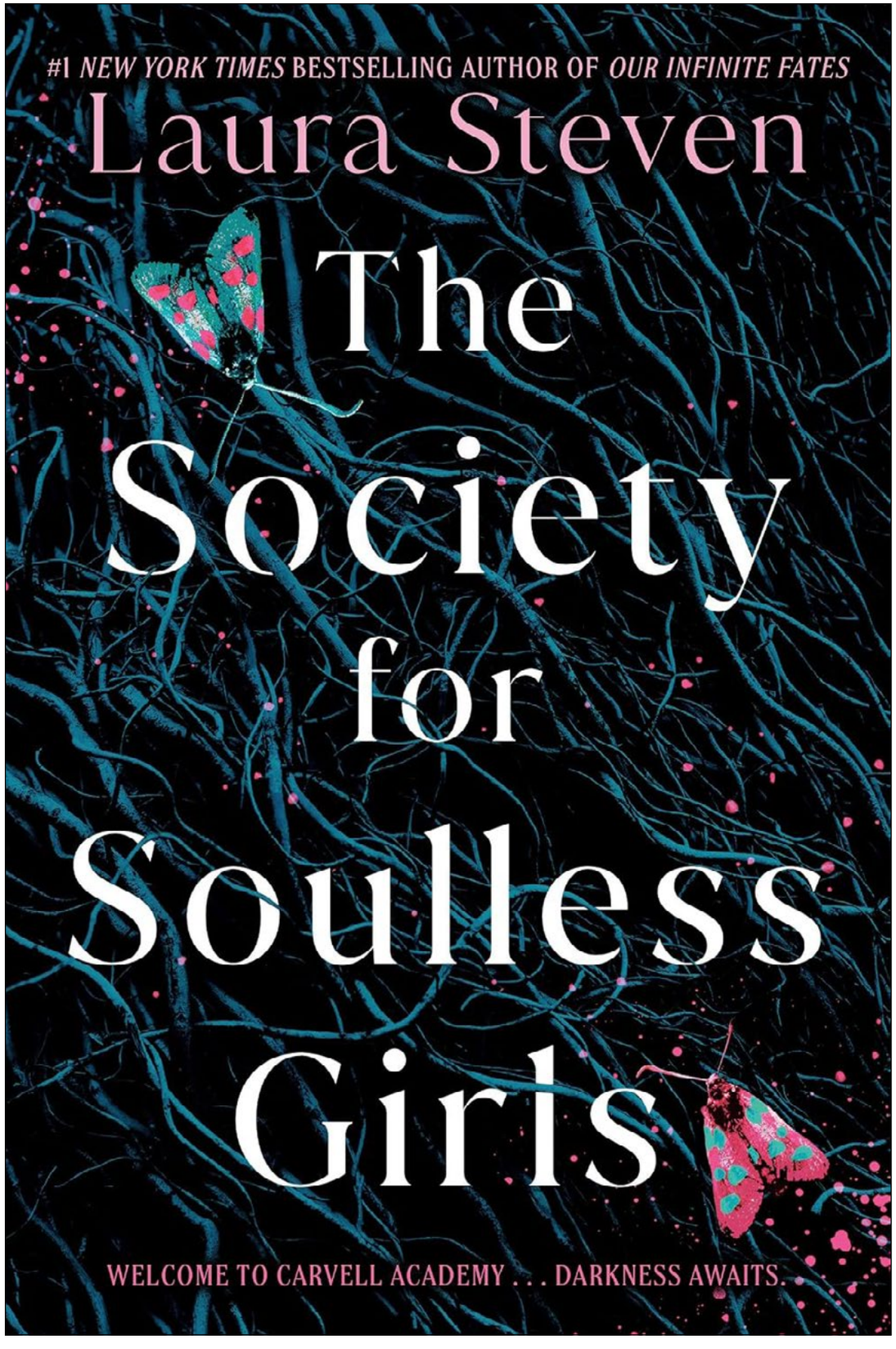
Review by August Campbell

This YA novel follows two roommates as they attempt to solve a cold case that forced the school to close 10 years prior. It's a sapphic enemies-to-lovers Jekyll and Hyde retelling.

Before this story began, we had the north tower murders: four students supposedly murdered on campus. So, it seemed that Carvell Academy of the Arts would close for good. Ten years later, the school has reopened, and freshman Lottie is determined to solve the murders. This ray of sunshine knew one of the victims and wanted to give her parents closure. When Lottie meets her roommate Alice, everything they were both wanting for their year goes out the window. Lottie was hoping for a forever best friend; Alice was hoping for someone as moody and dark as she is. Alice is mean, grumpy, and honestly cruel to everyone around her.

When Alice finds an ancient soul-splitting ritual in a library book, she attempts to corner off her "evil side." Over time, things become much darker than anyone could have expected. Lottie, too, starts experiencing strange and possibly evil things on campus. Is the spirit of the founder possessing students? Is the north tower sentient and out for more blood? When a girl is found dead at the base of the tower, everyone is a suspect.

This title is great for enjoyers of Holly Jackson, Jennifer Lynn Barnes, and titles like *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt and *A Lesson in Vengeance* by Victoria Lee.



Support Staff Division



Support Staff Division News

Lou Sica, Baltimore County Public Library

SSD had a good summer and is excited for fall! Our August meeting was held at the Laurel Branch of the Prince George's County Memorial Library System. Using MLA Connect, we also had a virtual option for those who couldn't make the trek down. Our October meeting was at the Miller Branch of Howard County Library System with a tour/overview of their garden!

Best of all, we were excited to offer our standalone program, How To Effectively Manage Organizational Change! It had to be rescheduled from June until September. We held it at the Elkridge Branch of Howard County Library System. It was well received and contained lots of great discussions. A special thank you to the presenters, SSD's own Teonja Jung (BCPL-Cockeysville) and Shirley Mason (BCPL-Woodlawn) along with their BCPL-Catonsville colleague, Tiffany Vincent.

Youth Services Division

Dwyn Griffin, Prince George's County Memorial Library System

Greetings, Youth Services Enthusiasts!

I hope this message finds you well! Now that the mayhem of Summer Reading has ended and Fall is upon us, I hope the flurry of Back-to-School Nights is treating you well!

There is a lot happening in YSD, so here are a few updates to keep on your radar!

Just a reminder that our YSD monthly meetings are now held on the second Monday of the month from 2:00–3:00 p.m. We would love for you to join us, connect with other Youth Services folks, and hear what is happening across the state.

Kids Are Customers Too

We are kicking off planning for Kids Are Customers Too 2027! Our first planning meeting was held on Wednesday, September 30 from 1:30–2:30 p.m. There is still time to join the committee! If you are interested, please reach out to me directly at dwyn.griffin@pgcmls.info.

Be on the lookout for our upcoming KAC Call for Presentations. The MLA Annual Conference has also issued its call for presenters. We know there is AMAZING Youth Services work happening across Maryland, and we want to support and uplift the wonderful work you are doing. Consider submitting a proposal and sharing your knowledge with your colleagues!

Fall BEST

Fall BEST was held on Thursday, October 15 from 9:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. focusing on graphic novels.

We were excited to welcome Zoe Persico, author and illustrator of *How to Talk to Your Succulent*, as our keynote speaker! The reading list included titles for Grades 3–5 and Grades 6–8.

As we move into this busy fall season, I hope you will find a way to connect with YSD—whether through a meeting, BEST, KAC, presenting at a conference, or simply sharing the great work happening in your library.

Thank you for everything you continue to do for the children, teens, and families you serve. Your work matters, and we want to celebrate it!

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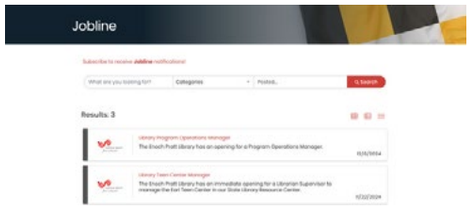
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Yesenia Garcia-Navarro, Washington County Free Library

About Yesenia's job and MLA responsibilities

What is your job title/employer? Professional history in libraries? Work responsibilities/special projects/initiatives?

I am a Library Associate in the Adult Information Services Department at the Fletcher Branch of the Washington County Free Library. I have been at WCFL for over three years, first starting in the Teens Department as a part-time employee. I studied at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in English Secondary Education. Before entering the library field, I was a high school English teacher. In my current position, I plan and lead several popular programs to bring the community together and connect through learning, creating, and having fun! My first program for adults was my Storytime for Adults with All Abilities, which started in September 2024. I was honored with Star Community's 2025 Advocate of the Year award because of my Storytime program.

What work have you done within MLA, and what are your hopes for your involvement with MLA in the coming year? What are you most excited about? How can the MLA community support you in achieving your goals?

I have attended the annual MLA/DLA Conference twice and have made several valuable connections with librarians across the state. I am the 2026 Chair of the Maryland Tech Connect Planning Committee and want to continue to promote technology use and learning within the library field. I recently attended and facilitated a roundtable discussion on Accessible Literacy at the Literacy Summit at the Elkridge Branch of the Howard County Library System and was excited to share what I do at my library to promote literacy and knowledge. My hope is to become more active with MLA through interest groups, such as Inclusion and Accessibility, and Readers Advisory. My goal is to continue making strong connections with colleagues across the state, so if you ever want to reach out to me to collaborate in some form, please do!



How are you involved in the wider community?

I am the lead on Outreach events in my department, and I have connected with the people in my community at these events. It is important to meet people outside of the library so that they have a friendly face to look for when coming in, especially if it is their first time. A recent event I attended was a Trunk or Treat at the ARC of Washington County, in collaboration with our Bookmobile staff. The library has a strong partnership with the ARC through a project my colleagues and I helped with for their Storywalk grand opening.

What is it about libraries that inspires or motivates you?

Everything! There's a magic to libraries. Even on my days when I am most tired or stressed, I enjoy and love the work I am doing! I never had a strong sense of community anywhere I lived, until I started working at the library in Hagerstown. Of course, my Storytime peeps also motivate me to make my programs the best they can be!

About Yesenia

What was your first job?

I got my first job at 18, and I worked at a Bosch factory. I thought it was going to be tough, but I really enjoyed it!

Do you have pets? What kind?

I have a mini poodle fur baby named Luka! He is the sweetest boy and loves nighttime cuddles.

Favorite type of music?

Bad Bunny, all day!

Favorite smell or sound?

Coffee. The smell and the sound of it pouring in my cup.

What book is currently on your nightstand?

Glass Sword by Victoria Aveyard

Do you read more than one book at a time?

Yes, and it's a problem. Sometimes I forget what was happening or mix up the plots...

Do you speak languages other than English?

I am also a native Spanish speaker and have learned some French. I would also love to learn ASL. ■

Carol Cason, Anne Arundel County Public Library



About Carol's job and MLA responsibilities

What is your job title/employer? Professional history in libraries? Work responsibilities/special projects/initiatives?

I am the Chief Operating Officer for the Anne Arundel County Public Library (AACPL). I have worked in public libraries for more than 25 years, including over 20 years in leadership roles. I began my library career with Carroll County Public Library as a Circulation Assistant and Library Associate before joining AACPL in 2003 as a Library Associate.

Throughout my career at AACPL, I have served as a Library Associate, Librarian, Assistant Branch Manager, Branch Manager, Regional Manager, and now Chief Operating Officer. These experiences have given me a broad understanding of library operations, public service, staff development, and strategic planning.

In my current role, I provide leadership for AACPL's operations and work closely with the CEO and leadership team to strengthen services, develop leaders, and advance the Library's strategic goals. My work focuses on organizational effectiveness, leadership development, change management, and especially ensuring excellent service to our community.

Some of the initiatives and projects I am particularly proud of include helping lead AACPL through the COVID-19 pandemic, balancing staff safety, community needs, and operational continuity during a period of significant change. I have also been an active member of AACPL's Library Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Team (LEDIT). Beyond my organization, I currently serve on the Planning Committee for the Maryland Library Leadership Institute and previously served as President of the Children's Services Division of the Maryland Library Association. Throughout my career, I have been passionate about developing people, strengthening leadership, and building strong, collaborative teams.

What work have you done within MLA, and what are your hopes for your involvement with MLA in the coming year? What are you most excited about? How can the MLA community support you in achieving your goals?

I was active in the Children's Services Division and loved being a part of that group earlier in my career. It was my first real opportunity to learn from peers around the state and make meaningful connections. It also gave me opportunities to grow my leadership skills in a highly supportive environment! I recommend everyone get involved in an MLA division!

I also had the opportunity to attend MLLI in 2010 - and still reach out to members of my cohort today for brainstorming, or advice, or just to catch up at conferences!

I'm excited that MLA offers so many avenues for growth and development, and I am always jumping at the chance to take advantage of as many of those opportunities as I can!

How are you involved in the wider community?

I currently serve on the MLLI (Maryland Library Leadership Institute) planning committee, and I'm excited to be joining MAPLA. I also serve as a trainer for the statewide training "Everyone Manages" with two of my AACPL colleagues.

What is it about libraries that inspires or motivates you?

What inspires me most about libraries is that they truly belong to everyone. They are one of the few places where people can come as they are, feel welcome, and access resources, opportunities, and support without barriers. Libraries as safe spaces are incredibly important to me.

I'm energized by interactions with customers and by seeing the difference our work can make in their lives. I especially enjoy programming because it creates connections and memorable experiences for our community. I'm always happy to fill in for Babies in Bloom (my favorite!) because it's such a joy to connect with families and see the library helping build a lifelong love of reading and learning from the very beginning.

About Carol

Favorite movie, tv show, or play?

Movie: *The Cutting Edge*

TV Show: *The Office*

Book: *Looking for Alaska* by John Green

What was your first job?

I did lots of babysitting as a teenager and my first "job" was being assigned to work at my college library as my work study assignment—and the rest is history!

Do you have pets? What kind?

I have a puppy named Fritz—he is a bundle of craziness right now but cute as a button, and two cats (Figaro and Bella).

What book is currently on your nightstand?

Hollywood Ending by John Green. I can't believe I haven't read it yet—he's my all-time favorite author. It's on deck!

Do you read more than one book at a time?

I can generally read one and listen to one.

What's your favorite place to travel, or a dream destination?

Recently, the beach because it's a fun place to go with my grandkids and the whole family. But next year, I'm heading to Italy and Greece with some high school friends to celebrate our 50th birthdays.

What is something that you think would surprise someone about you?

I hiked the Inca Trail in Peru (with a library co-worker), and somehow made it through—the toughest and most awesome adventure that I only need to do once! ■



the KNOWLEDGE!

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