



The Digital Magazine of the Maryland Library Association
Volume 56, Number 4 • Summer, 2026
SHARE *the* KNOWLEDGE!

**Our Stories,
Our Shelves 16**





The Digital Magazine of the Maryland Library Association • Volume 56, Number 4 • Summer, 2026

FEATURE ARTICLES

Our Stories, Our Shelves 16

A photo gallery of the MLA/DLA annual conference.

LATI Graduation 40

On Wednesday, June 3, 2026, public libraries in Maryland celebrated the latest LATI cohort graduation. Thirty-two library associates from thirteen different Maryland counties presented their capstone projects and received graduation certificates as the culmination of their training.

AI Is an Intellectual Freedom Issue: What Maryland Libraries Can Do Now 54

At the MLA|DLA 2026 preconference, Tess Wilson, Membership and Outreach Director for Library Freedom Project, led “Using Stories from the Library Community to Build AI Policy.” I left the workshop thinking less about artificial intelligence (AI) as a new tool and more about AI as a pressure point on long-standing library values: privacy, access, intellectual freedom, labor, equity, and public trust.

20 Years of Reading Together: Celebrating the La Plata Book Discussion 56

For the past 20 years, readers have gathered at the La Plata Branch of the Charles County Public Library to share stories, perspectives, and meaningful conversations through the La Plata Book Discussion.



OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026

FLWAN (Fat Library Workers Affinity Network): Why it Matters and Who Should Join 60

This new Affinity Network is intended to give fat library workers a safe, non-judgmental, professional space to discuss issues unique to fat librarianship, provide all library workers with an opportunity to work together to dismantle internalized anti-fat bias, and use what we learn from one another to improve our libraries for other fat workers and patrons.

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Editor's Note

Julie Fitzpatrick, MLA Crab Editor
Howard County Library System

Happy summer, *Crab* readers!

As you read this, many of you will be winding down from a busy schedule of summer reading, programming, arts and crafts, and other activities. Your community members appreciate all the wonderful opportunities for learning, creativity, and fun that you've provided during the summer months. I hope you've had a chance to partake in all the fun but also get some well-deserved and much-needed rest and relaxation for yourselves.

Two of my favorite features are always a highlight of the summer issue: our conference photo spread and LATI graduation. It's great to see our community of library workers from across two states take advantage of all the opportunities that the annual MLA/DLA Conference provides: gathering to connect, learn, and celebrate our shared commitment to advancing library services and resources. This year's conference, "Our Stories, Our Shelves," celebrated the power of stories in our communities and the library collections that reflect them. Enjoy the candid photos and see if you can spot yourself in them if you attended!

LATI graduation is also an opportunity to celebrate as the newly-minted Library Associates present their projects and receive their diplomas. Graduation takes place at my library branch, and it's always delightful to see fresh new faces touring our building, excited about their new careers and all the potential and possibility that the library world has to offer. Congratulations to the spring graduates and also to Ryan O'Grady and Laura Allen of LATI for their dedication to this crucial program for Maryland libraries.



This note is bittersweet for me because it is my final one as *Crab* editor. I've learned so much from all our contributors, and I consider it a privilege to be able to share your news, accolades, accomplishments, and ideas with *the Crab* community. I'd like to thank a few people whose dedication, hard work, and attention to detail keep *the Crab* humming along, quarter after quarter.

Amy Miller Meyers, Regina Rose, Robert Miller, and Ruth Utz are our terrific copy editors, and I'm pleased to be joining their copy-editing team for this and future issues. Peter Nguyen has designed and edited graphics for our publication and is always available for help and creative suggestions.

Finally, Bucky Edgett of Lucky Productions has been my real partner in producing this every quarter. Bucky has been doing design and layout for *the Crab* since it was a print-only publication, mailed out to hundreds of

addresses. His cumulative knowledge and commitment to this endeavor, pro bono, make him an MLA hero in my eyes.

The Crab is in great hands going forward. AshLee Bass of the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association and Leah Snow of Washington County Free Library have answered the call and will serve as your co-editors going forward, and they bring a wealth of knowledge, experience, and ideas to the publication. I'm excited to see them move *the Crab* into its next phase. Please enjoy learning about AshLee and Leah and their library lives in this issue's Library People feature. Finally, as always, if you have any news or information to share with the Maryland library community, please keep *the Crab* in mind. Reach out to Leah and AshLee at mla.crab.editor@gmail.com.

Thank you all and enjoy this issue! ■

President's Message

Conni Strittmatter, MLA President, Baltimore County Public Library

Happy summer, MLA friends!

IT IS NOW OFFICIALLY my first time writing to you as the President of the Maryland Library Association. I am honored to have been entrusted with this role and look forward to a great year.

Since the last *Crab* issue, a lot has happened! Many of us met at the MLA Annual Conference. It was a lovely couple of days full of networking and valuable professional development. One highlight for me was the sessions I attended on project management and leading from the middle, both of which left me with excellent takeaways to apply to my everyday work.

I also had the pleasure of attending the American Library Association conference in Chicago at the end of June. While there, I attended sessions on mobile outreach, civic engagement in libraries, career-oriented programming for teens, advocacy against book banning, and much more.

On my first day there, I attended the Chapter Leaders Forum, intended for folks who hold a leadership role in their state's association. There, we talked through strategic planning, fiscal responsibility, leadership development, and membership engagement, amongst other topics.

Kristin Evans from Amigos Library Services in Addison, Texas presented on the topic of membership engagement. One thing Kristin talked about that really stood out to me was the concept of the Membership Continuum, where membership takes the following path:

Consuming > Promoting > Creating > Serving > Governing

Ideally, every member of the Maryland Library Association spends some time **consuming**. We exist as an organization to provide access to professional development and networking, after all! That said, we need folks in every part of this continuum. It's important that we have people **creating** the professional development we all consume, people



promoting the value of MLA to other library workers, folks **serving** on committees or other units to keep things running, and people serving in leadership roles to **govern** the association.

So, I'm curious – where do you see yourself on this continuum? Do you have hopes or aspirations to progress to another part of the spectrum? If so, we can help! Never hesitate to reach out.

The other little tidbit she shared, which I found to be especially enlightening – the best recruitment tool for an organization is word-of-mouth. This means that one of the most important parts of the membership continuum for us all to consider is promoting. When is the last time you invited a colleague to attend an MLA meeting with you? Or encouraged a mentee to get involved as a way to help them develop? These are some of the best ways to ensure a strong and thriving association!

Thank you for being involved in MLA, wherever you fall on the membership continuum. Your connection with the Maryland Library Association helps keep the organization moving, allowing for library workers all across the state of Maryland to receive valuable opportunities for development. ■

Vice President's Message

Ashley Teagle, Southern Maryland Regional Library Association

Greetings, MLA!

FOR THOSE of you I have not yet had the pleasure to meet, I'm Ashley Teagle, the CEO of the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association (SMRLA) and your MLA Vice-President/President Elect.

I'm a Maryland native, and I grew up on the Eastern Shore in Wicomico County. I attended public schools, and my parents had to intervene more than once to advocate for me in the education system. As I floundered in my math classes due to a frustrated teacher belittling me, my aspiration to become a scientist died. But I never stopped reading. To me, the public library was a vital part of my education by providing access to books that would never make it to the school's curriculum. I don't think I have enough space here to fully articulate how incredibly important books were to me growing up.

These early interactions with the education system pushed me to become an English major and, eventually, a librarian.

At Charles County Public Library (CCPL), my first job was as a children's librarian. I'll never forget the day I was doing a Black History Month themed story time. A little girl was so enraptured by the art in the picture book I was reading; I noticed her coming closer to me the longer I read. Finally, she hoisted her little body up on my lap, and I kept on reading. I understood that feeling of wanting to be seen and to lose myself in a story that felt familiar but new all at once.

Looking back, starting with that first position at CCPL, I recognize something was ignited in me. I recognized that libraries are also the product of their environments and are subject to the same racist, classist, misogynist (insert the -ist of your choice here) systems as other public education entities. I wanted to move into leadership roles within libraries because leadership is where policy, strategy, and priorities are established. I'm grateful every day to be able to do this work at SMRLA where our organizational values include diversity and inclusion, service, and kindness.



Being elected Vice-President/President Elect of the Maryland Library Association is a tremendous honor. MLA has been an important part of my library journey. I credit MLA with connecting me to mentors who could provide me with career guidance. MLA has provided professional development opportunities that have helped me grow as a library director. MLA helped me become more confident as a leader and has given me opportunities to contribute to the profession beyond my own library through the EDI Panel, the MLLI Committee, BCMLA and the MLA Executive Board.

I'm currently reading *107 Days* by Kamala Harris—politics aside, what stands out to me is that the role of Vice President is one of background leadership and preparation. What I mean by this is that while I may be called upon to step in when our President is unavailable, I anticipate spending this year supporting President Conni Strittmatter and her goals and vision for MLA. This is the year that I will roll up my sleeves and get the work done that helps move MLA forward.

My other big priority this year is to learn all that I can about MLA and how to be an effective association leader. My first accomplishment was attending the American Library Association's Chapter Leaders Forum on June 26. The Forum is a learning opportunity for incoming state association leaders to brush up on topics like financial management, association membership, and governance. It was exciting to hear what other library associations are doing and to share what makes MLA special.

This year, I'll also be doing a lot of listening to any MLA members who have thoughts, questions, or ideas about the MLA membership experience. Send me a message on MLA Connect—I'd love to hear from you!

Thank you for the opportunity to serve. ■

Report from MLA's ALA Chapter Councilor

Joseph Thompson, Carroll County Public Library

It's time for a review of the American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference! The ALA's 2026 Annual Conference took place in Chicago over June 26–29 and included three Council meetings. Just as a reminder, the ALA Council is the policy-making body of the association and includes over 100 members. Each chapter (mostly state associations like MLA) gets one vote. These meetings are held in a large room in the convention center full of tables and microphones. If you ever get a chance to attend an ALA Conference, I'd really encourage you to sit in as a visitor to observe the process.

In this report, I'm only going to focus on how I voted and the outcome of proposed motions and resolutions. However, I would encourage you to also take a look at the reports from the ALA committees and other Council documents, which can be found [here](#). These reports are a great way to learn more about the work of the entire association.

Council I kicked off on the morning of Saturday, June 27. At the start of the meeting, another Councilor offered a motion to change the rules and limit debate on any item to 10 minutes. I voted no, and the motion was defeated. We proceeded according to the regular Council rules. There was an additional motion by another Councilor to pull the Endowment Trustees report from the Consent Agenda to give time for it to be discussed during our meetings. This was approved. Moving into the main agenda, the Resolutions Committee presented "Resolution on Libraries Supporting Caregiver Awareness, Community Dialogue, and Dignity in Aging." This resolution had been approved during the ALA Membership meeting the week before and now needed approval by Council. I voted yes. The motion carried, and this resolution was approved. The Policy Monitoring Committee then presented a series of three action items. If approved, these would codify in the ALA Policy Manual decisions made previously by ALA Council. I voted yes on each, and all three were approved.

The Committee on Organization (COO) then presented a series of five action items. The first motion was to set a three-year moratorium on establishing additional ALA-level Divisions, Roundtables, and Standing Committees. The context for this is to address ALA's current difficult financial situation and ensure that we aren't taking on new initiatives



that would require the outlay of additional staff time and financial resources. I voted yes, and the motion carried. A vote on COO's motions 2 – 5 was taken as a single block. COO's Motion 2 was to approve changes to the charge and composition of the Nominating Committee. These changes to Nominations are a consequence of the work of an ad-hoc committee that I had chaired last year, which recommended that the Nominations Committee be responsible for finding candidates for the Executive Board in addition to selecting candidates for Council and President. This allows for the consolidation of a lot of work. COO's Motions 3, 4, and 5 regarded changes to the charge and composition of the Information Technology Advisory Committee, Intellectual Freedom Committee, and Committee on Appointments. All of these changes help to reduce duplication and create efficiencies in ALA's operations. I voted yes, and the motions carried. The change to the Committee on Appointments will require a change in the bylaws, so it will go to ballot for vote by the full ALA membership in the winter/spring election. The last item of business at this meeting was the resolution to accept the Librarians' and Library Workers' Bill of Rights. I voted yes, and the motion carried.

The Council II meeting began with a report from the Committee on Legislation (COL). One area of great concern is a new effort by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to end the federal E-Rate program, which makes funds for high-speed broadband and Wi-Fi available to public libraries and schools nationwide. We are each strongly encouraged to contact our members of Congress to make sure that they are aware of how important this funding is for libraries and our communities. Find more information [here](#). COL then presented a Resolution on Library Infrastructure as Essential Economic and Civic Infrastructure. This helps to draw further attention to the recent study by the

U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) which found that many library facilities across the country are in poor condition and are in need of renovations and new HVAC systems. Find more information [here](#). I voted yes, and the motion carried.

The AI Working Group then presented its report and a motion to accept its Guidance on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Libraries. This is a very in-depth report that should be very helpful to many libraries across the country as they develop their own AI policies. Some councilors expressed concern that the report did not address copyright. Others expressed that, while the working group membership was large, it did not include a school library perspective. I voted yes, and the motion carried. The guidelines were approved. This report will now become the responsibility of the Information Technology Advisory Committee, which was charged with providing a report to Council at the next winter meeting addressing the concerns. Under new business, a Resolution on Library Card Access Policies as a Form of Social Equity was presented. I voted yes, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Council III started with a presentation of Memorial Resolutions honoring individuals who have passed and Tribute Resolutions recognizing outstanding work. I served as the mover of a memorial resolution for Diana Shonrock, another Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) Past President, who had passed away earlier this year. I also endorsed a few other memorial and tribute resolutions honoring individuals who had made great contributions to the library profession.

The ALA Treasurer presented his report, with an update on the goals set at the beginning of the year, and ALA's Structural Deficit Closure Plan, which aims to close the difference between expenses and revenues in five years. The Publishing Committee then presented its report and the ALA Monograph Ethics Guidelines. I voted yes, and the guidelines were approved unanimously. The International Relations Committee then presented its report and a tribute resolution honoring Michael Dowling, who recently retired from the ALA staff. I voted yes, and the resolution passed unanimously. Before the meeting closed, ALA Executive Director Dan Montgomery reported on the conference attendance. There were 14,800 total registrants with 2,567 being first-time attendees.

In addition to serving on Council, I also want to make you aware of my participation in some additional committees, since some of these are related to my role as your Maryland chapter councilor.

ALA 150: I've been serving on the programming subcommittee for ALA's 150th anniversary for a few years. Our efforts culminated with events at this conference in Chicago. We were responsible for tagging programs in the schedule that had some relationship to the 150th anniversary and organized our own panel discussion, "Leading ALA Into the

Next 150 Years."

ALA's Budget Analysis & Review Committee (BARC): Originally scheduled to be a three-year term, this has turned out to be only a one-year term. This change is a consequence of the merger of BARC and the Executive Board's Finance and Audit Committee to become a newly consolidated Finance Committee.

ALA's Committee on Legislation (COL): While my term on BARC is ending, I am now returning as a member of the Committee on Legislation (COL), which I previously chaired. COL is responsible for developing ALA's Legislative Agenda, which prioritizes the association's advocacy efforts annually.

ALA's Nominating Committee: We began our work a few months ago to recruit individuals to run for ALA Councilor-at-Large, ALA Executive Board, and ALA President. If you know someone who would be a good candidate for any of these elected positions, or think you'd be interested in running yourself, please take a moment to complete our committee's interest form [here](#). The official form will be posted by ALA later this summer. Or, let me know if you would like to talk about it, reach out via MLA Connect! ■



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Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library Launches Deaf Creator Collective

Tim Pratt, Maryland State Library Agency

The Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) and the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL) announce the launch of the Deaf Creator Collective, a first-of-its-kind statewide public catalog designed to amplify Deaf voices; strengthen authentic representation; and make it easier for organizations, educators, libraries, and communities to discover and collaborate with Deaf digital content creators and experts.

“Maryland continues to lead the way in ensuring our Deaf community has access to important cultural resources, programs, and information,” said Maryland State Librarian Morgan Lehr Miller. “The launch of this collective gives everyone a seat at the table and clears a path for communities to discover and collaborate with the many talented and knowledgeable Deaf content creators out there today.”

Deaf creators face unique systemic hurdles in the digital landscape. These creators often carry an additional burden of time and resources to produce accessible content, such as self-captioning and voiceover, to achieve the same visibility as their non-disabled peers. Researchers in 2025 referred to the added workload as “The Deaf Multimedia Authoring Tax.”

The Deaf Creator Collective directly addresses these barriers by providing a centralized, searchable catalog where libraries, organizations, and event planners can

connect directly with Deaf storytellers, educators, and artists.

The Collective serves as the centerpiece of the DCDL’s “Find Deaf Creators” campaign. Key features of the initiative include:

 The platform is free for both creators and organizations. The DCDL does not charge fees or take a percentage of bookings.

 Organizations can contact experts directly for programs, consultations, and creative collaborations.

 The DCDL is a State-funded resource established by the Maryland General Assembly, which allows the Collective to provide a stable, long-term platform for creator discovery.

Maryland public libraries are already utilizing the resource to diversify their programming. Recent collaborations include ASL Storytimes and cultural performances at Anne Arundel County Public Library and the Aspen Hill branch of Montgomery County Public Libraries.

The Maryland DCDL invites all Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, Hard of Hearing, late-deafened, and Children of Deaf Adults creators to join the Collective and encourages organizations to utilize the catalog for their upcoming programming and expert needs.

For more information, to browse the catalog, or to apply for the Collective, visit <https://www.marylanddcdl.org/deaf-content-creators>.

About the Maryland State Library Agency

The Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) is an independent agency providing strategic leadership and guidance to Maryland’s public libraries. MSLA promotes the planning and implementation of library programs, supports staff and career development through education and training, and facilitates resource sharing among libraries. MSLA oversees Maryland’s 24 public library

systems, the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library, the Governor’s Young Readers Program, the County Library Capital Grant Program, and the Library Associate Training Institute.

About the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library

The Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL) was established by the Maryland General Assembly to be the primary information center on Deaf resources for library customers and staff in the state. Managed by the Maryland State Library Agency, the DCDL provides equitable access to Deaf cultural information, digital collections, and community resources. ■

Black-Eyed Susan Tapestry 2026: The Fall Edition

Joe Farmaco, Montgomery County Public
Libraries, and Noel Knepper, Baltimore
County Public Library



Zoe Persico,
keynote speaker
and author of
*How to Train Your
Succulent*.

Love talking about books? Join us on Thursday, October 15, 2026 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for BEST 2026—The Fall Edition, a celebration of juvenile fiction for upper elementary and middle school grades. Learn about the Black-Eyed Susan Award and participate, via Zoom, in a half day of small-group discussions of some of the 2026-2027 juvenile fiction nominees. Zoe Persico, author of *How to Talk to Your Succulent*, will be our keynote speaker.

The registration deadline for this program is October 1, 2026. Please register on mdlib.org.

Please read all the titles for each group.

Group 1: Grades 3-5

Anta, Julio, and Mendez, Gabi (illus.):

Speak Up, Santiago!

Everett, Tiffany:

Diary of a Nature Nerd

Hirsch, Andy:

Good Boy

Kahn, Ben, and Brooks, Georgeo (illus.):

Mr. Muffins: Defender of the Stars

Mandanna, Sangu, and Ballesteros, Pablo (illus.):

Juniper Nettle and the Seven Schools of Magic

Group 2: Grades 6-8

Algarmi, Wahab:

Almost Sunset

Gros, Kathleen:

Carousel Summer

Mitchell, Dora M.:

The Puzzling Fate of Millicent Graves

Persico, Zoe:

How to Talk to Your Succulent

Wolf, Allan, and Pimienta, Jose (illus.):

*The Vanishing of Lake Peigneur: A Graphic Novel
Based on a True Story*

This program has been approved for 8.5 contact hours of continuing education for attendees. Group discussion leaders will receive 12 contact hours. All group discussion leaders must first register and pay as participants.

If you would like to be a group discussion leader, or if you have any questions, please contact Joe Farmaco (joseph.farmaco@montgomerycountymd.gov) or Noel Knepper (nknepper@bcpl.net).





John Shields holding up a copy of his 2004 book, *Coastal Cooking with John Shields*.

The William G. Wilson Author Award 2026 Winner: John Shields

Lisa Kenyon, Enoch Pratt Free Library

John Shields (c1769–1809) was a private in the Lewis and Clark Expedition, a gunsmith, blacksmith, hunter, and scout.

Oops, my mistake. That is the wrong John Shields, but it does highlight one of the difficulties faced by the award committee this year—the depth and breadth of the “adult nonfiction” genre (the other is the sheer number of pages we read). Even though we focused our gaze on Maryland and her authors, the extensive range of subjects makes adult nonfiction a challenging genre to evaluate.

How to judge Sheri Booker’s *Nine Years Under: Coming of Age in an Inner City Funeral Home* with Josh Pons’ *Merryland: Two Years in the Life of a Thoroughbred Training Farm*, and Margaret Tran’s *The Actions: 7 Steps to Powerful Change?* Maryland authors of adult nonfiction explore history, racism, sexism, redlining, mourning, medical malfeasance, and even embarrassing stories of family eccentrics and the joys of fly fishing.

Our winner this year, however, writes books that are a bit more palatable (sorry, John), and appropriate to our setting today. Baltimore native, and culinary guide, Chef John Shields is often referred to as the Culinary Ambassador of the Chesapeake Bay. Devoting his life and career to celebrating and protecting the Chesapeake, Shields promotes healthy, local, and bay-friendly food that brings us to a “common table.” Combining regional traditions with an understanding of food economies in a celebration of local seafood, agriculture, recreation, culture and cuisine, Shields shows the

interconnectedness of all aspects of the Chesapeake region.

Shield’s nonprofit organization, Our Common Table, supports initiatives and partnerships to engage communities with the bounty of the Chesapeake Bay. In partnership with Harford County Public Library, Our Common Table presents “Chesapeake Farm and Bay to Table,” a free, streamed cooking show focusing on local food artisans, farmers, and local businesses. Offering recipes from Baltimore Peach Cake and St. Mary’s Country stuffed ham, to Rockfish Tacos and Maryland Oyster Pudding, to Kraut-fest and Galumkis, the program is a feast for the eyes as well as the stomach.

The 2026 MD Author committee proudly presents a blend of cooking, philosophy, and education, Chef John Shields. You can follow John and learn more about his projects at <https://www.johnshields.com>. ■

Member News

Danielle Voelker, MLA Office

Catherine (Cathy) E. Hollerbach Named PGC-MLS Library Director

Congratulations to Cathy on her appointment as Library Director of Prince George's County Memorial Library System! With nearly 40 years in Maryland library leadership, Hollerbach has expanded early literacy through the "1000 Books Before Kindergarten" program and established the state's first Book Sanctuary—a career marked by lasting impact on library communities statewide.



Upcoming Retirements

Andrea Berstler

After eight years as Executive Director of Carroll County Public Library and 27 years in the field, Andrea will retire January 16, 2027, leaving behind a top-ranked system with the state's highest per capita circulation rate and the award-winning Exploration Commons makerspace.



Charles M. "Skip" Auld

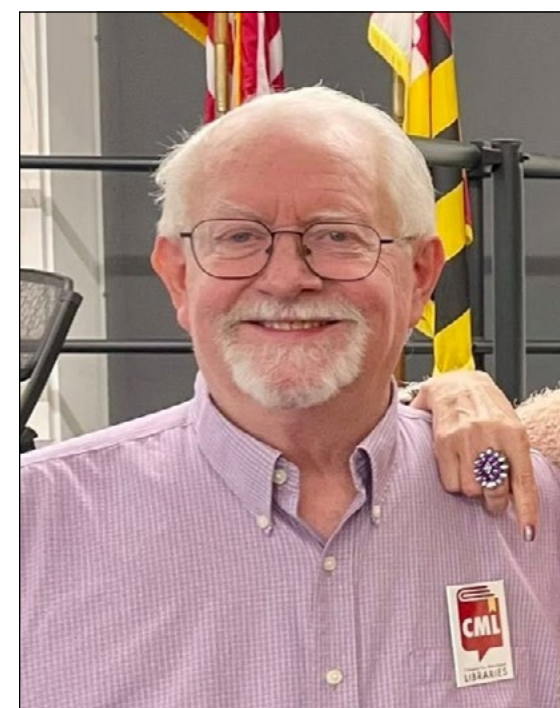
Skip will retire as CEO of Anne Arundel County Public Library on February 1, 2027, capping a five-decade career and 17 years leading AACPL. His tenure brought new facilities, including the Michael E. Busch Annapolis Library and Discoveries: The Library at Annapolis Mall, plus a deepened commitment to equity and inclusion.



Jim DeArmey

Jim will retire as Executive Director of Citizens for Maryland Libraries, after leading the organization since June 2022. He plans to stay on through the onboarding of his successor before stepping away. A prominent Maryland library advocate, DeArmey rallied parents, library workers, and communities to defend collections from censorship and protect local library funding and staff.

Thank you to Andrea, Skip, and Jim for the decades of care, advocacy, and leadership you've poured into Maryland's libraries. Your impact will be felt for years to come, and MLA and *the Crab* wish you all the best in this next chapter. ■



A Farewell from Danielle Voelker

By the time this reaches you, my last day with the Maryland Library Association will already be behind me. I wanted to leave you all with a proper goodbye and a note of gratitude.

It's been a privilege to work alongside so many dedicated library workers and advocates across the state. Together, we pulled off the best library conference in the country (in my humble opinion), stood with legislators to share the impact libraries have on our communities, expanded our reach to new members and supporters, and sorted out more than a few database quirks along the way. All of it in service to you — our members, who are the engine behind everything MLA does. Supporting this work has been an honor I'm incredibly proud of.

What I'll miss most, though, are the connections I've made with all of you. Talking about our favorite books before we got to work (or even better, as part of the work). Swapping stories as we untangled lanyards. Getting roped into Pub Quiz and confidently writing down all the wrong answers. I have never met a community more welcoming, or more generous with what they know and what they care about.

My deepest thanks to everyone who so generously welcomed me into this community—Joshua Stone, the MLA executive board, and every member who made this experience so meaningful. You're doing important work, and I'll be cheering you on from the sidelines as a lifelong library advocate.

For my next chapter, I've joined Outward Bound USA as their national marketing director. Outward Bound runs a network of regional schools that use wilderness expeditions and other experiential learning programs to help young people build confidence, resilience, and leadership skills. It's a great blend of my love for lifelong learning

and the outdoors. I'll be staying right here in Maryland, and I'm already thinking about how to build partnerships with local libraries.

If you'd like to stay in touch, I'd welcome it! You can reach me at Danielle.L.Voelker@gmail.com.

Thank you all for the work you do every day on behalf of libraries and your communities. I'm so grateful to have been part of it.

Until we meet again...



Welcoming Jenn Norris to MLA

Joshua Stone, Maryland Library Association

Please join me in welcoming MLA's new Member Engagement Specialist, Jenn Norris! Prior to joining us at MLA, Jenn served as a substitute librarian with Calvert Library. Jenn has also served as a training coordinator for a local college and has also been a swim coach and helped form a local swimming school! However, it was her time with Calvert Library that really inspired her to pursue a career in the library field, so good job, Calvert!

Besides her love for libraries and swimming, Jenn is a big dog person and has an adorable pup named Hanna. A fun fact I learned about Jenn is that she is learning Slovene! So, if we have any Slovene speakers out there, I'm sure Jenn would love to hear from you.

I'm thrilled to welcome Jenn to the team and can't wait for you all to work with her and show her exactly why Maryland is Library Heaven!! Welcome to the Maryland Library Association, Jenn!



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OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026

Mike Kiel, Robert L. Bogomolny Library, The University of Baltimore
Photographs courtesy of Audrey Dingler, Melissa Lauber, Amy Miller Meyers,
and Allison Wood.

THE 2026 MLA/DLA CONFERENCE was back in Cambridge, Maryland this year, and we had lots of stories to tell each other about what happens on and outside of our shelves! We had a record-breaking number of sessions proposed and so we were able to include a wider variety of topics than ever, with more sessions focused on academic librarians and special libraries.

Conference mainstays like Book Buzz and legislative updates were side by side with exploration of new topics like the impact of artificial intelligence on our communities and food festivals. We heard from ALA Leaders and legendary chef John Shields during our keynotes, and when the day was done, relaxed with karaoke and pub quiz or took in a new ghost tour!

We'll be back in Cambridge again from May 5-7, 2027, so look out for more in *the Crab* as our conference planning kicks off for another spectacular year. ■

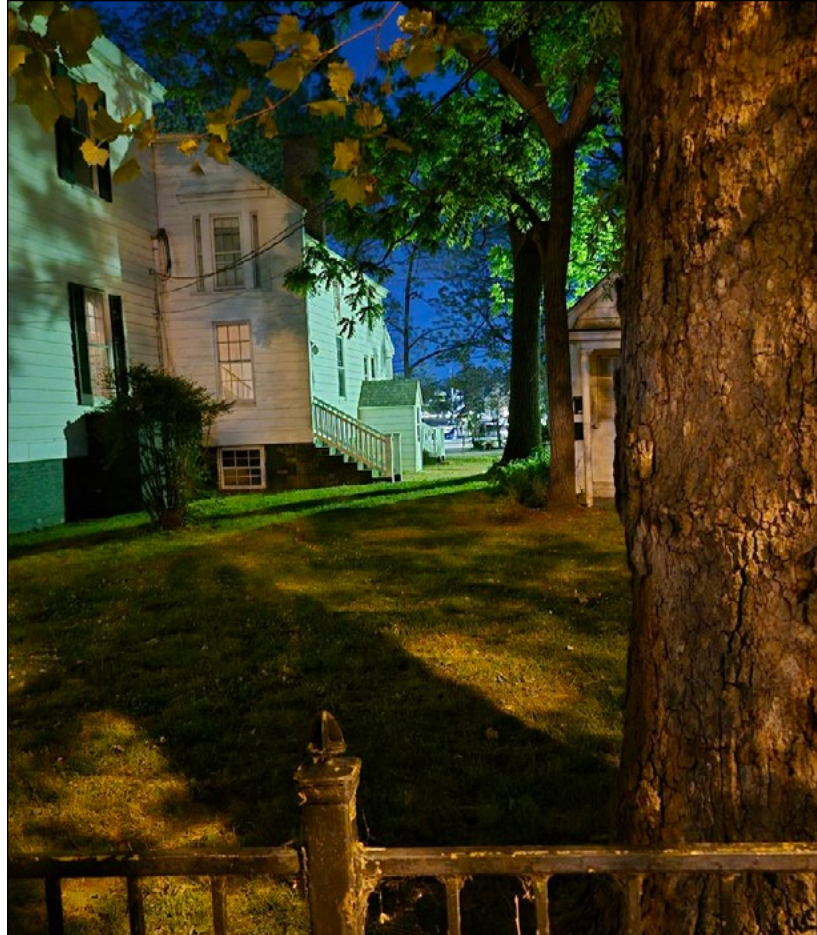










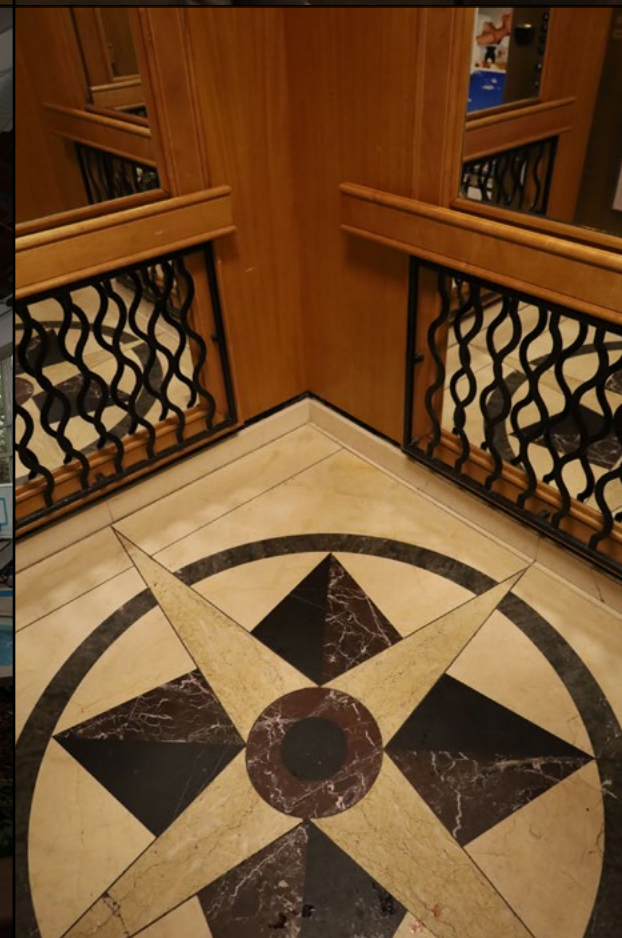










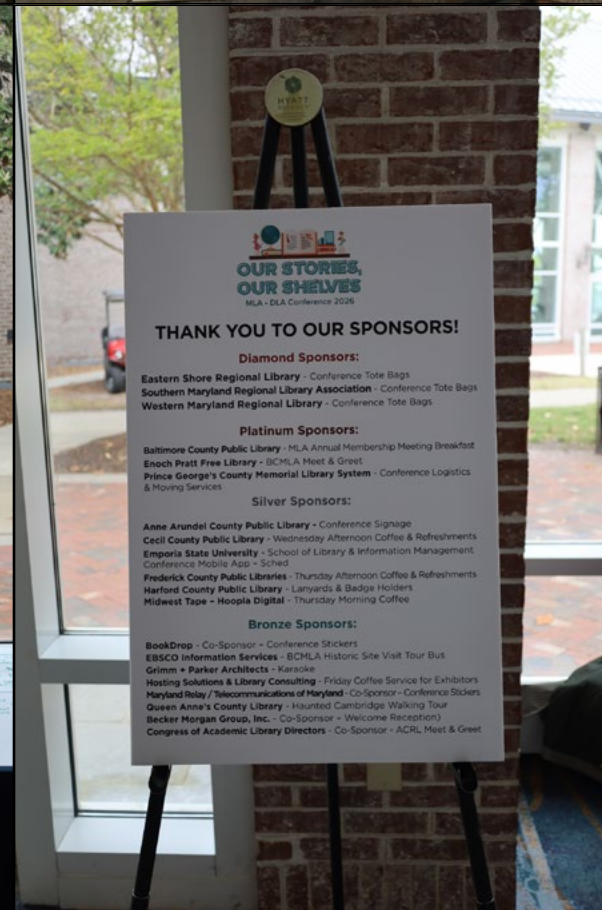


























See you next year!

Maryland Public Libraries Celebrate the Spring 2026 LATI Cohort of Graduates

Photographs courtesy of Doug Kapustin, Howard County Public Library

MARYLAND PUBLIC LIBRARIES CELEBRATED on Wednesday, June 3, 2026, when the most recent LATI cohort graduated. Thirty-two library associates from thirteen different Maryland counties presented their capstone projects and earned their graduation certificates at the Miller Branch of Howard County Library System. Graduates were congratulated by Maryland State Librarian

Morgan Lehr Miller, who awarded each cohort member their certificate. Rachel Wright, Executive Director of the Cecil County Public Library, delivered the excellent keynote address, telling graduates, “Each of you has a unique library journey story to tell; It is your origin story—no two of us have taken the same path and that diversity plays a critical role in how libraries evolve and continue to remain relevant.”

Rachel went on to impart her five major thoughts for graduates:

- 📖 Be curious and immerse yourself in the world of libraries.
- 📖 Center your thinking and your work on the communities you serve.
- 📖 Find your joy—name it and hold on to it.
- 📖 Know your impact—you are your library’s greatest resource.
- 📖 You are a leader already—it is never too early or too soon to practice leadership.

What is LATI?

LATI is short for the Library Associate Training Institute and serves Maryland public libraries through LSTA grant funds awarded by the Maryland State Library Agency. There has been a history of cooperative training for library associates in Maryland since the 1960s. In 1980, The Division of Library Development and Services (now known as the Maryland State Library Agency) began to offer an approved, statewide program to ensure consistent, quality customer service for all 24 public and three regional library systems. LATI’s vision is that Maryland customers receive exceptional service, and its mission is to provide tools, techniques, information, ideas, and practical opportunities for LAs to enhance and develop their professional competencies.

Spring 2026 LATI

The cohort of LAs spent the spring engaged in instruction from expert trainers across all Maryland public libraries. One highlight included visiting the newly renovated Catonsville Branch of Baltimore County Public Library as well as a stop at the Exploration Commons

at Carroll County Public Library, participating in hands-on activities in the makerspace and teaching kitchen there. The cohort, for the first time during the same day, visited the Enoch Pratt Free Central Library/Maryland State Library Resource Center and the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, learning about statewide services in downtown Baltimore. It was a whirlwind day!

Support for LATI

Thanks go to the Maryland State Library Agency for their support of LATI through LSTA grant funds. State Librarian Morgan Lehr Miller proudly supports each LATI graduate. Sheila McDuff, LOC Chair and Associate Director at Frederick County Public Libraries, gave the introductory remarks, and Rachel Wright, Executive Director of the Cecil County Public Library, shared in closing, “While libraries in the 21st century may look a little different than those of the past, our purpose remains: to connect and serve the community and to be the place for our community to be connected and to connect with one another.”

LATI Oversight Committee (LOC)

LATI is further supported by the LOC, comprised of Sheila McDuff, LOC Chair, Frederick County Public Libraries; Tamar Sarnoff, Maryland State Library Agency; Paul Chasen, Enoch Pratt Free Library/Maryland State Library Resource Center; Jennifer Keysor, Washington County Free Library; Cheryl Nardiello, Wicomico Public Library; Jaleen Walker, Prince George’s County Memorial Library System; Vivian Fisher, Enoch Pratt Free Library/Maryland State Library Resource Center; Sara Stephenson, St. Mary’s County Library; Karen Earp, Wicomico Public Library; and Katie George, Howard County Library System.

Thanks go out especially to all the trainers and supervisors across the state of Maryland who help LATI run so smoothly.



Anne Arundel County Public Library cohort. Erin Hanratty, Arpa Hartoni (LA), Gabi Norton, Alexis Powell (LA), Liz Bauckman (LA), Samantha Kostkowski (LA), Darnice Jasper, Morgan Lehr Miller, Caroline Harper (LA), Marc Beard, Kate Boeree-Kline, Skip Auld.



Baltimore County Public Library cohort. Erin Baker, Jaclyn DeForge (LA), Elizabeth Storms, Cindy Swanson-Farmaco, Zeke White, Morgan Lehr Miller, Tyler Wolfe, Lucia Golovina (LA), Angela Seebold (LA).



Calvert Library cohort. Melissa Gray, Gisele Mitima (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Carrie Willson, Becky Murphy (LA).



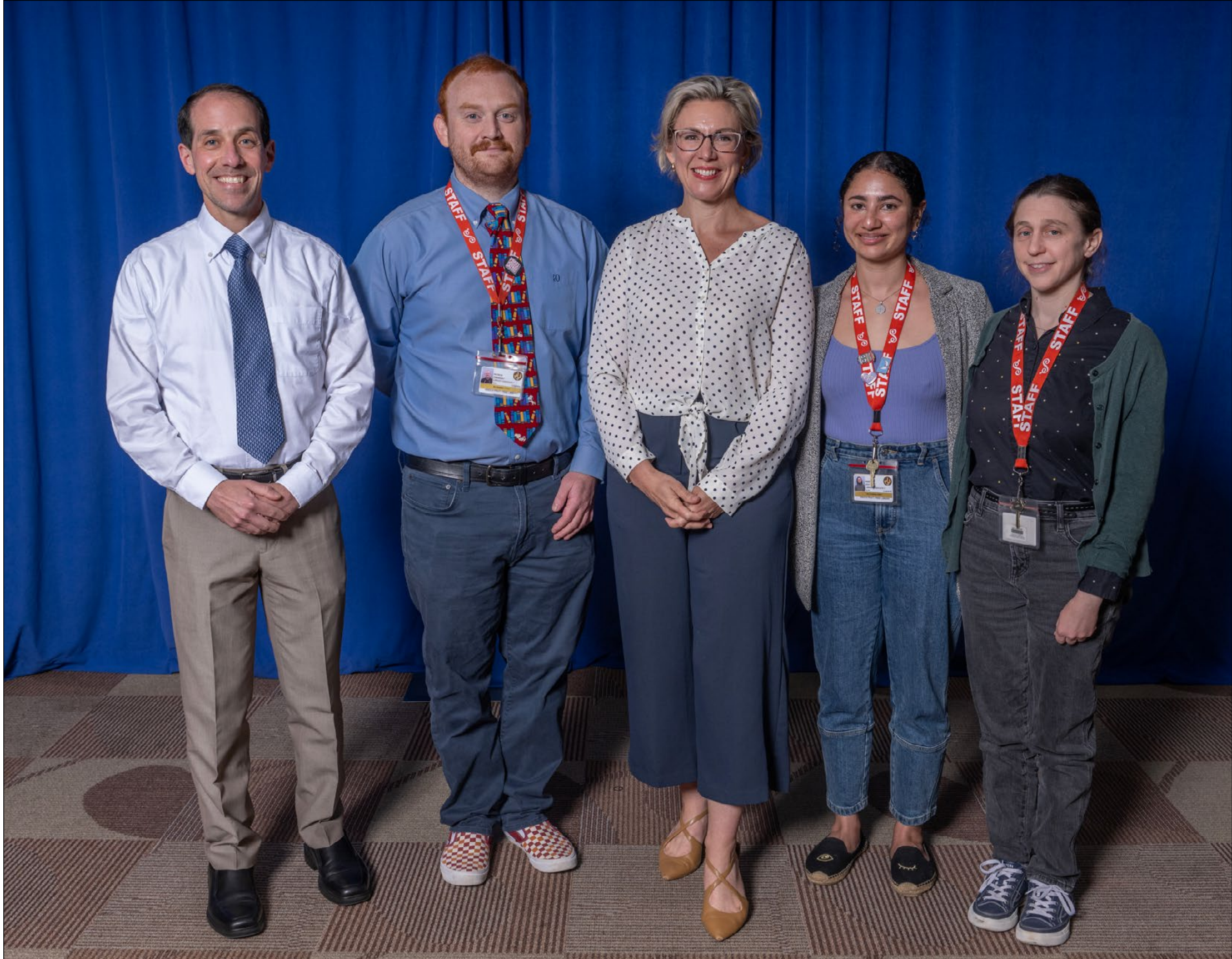
Carroll County Public Library cohort. Darrell Robertson, Sara Arnold, Amy Button (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Emily Kunkle (LA), Joseph Thompson.



Cecil County Public Library cohort. Rachel Wright, Darla Carter (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Alyssa Gorton (LA), Naomi Copenhaver.



Charles County Public Library cohort. Matthew Swann (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Julianna Hieb.



Enoch Pratt Free Library cohort. Paul Chasen, Patrick Ormsby (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Kiara Oyola (LA), Leah Caplan (LA).



Frederick County Public Libraries cohort. Amanda Berry, Jennifer James (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Lauren Bicknell (LA), Stephanie Yates.



Harford County Public Library cohort. Sarah Prindiville (LA), Sheila George (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Maurice Coleman (LA), Sydney Buffington.



Howard County Library System cohort. Penelope Stockton, Stevia Morales, Angela Best, Amadea Oberg (LA), Kyle Brown (LA), Tonya Aikens, Morgan Lehr Miller, Katie George, Marcy Leonard.



Montgomery County Public Libraries cohort. Risa Pomerselig (LA), Rosa Hsiung (LA), Wajeeha Ahmad (LA), Tina Deifallah, Morgan Lehr Miller, Claire Rossin, Shelley Nituama, Liz Bowen, Melissa Hurley.



Prince George's County Memorial Library System cohort. Brandon Adams (LA), Louis Bondoc (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Ke'Yona Turpin-McCurtis, Tamika Sanders.



St. Mary's County Library cohort. Stevie Sanchez (LA), Sara Stephenson, Tess Goldwasser, Morgan Lehr Miller, Hannah Bear (LA), Emma Rawlinson.

AI Is an Intellectual Freedom Issue

What Maryland Libraries Can Do Now

Witt Salley, Montgomery County Public Libraries

At THE MLA/DLA 2026 PRECONFERENCE, Tess Wilson, Membership and Outreach Director for Library Freedom Project, led “Using Stories from the Library Community to Build AI Policy.” I left the workshop thinking less about artificial intelligence (AI) as a new tool and more about AI as a pressure point on long-standing library values: privacy, access, intellectual freedom, labor, equity, and public trust.

These values already guide our work. The pressure to adopt AI tests whether libraries can still defend these values when technology feels complicated, vendors sound confident, and institutions feel pressure to move quickly. My central takeaway is simple: AI is an intellectual freedom issue because AI systems can shape what people find, what they trust, what they reveal, and what they feel safe asking.

Maryland Is Already in This Conversation

Maryland libraries are not entering this conversation from the outside. Maryland’s Artificial Intelligence Governance Act of 2024 requires state units to inventory certain systems that use high-risk AI; directs the Maryland Department of Information Technology to adopt AI policies; establishes the Governor’s AI Subcabinet; and sets limits on certain AI deployments.

Maryland’s K-12 education context is moving in the same direction. The Maryland State Department of Education’s 2026 AI guidance centers human judgment, equity, privacy, student wellbeing, data security, academic integrity, and vendor governance. Maryland has also moved on online privacy through the Maryland Online Data Privacy Act of 2024 and the Maryland Kids Code, which together show how data collection, opt-out rights, children’s privacy, and online access have become active state policy concerns.

Library workers do not need to become privacy lawyers to care about these developments. We do need to recognize that Maryland’s public conversation is moving toward the same questions library workers face at the desk, in the classroom, in procurement, and

in programming: What data gets collected? Who controls the system? Who can opt out? Who benefits? Who is harmed? Who gets watched?

Privacy Is Not a Side Issue

Privacy is not separate from intellectual freedom. Privacy makes intellectual freedom possible. Patrons cannot read freely, search freely, or ask freely when they fear tracking, profiling, monitoring, or disclosure. Students, job seekers, caregivers, older adults, and teens may all avoid questions that feel visible, searchable, or recorded.

AI-enabled systems can increase the risk of chilled inquiry. Through AI tools and vendor platforms, institutions may capture prompts, queries, identifiers, chat transcripts, usage patterns, timestamps, and behavioral signals. Even when a tool appears helpful, library workers still need to ask who controls the data, how long the data remains stored, whether the data trains a vendor model, and whether staff, patrons, or students can meaningfully opt out. These questions belong at the center of how libraries protect privacy, access, and intellectual freedom.

What I See at the Public Library

In public library work, AI is not abstract. Patrons encounter AI at the point of need: search summaries, homework tools, job applications, resume help, health information, social media, creative projects, and highly personal questions.

The strongest conversations rarely begin with “Should AI be allowed?” They begin with practical uncertainty: Can I trust an AI summary? What personal information should I avoid sharing? Why does the tool sound so confident when the answer is wrong? What happens when a person needs help but does not want to be watched?

These questions are information-literacy, privacy, and intellectual-freedom questions. The same privacy principle connects book challenges and AI-mediated searches: people cannot read freely when they cannot search freely. ►

From Hype to Library Judgment

Libraries hear familiar claims about AI: the tools will save time, everyone is using them, adoption is unavoidable, and skepticism means falling behind. Library workers should not answer hype with panic. We should answer hype with judgment.

A productivity claim is not enough. Libraries need evidence, review, and a values-based reason for adoption: What problem does the tool solve? What new problems does it create? What data does it collect? Who verifies the output? What staff labor moves from visible work to invisible cleanup? What happens when a patron, student, or worker refuses the tool?

A Scenario for the Next Staff Meeting

A database or discovery-layer vendor adds an AI-generated answer panel above search results. The feature is enabled by default and described as a time-saver. Staff did not request the feature and learned about it only after patrons began asking whether the panel is part of the library's own guidance.

Ask staff to discuss:

-  What problem does the feature solve, and who defined that problem?
-  Can staff and users turn it off?
-  What data does the feature collect, retain, or share?
-  Does the vendor use searches, prompts, clicks, account identifiers, or interactions to train models?
-  How does the feature show sources, uncertainty, or missing context?
-  Who verifies the output, and what authority do they have to reject it?
-  What staff labor will the feature create, hide, or shift?
-  What will we tell a patron, student, caregiver, or board member who asks how the feature works?

This discussion moves AI out of the realm of novelty and into the realm of governance.

Policy, Teaching, Harm Reduction, and Refusal

A strong AI policy should name both the guideline and the reason behind the guideline. A policy that requires human review does not say enough unless staff know who reviews the output, what evidence must be checked, and whether the reviewer has authority to reject the output. A policy that promises privacy does not say enough unless the library defines data minimization, retention limits, opt-out expectations, and vendor accountability.

A harm-reduction approach fits this moment. Many patrons, students, and staff already use AI tools. Library instruction should not begin with shame, panic, or prohibition. It

should begin with practical support: verify claims at the source, avoid entering identifying information, ask what data a tool may collect, disclose AI assistance when required, and move sensitive questions to trusted human support.

In small, practical ways, library workers can help patrons evaluate AI summaries, protect sensitive information, recognize manipulation, and slow down before accepting confident output as reliable evidence. A teen using AI for school, an adult using it for a resume, a caregiver using it to understand benefits, or an older adult using it to evaluate health information all need the same basic support: look at the source, check the claim, remove identifying details, consider what the tool may capture, and decide whether the tool serves the purpose.

Libraries do not need to adopt every tool that arrives with an AI label. Refusal, delay, limitation, and opt-out can all be responsible choices. Refusal does not mean rejecting technology. Refusal means protecting values.

What Maryland Library Workers Can Do Now

Start small and concrete. Choose one AI-enabled tool already present in your library environment. Identify the vendor, the data collected, the opt-out options, the accessibility status, and the staff workflow affected. Bring one real scenario to a staff meeting. Add one AI question to vendor conversations: Can patron, student, or staff data be used to train models? Can AI features be turned off?

Create one public-facing learning moment, such as a bookmark, teen program, staff script, classroom mini-lesson, or display card that teaches a simple habit: open the source, verify the claim, protect personal information, and know when to ask a human.

The future of AI in libraries remains unsettled. Maryland library workers still have choices. We can ask better questions, write stronger policies, teach with care, and refuse tools that violate our values. AI policy, privacy education, vendor accountability, and the right to refuse harmful tools are not separate from intellectual freedom. They are how libraries protect intellectual freedom now.

Source note: This reflection draws on Tess Wilson's MLA/DLA 2026 preconference workshop, "Using Stories from the Library Community to Build AI Policy"; preliminary Library Freedom Project AI in Libraries survey findings shared during the session; Library Freedom Project critical AI resources; and public Maryland materials on AI governance, K-12 AI guidance, online privacy, and the Maryland Kids Code. ■

20 Years of Reading Together Celebrating the La Plata Book Discussion

Ashley Littleton, Charles County Public Library

Photographs courtesy of Charles County Public Library staff.

FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS, readers have gathered at the La Plata Branch of the Charles County Public Library to share stories, perspectives, and meaningful conversations through the La Plata Book Discussion.

Since its first meeting in May 2006, the group has explored hundreds of titles across various genres, generations, cultures, and viewpoints. From beloved classics like *Pride and Prejudice* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* to contemporary favorites such as *The Women*, *Lessons in Chemistry*, and *The Covenant of Water*, members have spent two decades discovering books that challenge, inspire, and connect them.

While the books draw people into the room, the discussions and relationships keep members returning month after month. Participants often describe the experience as an opportunity to hear new perspectives and engage more deeply with their reading. One member reflected that hearing everyone's different interpretations is what makes the group so meaningful, while another noted that discussions often introduce them to books they might not have chosen on their own.

For many members, the conversations extend the life of a story long after they've turned the final page.

"When I finish a book alone, the experience ends," one participant shared in an anniversary survey. "With book club, it continues."

Others view the group as a source of friendship and community over the years. One longtime participant mentioned making several close friends through the group, while another called the discussions "a great community-builder."

The group's lasting impact is perhaps best reflected in the members who continue to return year after year. Several members have attended the La Plata Book Discussion since it began in 2006, remaining part of the group throughout most of its 20-year history. This

longevity reflects not only a love for reading but also the sense of connection and belonging the group has fostered over time.

The welcoming atmosphere and longevity of the La Plata Book Discussion have been shaped by the dedication of staff members who have facilitated the program over the years, including Jessie Austin, Phyllis Frere, Shannon Bland, Christine England, and the current facilitator, Nancy Marquardt. Their leadership has created a space where readers feel comfortable sharing perspectives, asking questions, and connecting through stories.

The strength of the discussion and the chance to hear others' perspectives keeps the experience fresh and engaging year after year. Nancy Marquardt added, "It's a privilege to be a part of the La Plata Book Discussion. I always hear something in the discussion that I hadn't considered while reading, and I love to see the way readers connect with each other over shared books."

Over the years, the group has evolved alongside its members and community, even continuing virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout every season, the La Plata Book Discussion has remained a consistent space for curiosity, connection, and lifelong learning.

As libraries continue to serve as vital gathering spaces, programs like the La Plata Book Discussion highlight the lasting impact of shared stories and experiences.

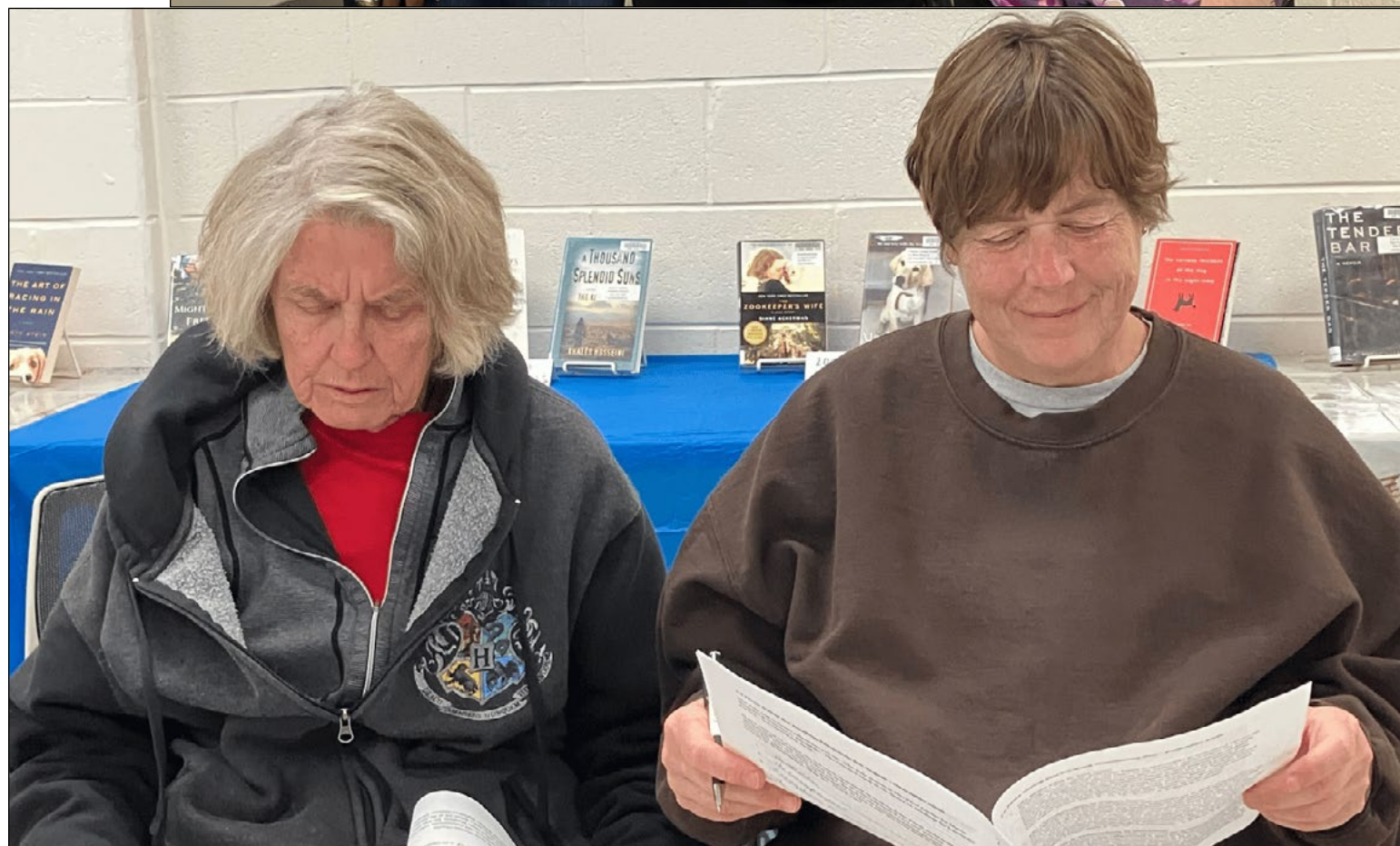
The group's complete 20-year reading list, featuring hundreds of titles discussed since 2006, is available [here](#) for those interested in exploring the books that helped shape the group's shared history.

Twenty years later, the conversation continues.

[Continue to the photo gallery ►](#)



Former and current facilitators of the La Plata Book Discussion, including Shannon Bland, Nancy Marquardt, and Christine England, helped guide the program throughout its 20-year history.



Members of the La Plata Book Discussion review notes and prepare for conversation during the group's 20th anniversary celebration.



Longtime members of the La Plata Book Discussion gather during the group's 20th anniversary celebration at the La Plata Branch.



Members of the La Plata Book Discussion sit near a display highlighting books read by the group throughout its 20-year history.



Members of the La Plata Book Discussion gather at the La Plata Branch of the Charles County Public Library during the group's 20th anniversary celebration. Since 2006, the discussion group has brought readers together through shared stories, conversation, and community.

Fat Library Workers Affinity Network: Why it Matters and Who Should Join

Katie Delezenski, Salisbury University Libraries

Fat library workers of Maryland, unite! You have nothing to lose!

Apologies to Judy Freespirit and Vivian Mayer of the Fat Underground for borrowing and slightly adjusting the final words of their 1973 “Fat Liberation Manifesto,” but what better words to announce the MLA’s first Fat Library Workers Affinity Network (FLWAN)?

This new Affinity Network is intended to give fat library workers a safe, non-judgmental, professional space to discuss issues unique to fat librarianship, provide all library workers with an opportunity to work together to dismantle internalized anti-fat bias, and use what we learn from one another to improve our libraries for other fat workers and patrons.

FLWAN will meet monthly with a prompt or reading preceding the meeting to help give an optional direction for the meeting.

Fat Language

Before we continue, let’s get the word fat out of the way, because I’m very aware that some reading this article may feel discomfort at the use of the word. Isn’t fat a pejorative? Doesn’t the word imbue judgement? Why does it cause this feeling of discomfort? Is Fat Library Workers really what this affinity group should be called?

And certainly, there are plenty of euphemisms that I could have used instead—plus-sized, big and tall, husky, curvy, chubby, heavysset, or simply overweight—but the truth is, no matter the word we use, no matter how one tries to soften their language, many of us who live daily in our larger bodies know that the word doesn’t matter. Whether referred to as fat or fluffy, my size still affects how I am viewed and treated within society.

Much work is currently being done to combat anti-fat bias, and as such, I knowingly chose to use fat as a neutral descriptor for this affinity group, but others may choose different language for equally valid and understandable reasons.

Fat at Work

There have been many studies that examine the stigma of being fat at work. For example, in a 2023 analysis of the obesity pay gap conducted by *The Economist*, it was found that “obese men with a bachelor’s degree earn 5% less than their thinner colleagues, while those with a graduate degree earn 14% less. Obese women, it is true, still have it worse:

for them, the equivalent figures are 12% and 19% respectively.” As a fat employee, and a woman with a graduate degree, those numbers are disheartening.

Beyond pay, workplaces are often not inherently a comfortable or safe environment for fat workers. It may be difficult to think of our own beloved libraries as a workplace that could ever possibly hold anti-fat biases towards its fat workers and patrons, but our love for our work does not give us leave from institutional self-examination.

It can be hard to identify the issues in our workplaces, as often the indignities of fat people go underreported due to the internalized stigma of fat bodies. Weight bias internalization is the self-devaluation of fat people based on the societal stigmatization of fatness. This internalization can lead to adverse mental and physical health, can lower an individual’s self-worth and, rather than share experiences that could help other fat bodies, fat people may feel they deserve discomfort because fatness is perceived as a choice made due to weakness of will (Durso & Latner, 2008).

We are not weak-willed. By joining FLWAN you will be encouraged to share how your, and own experiences also deserve respect in our professional spaces. We now have the opportunity for conversation and to look more critically at our workplaces as we strive together to combat our own internalized weight bias and be a voice for those who do not yet have the confidence to self-advocate.

Examples of Fat Bias Lurking in the Library

Still not sure how libraries can possibly support anti-fat bias? While well-intentioned, libraries may miss the mark in several ways when it comes to supporting their fat workers and patrons. Even if you feel comfortable at your library, I challenge you to ask yourself the following about your physical spaces, programming, and cataloging:

Physical spaces

-  Library seating may take weight into consideration for durability, but how comfortable is the seating for larger sizes?
-  During library programming that uses theatre-style seating arrangements, how much care is taken to ensure larger bodies in attendance aren’t squished?
-  A rolling kick stool may support up to 350 pounds, but how steady is a larger person teetering on one?

Programming

-  Individual librarians likely want to support their fat coworkers and patrons, but how many library workers have noticed programming, events, talks, and panels that idealize a slender body and promote weight loss?
-  How often do you encounter coded language meant to mask anti-fat sentiment ▶

such as “clean eating,” “portion control,” and “lifestyle changes” at work?

Cataloging

🦀 What does it say to fat workers and patrons when our university libraries use the Library of Congress classification for *The Fat Studies Reader* which places it at RA645.O23 F55 2009 (RA643-RA645 Disease (Communicable and noninfectious and public health) rather than in the HM1041 (Social perception. Social cognition including perception of the self and others, prejudices, stereotype)?

🦀 Or non-academic libraries, what do we tell our fat workers and patrons when Aubrey Gordon's *What We Don't Talk About When We Talk About Fat* is cataloged as 616 (600s Medicine, 16 Diseases) instead of 305 (300s Social Sciences, 05 Groups of People)?

🦀 What other books are people seeing when they are trying to find titles about fat studies, fat acceptance, and fighting anti-fat stereotypes?

I personally work in an academic library, and I recently checked out my library's copy of *The Fat Studies Reader*. Marilyn Wann (a well-credentialed fat activist) writes in the forward, on the very first written page, in the third paragraph, “If you believe that being fat is a disease and that fat people cannot possibly enjoy good health or long life, then you are not doing fat studies.” Immediately, the reader knows this is not a book about the “obesity epidemic”; it does not support or promote weight loss. No, in fact, *The Fat Studies Reader* is a tome of fat activism. It is empowering.

But what books did I find on the shelf next to *The Fat Studies Reader*? (Thank you for asking.) I found: *Smoking, Personality, and Stress: Psychosocial Factors in the Prevention of Cancer and Coronary Heart Disease*, and *Diabetes & Women's Health Across the Life Stages: A Public Health Perspective*. The shelf above was filled with books on HIV/AIDS and the shelf below, epidemics and pandemics. I'm still finding it hard to articulate exactly how I felt about that. How do you feel?

Who Should Join?

If you're not sure if you qualify to join this affinity network, don't fret. There is no weight limit and no judgment of your size when you join. If you think you belong here, you do!

Maybe you identify as fat but feel well-supported by your library and your coworkers. That's great! I'd still love if you joined. Maybe your library is the example others should aspire to. We'll want you to tell us more!

For the more anxious who do better with rules or framework to guide you, in *What We Don't Talk About When We Talk About Fat*, author Aubrey Gordon chooses these definitions



from “The Fat Lip” podcast— which explored the degrees of experience based upon a “fat person's proximity to thinness”— and these grades of fatness are based on U.S. women's clothing size.

🦀 Small fat: 1x—2x, sizes 18 and lower

🦀 Mid-fat: 2x—3x, sizes 20-24

🦀 Superfat: 4x—5x, sizes 26-32

🦀 Infinifat: 6x and higher, sizes 34 and higher (p. 9).

This system is imperfect. In addition to excluding people who only wear clothing based on men's sizes, or those not from the United States, it also ignores differences in height. At 5' 2", my own “small fat” self might be better classified as a “mid-fat.” Those caveats aside, hopefully it will give some insight into the spectrum of fat bodies. But again, I'm not hung up on the numbers, and I hope you— my fellow fat library workers reading this— will be vulnerable and brave and join the FLWAN. And also, because hey, we're all about libraries around here, I promise you there will be plenty of book discussions as well!

If you are interested in joining, please email FLWAN facilitator, Katie Delezenski at kadelezenski@salisbury.edu.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Durso, Laura E., & Latner, Janet D. (2008). *Understanding Self-directed Stigma: Development of the Weight Bias Internalization Scale*. *Obesity*, 16(S2), S80—S86.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/oby.2008.448>

Freespirit, Judy, & Mayer, Vivian. (1973). *Fat Liberation Manifesto*.

<https://fatlibarchive.org/fat-liberation-manifesto-1973/>

Gordon, Aubrey. (2020). *What We Don't Talk about When We Talk about Fat*. Beacon Press.

Wann, Marilyn. (2020). “Foreword: Fat Studies: An Invitation to Revolution” in Esther Rothblum & Sondra Solovay (Eds.), *The Fat Studies Reader* (p. ix-xxv). New York University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814777435.003.0003>

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

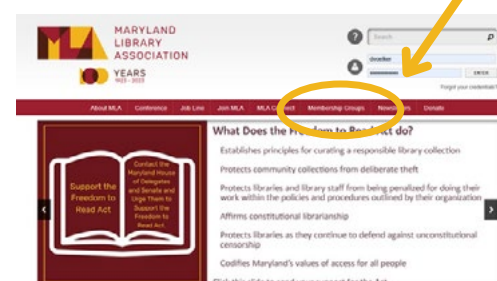
COMMITTEES & PANELS

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.



OutRAIGeous Reviews

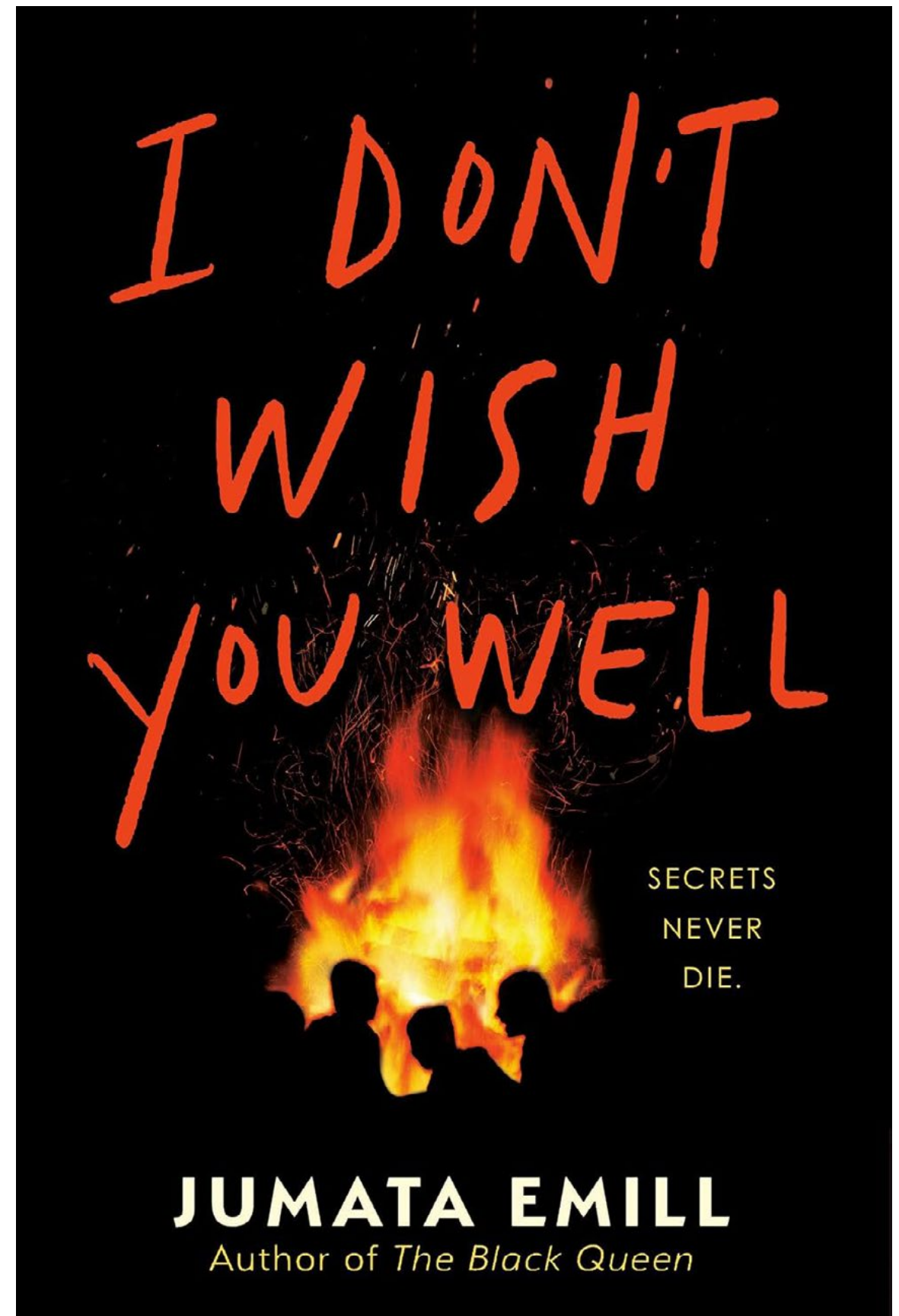
*Books recommended by members of
the Reader's Advisory Interest Group*

***I Don't Wish You Well* by Jumata Emill (Delacorte Press, 2026)**

Review by Theo Scully

As a non-athletic, Black, and gay new adult, Pryce is glad to be at college instead of his small Louisiana town, Moss Pointe, where four teens were murdered by a killer wearing a Trojan mask. However, the blaming of the infamous “Trojan murders” on another Black, gay teen named Deuce never sat well with Pryce, and he is determined to solve this case... and potentially get a podcast out of it. As Pryce interviews his fellow townsfolk, finds evidence and develops a friendship with Deuce’s ex, Izzy, he begins to wonder if this case is simply about the murders and Deuce’s resulting suicide or if Moss Pointe is hiding more under its provincial surface.

I Don't Wish You Well is full of twists and turns, and each layer that is peeled back will make any reader that much more hooked. From a story that already seems complicated by the presence of racism and homophobia in a small Southern town, Emill adds classism, sexual assault, drug use, abuse of power, and police corruption (believe it or not, the last two are separate). Pryce and Izzy’s investigation into Moss Pointe proves that no one in this town is innocent—from the booster club and high school football team to the local police and church leaders, there is potential for evil in anyone. I highly recommend this book for fans of *The Good Girl's Guide to Murder* by Holly Jackson, *One of Us Is Lying* by Karen McManus, and *Hollow Fires* by Samira Ahmed.

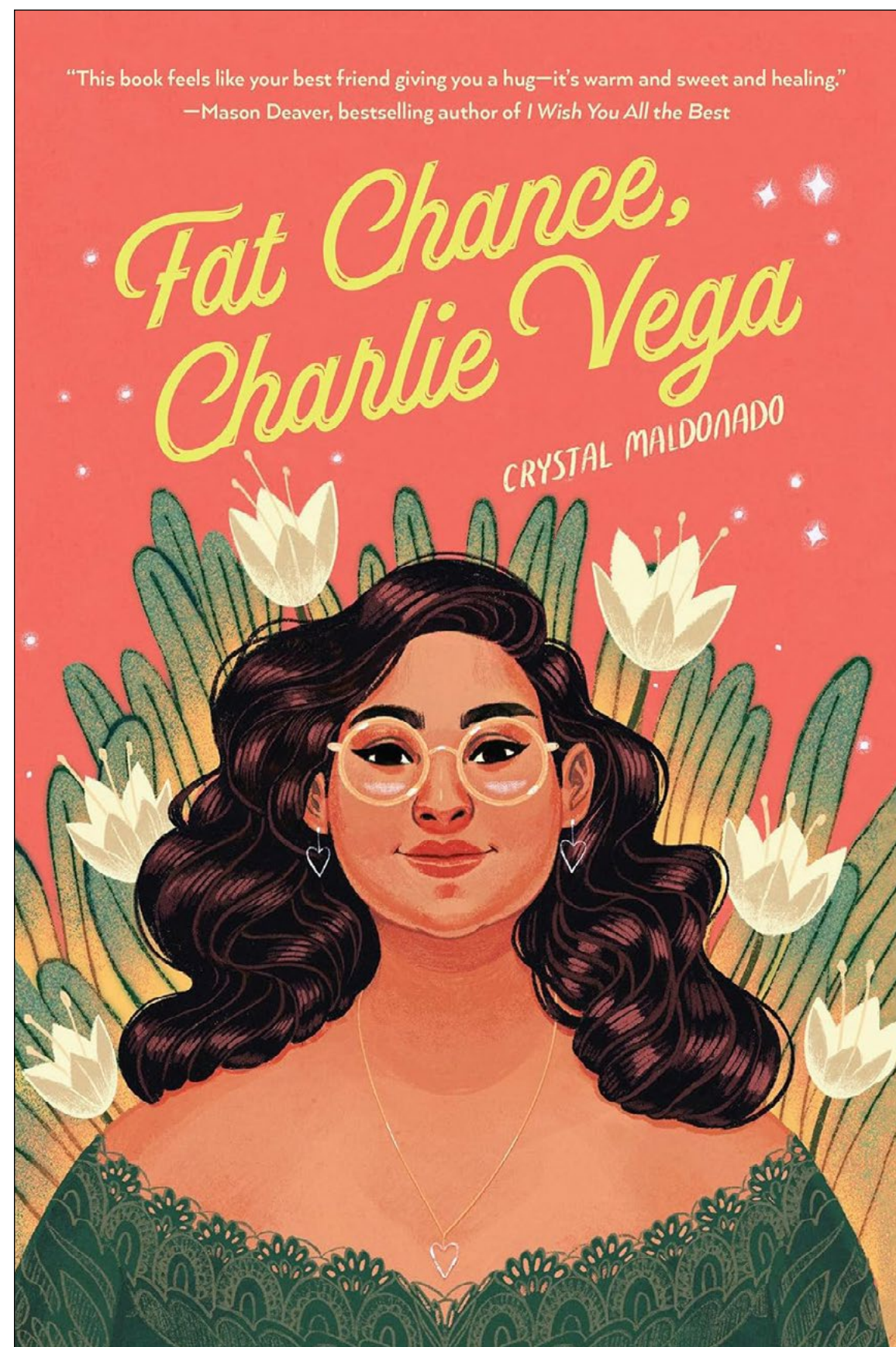


***Fat Chance, Charlie Vega* by Crystal Maldonado (Holiday House, 2021)**

Review by Teresa Miller

So far, Charlie Vega's high school experience has been defined by writing projects, a super best friend, an unrequited crush, and a strained relationship with her mother. And being fat. Unfortunately, those last two things are connected. Charlie and her mom used to bond over her father's cooking, but ever since his death and her mother's weight loss, food has become a loaded topic at home. Meanwhile, a cute boy seems to be returning Charlie's interest for the first time, unexpectedly changing the dynamic between her and her best friend. As Charlie navigates these shifting relationships, she learns to stand up for herself, accept the love around her, and enjoy her life just as she is.

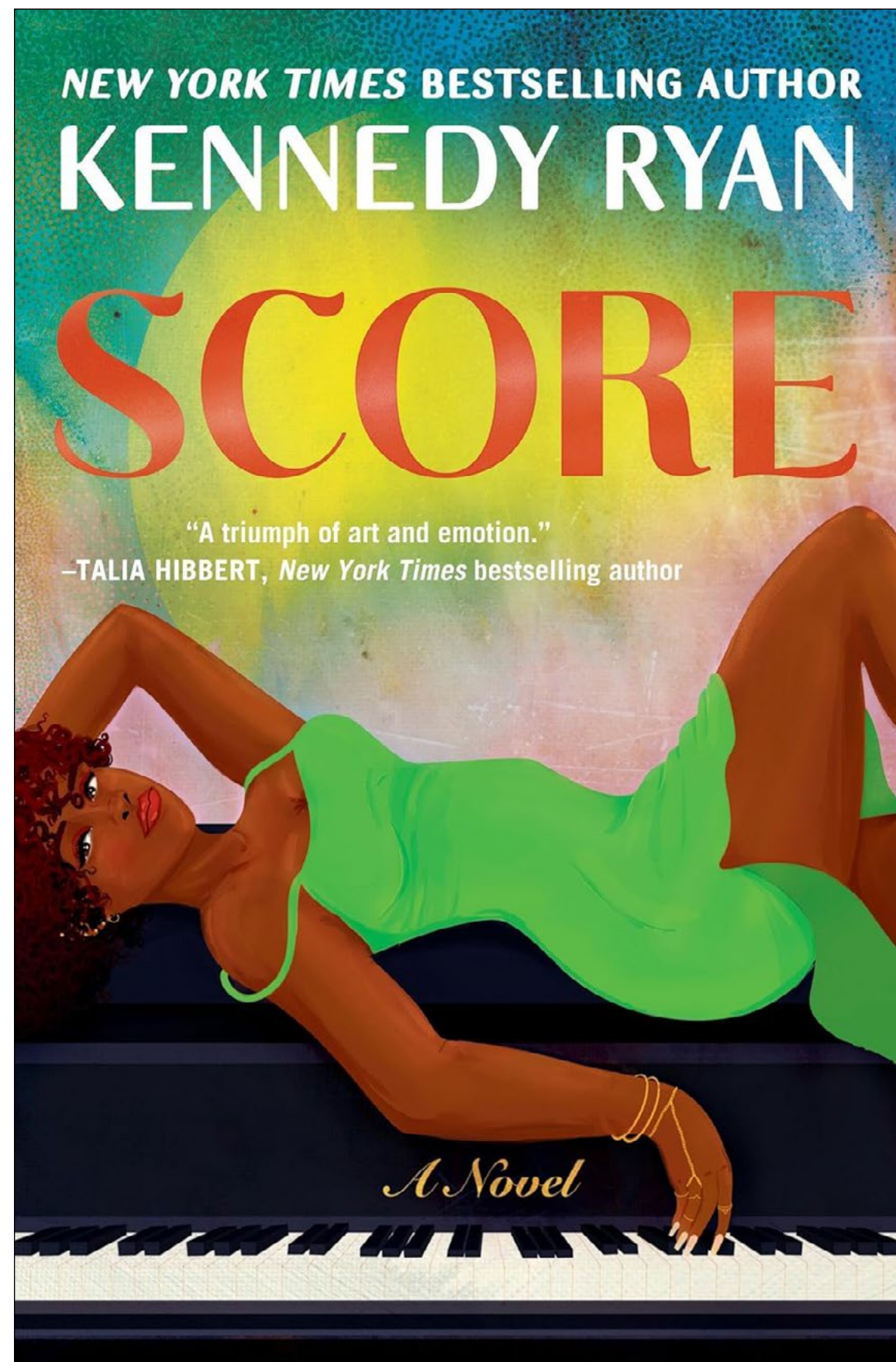
Charlie and her friends touched my heart so deeply. Charlie is a wonderful character to follow, with so much going for her but many internal and external challenges to work through. I was so proud to see her grow into herself and her worth, stand up for herself, and find her joy. This will be a comforting read for anyone who has struggled to believe in their own value and wants to cheer for a girl on that journey.



Score by Kennedy Ryan (Forever, 2026)

Review by Brittany Cornish

Score tells the story of Verity and Monk, and what happens when you get a second chance at love. Our characters are dealing with the past while trying to work together on a film honoring the life of Dessi Blue, a jazz singer who Kennedy describes as “a fictional composite of Billie Holiday and Ma Rainey.” Verity has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and readers will go on a journey with Verity as she navigates her diagnoses, all while being a screenwriter on the film. Kennedy Ryan’s care and research about mental health and the effects it can have on relationships is shown throughout the novel. The spice is spicing, and you will get invested in these characters! This book is the second story in the “Hollywood Renaissance” series, and I recommend that you read the first book, *Reel*, before diving into *Score*.





Maryland Library Association's Future of Libraries Interest Group

MLA 2026: Things from Future Libraries

Tracy Miller, Harford County Public Library

At the MLA Conference, the Future of Libraries Interest Group sponsored two programs: a session about AI ethics, and a preconference repeating the “Things from Future Libraries” standalone program that was presented last October.

“AI Ethics Library Instruction and Educational Autonomy” was presented by Ernest Anderson, a Research and Instruction Librarian at Towson University. He serves as liaison to departments within the Fisher College of Science and Mathematics. Ernest shared some of the work he does with students to demystify AI. Students are receiving lots of conflicting information and expectations around AI use in their college courses. Ernest’s goal is to make sure that students understand AI so that they are equipped to make good choices around its use. As Ernest said, “If students learn how the tools work, they are better positioned to evaluate use cases for a tool based on capability and context rather than hype.” His session was full of practical information for academic librarians and generated great discussion among everyone in the room!

The preconference session, “Things from Future Libraries,” was an interactive program that allowed participants to time travel to the future and bring back “artifacts” from libraries there. The workshop was based on an activity created by Situation Lab, “Futures Bazaar.” The Futures Bazaar is described as “a design jam or creative gathering, where people bring in ‘junk’ items from home, and transform them into unique ‘artifacts from the future,’ to provoke, amuse, and inspire one another.” More information is available [here](#). The Futures Bazaar was adapted (with permission) for use in libraries by staff at the Idaho Commission of Libraries. More information is available on their [website](#).

The organizers brought lots of interesting “junk” for the teams to create with. Each team

chose a future, a theme, and a mood and combined them together to create a borrowable item, a service, and a program for their future library. Because they chose randomly from a wide variety of options, the resulting combinations were really challenging and thought-provoking. For example, one team created their items for a future that was “innovative” and “related to spirituality.” It was supposed to make people feel “uneasy.”

See the Gallery on the next page ►

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

Catherine R. Johnson, Nimitz Library, U.S. Naval Academy

On June 3, 2026, academic library workers from across Maryland gathered at Discoveries: The Library at the Mall in Annapolis for a half-day workshop titled “Beyond Colleagues & Coworkers: Creating Sustainable Communities for Library Workers.” The event aimed to foster intentional, equitable, and sustainable professional networks for library workers at every stage of their careers.

The workshop was organized by a small group of ACRL-MD representatives including: TaChalla Ferris (Johns Hopkins University), John Jewitt (St. John’s College), Gaby Messinger (University of Baltimore), Wendy Ward (University of Baltimore), and led by Catherine Johnson (United States Naval Academy).

The day began with a high-energy “worknote” (imagine a workshop-style keynote) from Jen Lara, the Director of The Center for Coaching and Mentoring at the United States Naval Academy, focused on a “Coaching-Forward Approach.” Lara emphasized the differences between mentoring, which often centers on giving advice, bestowing wisdom, and coaching, which focuses on active listening and partnering with the coachee to take action. She equipped attendees with examples and strategies for asking “powerful questions.” Rather than trying to fix a colleague’s problem, Lara challenged the room to ask questions like, “What are you tolerating?” or “What does success look like?” and then to stop talking and let the coachee discover their own best solution.

In addition to asking powerful questions, Lara reminded the group to create space in our work lives to think creatively and to be mindful of the roles we play in workplace interactions – are we leading the charge, supporting our leader, or simply along for the ride. She encouraged us to consider in which of these roles we spend most of our time at work and reminded us to be agile and find the right balance in every situation.

Following the keynote, the program transitioned into highly structured, collaborative activities designed to put the coaching-forward mindset into practice. In the first breakout



ASSOCIATION of COLLEGE and RESEARCH LIBRARIES, MD

session, attendees partnered with another person to explore a problem or challenge they brought to the program. This gave one partner the opportunity to think and talk through a problem they’re facing at work, and the other partner an opportunity to practice asking powerful questions. This exercise helped attendees better define and understand the professional challenge they brought to the event. Attendees then exchanged contact information with others at their table.

In the second breakout session, participants were grouped by their functional roles to engage in a unique problem-solving exercise. Attendees wrote down their workplace challenge and passed the papers around their tables, allowing peers to offer actionable solutions and resources. After a few minutes dedicated to each person’s challenge, they discussed them as a table, brainstormed

solutions, and shared contact information.

The most meaningful part of these exercises was not just the ideas they exchanged as a group. The real value lay in the newly formed network of professional problem-solvers. These new professional networks were then tasked with making concrete commitments, like a monthly check-in or email group, to keep their communities alive after the event.

The final activity prompted attendees to consider their role in professional networks. Participants drafted a “Community Roadmap,” laying out specific, actionable steps to build and maintain professional networks. Attendees were encouraged to define their future roles within these groups to make a plan for showing up in whatever way makes the most sense for them.

While the formal program wrapped up with a reflective summary and calls to action, the community-building continued into the afternoon. Attendees dispersed for “Dine ArounDs” at nearby Annapolis restaurants to continue their professional network building. Later, some attendees reconvened for an exclusive tour of the St. John’s College Greenfield Library, exploring its rare book room and newly-renovated Ehrle Reading Room.

ACRL-MD’s “Beyond Colleagues & Coworkers” directly addressed the need for local, professional connections and provided the tools to build intentional networks. The event demonstrated that when library professionals come together to act as coaches, mentors, and collaborators, the resulting community is resilient and ready for whatever challenges and opportunities lie ahead. ▶



Select attendees who participated during Jen Lara’s worknote were gifted a pair of socks that read “Stop Talking” to remind them to ask powerful questions and then stop talking and let the other person respond.



Participants from across Maryland shared ideas and solved problems with a coaching-forward mindset.



Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Panel

Word on the Street: Beyond “Kids These Days” and “OK, Boomer”

Reframing Age in Libraries

Cassandra Miller, Baltimore County Public Library

We often think about inclusion through the lenses of race, disability, language, gender, or socioeconomic status, but one form of bias quietly shapes many of our routine interactions without receiving nearly as much attention: ageism. Ageism is often described as prejudice or discrimination based on age, but it is better understood as a collection of assumptions about what people are like because of how old they are.

Unlike many public institutions, libraries intentionally bring together people throughout their lifetimes. Because libraries are truly intergenerational spaces, it is important to think about how our assumptions about age shape our interactions with one another and with our patrons. As libraries work to create welcoming environments for everyone, age inclusion asks us to move beyond stereotypes and deficit-based thinking and instead to approach people with respect and an appreciation for what each stage of life contributes to our communities.

Two of the age groups most likely to experience ageist attitudes and behaviors are older adults and teenagers. Ageism toward older adults has real consequences for health, participation, learning, and belonging. The same is true for young people who repeatedly experience adultism, the systematic devaluing of youth perspectives, experiences, and autonomy. Although these biases look different, they are both rooted in defining people primarily by what we assume they cannot do rather than by what they bring.

Older adults commonly encounter assumptions that they are bad with technology,

unable to learn new things, all share similar political or social views, or are less capable of living and working independently. These beliefs can become self-fulfilling when we unintentionally lower our expectations or remove opportunities. Older adults may be less likely to use library services, participate in programs, or ask for help when they anticipate being judged or fear being seen as a burden.

Teenagers, on the other hand, are often viewed as disruptive, irresponsible, suspicious, or even dangerous. Groups of teens may be monitored more closely than groups of adults engaging in identical behavior. Normal adolescent behaviors, such as socializing, testing boundaries, and gathering in groups, can be quickly interpreted as misconduct simply because of who is doing them. Teens may also avoid libraries or become defensive when they feel unwelcome or are viewed with suspicion.

What Age-Inclusive Libraries Can Look Like

One way libraries can challenge ageism is by reframing how we think about these stages of life. Too often, we define both older adults and teenagers by perceived deficits. We talk about what older adults have lost or what teenagers have not yet developed. While every stage of life comes with its own challenges, that perspective tells only part of the story.

Older adults bring a lifetime of knowledge, experience, resilience, and historical perspective. Many serve as mentors, caregivers, volunteers, lifelong learners, and community leaders. Teenagers bring creativity, curiosity, adaptability, idealism, and an openness to questioning existing systems. They are developing their identities, building new skills, and shaping our culture. Neither group can be reduced to a list of stereotypes, and neither should be defined primarily by its limitations.

This strength-based perspective also changes how libraries think about service. Rather than asking, “How do we manage teenagers?” or “How do we accommodate older adults?” we can instead ask, “How can the library help people thrive during this stage of life?” That shift opens the door to designing spaces, services, and interactions that recognize both the needs and the contributions of people of every age.

Creating age-inclusive libraries reminds us that people of every age deserve dignity, autonomy, and the benefit of doubt. It asks us to respond to behavior rather than stereotypes, to ask questions instead of making assumptions, and to remember that age is only one part of a person’s identity.

Libraries cannot eliminate ageism from society, but they can become places where people experience something different. When we stop defining people by what they lack and instead recognize what each stage of life contributes, we create libraries in which every generation feels welcome, valued, and able to belong. ■

Intellectual Freedom Panel (IFP) News

Lloyd Jansen, Charles County Public Library

Maryland Intellectual Freedom Round-Up

On April 14, the American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland [filed a lawsuit](#) against the Somerset County Board of Education for not publicly releasing documents related to the Board adopting a revised selection policy and their efforts to censor school library materials. [Here's](#) a local news channel story from a year ago about the revised policy, and [here](#) are the minutes of the April 15, 2025 board meeting when the policy was adopted.

IFP Book Discussion

The IFP held its third Banned Book Discussion on August 11. The theme, tying into the 2026 Summer Reading theme, was "Unearth a Story" and looked at older banned book titles. Look for a recap in the fall edition of *the Crab*.

IFP @MLA

The Panel sponsored or co-sponsored four great events at the MLA/DLA conference in May:

Preconference

"Using Stories from the Library Community to Build AI Policy" (Presenter: Tess Wilson, Library Freedom Project)

See Witt Salley's separate article inspired by this preconference, "AI Is an Intellectual Freedom Issue: What Maryland Libraries Can Do Now", elsewhere in this issue of *the Crab*.

Regular Sessions

"Practical Intellectual Freedom Strategies for Front Line Workers" (Presenters: Skip Dye and Rosie Stewart, Penguin Random House)



Intellectual Freedom Panel

Skip and Rosie gave a very informative and entertaining presentation that covered the following topics:

Understanding the local context

- 📖 Maryland Freedom to Read Act (SB 738/HB 785)
- 📖 Delaware Libraries for All Act (HB 299)
- 📖 Know your library's policies and state protections
- 📖 De-escalation fundamentals
- 📖 You're not the decision maker
- 📖 Stay calm - regulate your time
- 📖 Acknowledge without agreeing
- 📖 Stick to policy/process
- 📖 Use clear, repeatable language
- 📖 This is not a debate
- 📖 Offer the next steps
- 📖 Maintain boundaries
- 📖 Document, document, document
- 📖 Support each other
- 📖 Be steady. Be consistent. Let policy do the heavy lifting.

Building community support

- 📖 Make intellectual freedom visible
 - Integrate intellectual freedom into programming and create displays that emphasize choice and access

- Host a program on How Libraries Choose Materials

-  Use everyday interactions to reinforce the mission
-  Build relationships before there's a problem
-  Prepare simple, sharable language
-  Partner with Friends groups
-  Keep trustees and board members informed
-  Highlight the library's value to the community

While policies and procedures guide our responses, long-term success in upholding intellectual freedom depends on the strength of our community relationships.

"Balancing the Books: Intellectual Freedom in Technical Services and Collection Development" (Presenters: Maggie Saponaro, University of Maryland; Kristina J. Alayan, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library; and Laura Bandoch, Harford County Public Library)

This panel presentation covered who decides what goes on the shelves, including acquisitions, cataloging, and censorship challenges. The panelists offered strategies to keep libraries open, diverse, and inclusive from both academic and public library perspectives.

"Shelf Censorship: Threats to the First Amendment's Protection of Intellectual Freedom" (Presenter: Aaron Terr, Director of Public Advocacy, Foundations for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE))

Aaron Terr presented an overview of first amendment challenges over the years, leading right up to the present day when cases such as Little v. Llano Co. are threatening to upend decades of precedent that define how library collections are built and curated. State and local governments have sought to narrow the range of ideas available for exploration in these library spaces, while library and first amendment advocates fight back in the court of law and the court of public opinion.

SIFnet News

A regular feature of the IFP column is a sampling of intellectual freedom joys and concerns taken from the monthly State Intellectual Freedom Network virtual meetings, hosted by the American Library Association Office for Intellectual Freedom. The meetings took place on April 15, May 20, and June 17.

Colorado: Libraries in Colorado reported a 25% decrease in book challenges in 2025.

Iowa: In April the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals **upheld an Iowa law** restricting the use of "sexually explicit" materials in K-6. It also prohibits references to LGBTQ topics in K-6 schools and requires written parental permission to use a student's preferred pronouns or name if it does not match the gender listed in school records. The court ruled the library collection is "school sponsored speech." Penguin Random House may try to take the case

to the Supreme Court.

Michigan:

-  The Cromaine District Library Board's decision not to pay for library staff memberships to ALA and the Michigan Library Association prompted **this** opinion piece by a local citizen. The Board also decided to simply **relocate** 160 primarily LGBTQ+ themed titles because it was too cumbersome to review all of the challenged books.

-  Convicted January 6th participant Jake Lang **failed** at attempt to hold the "largest book burning in American history" in Dearborn.

New York: Another **Freedom to Read** bill passed the state legislature and was sent to Governor Hochul's desk. She vetoed a similar bill last December.

North Carolina: Fontana Regional Library System **postponed** a vote on approving a new anti-LGBTQ+ collection development policy.

Pennsylvania:

-  Op-ed in the Bucks County Beacon: "**When We Ban Nonfiction, We Erase Ourselves**".
-  Elizabethtown Area School District **considered revising its policies** to make it easier to ban books. They already implemented a rating system, which they already plan to scrap.

Tennessee:

-  Rutherford Co. Is debating if new director needs to have an MLS/MLIS.
-  Knox Co. school system **reversed its decision** to ban *Roots* by Alex Haley from school libraries.

Virginia: A Freedom to Read bill is being drafted for 2027.

Passing the Torch

By the time you read, I will have stepped down as Intellectual Freedom Panel Officer and passed the torch back to Andrea Boothby-Rice, who served in this role prior to me. This is also my last *Crab* column before my retirement in October. Many thanks to all at *the Crab*, especially Julie Fitzpatrick, for their assistance with these columns. And thanks to all of you who have read the column. Please continue to keep the commitment to the freedom to read a hallmark of Maryland libraries! ■

LGBTQ+ Interest Group

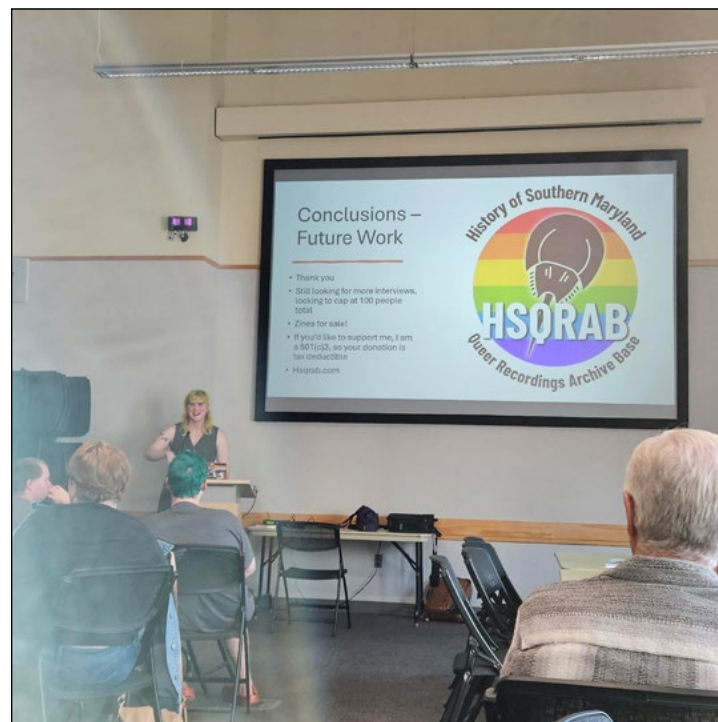
Pride Retrospective

As June has come to a close, we want to share some of our pride successes. We hope this inspires you, and remember – you can have pride all year!

Lily Crunkleton (She/Her/Hers), Calvert Library

Last year I created the nonprofit **HSQRAB**, or the History of Southern Maryland Queer Recordings Archive Base, or just “Horseshoe Qrab.” The main thrust of the project has been recording oral histories, and I’ve talked to around 40 people so far.

I gave a few presentations in June, including one at the Prince Frederick Branch of Calvert Library with Ben Eggerman of the Enoch Pratt Free Library/Maryland State Library Resource Center on June 17, and one by my lonesome at the Waldorf West Branch of Charles County Public Library on June 18. Both events had the same slideshow about early findings from the project, where I collected a number of quotes from the interviews and arranged them into eight topics to discuss Queer history of the region.



Anna White (She/Her/Hers), Baltimore County Public Library

We got this lovely thank you from Pandora Boxx after our fourth annual Evening with a Drag Queen at the Owings Mills Branch!



pandoraboxx

Follow



Pandora Boxx

Posted by Pandora Olivia Boxx

Just now

I have to say what a fantastic experience I had at the Owings Mills Branch of the Baltimore Public Library doing their series of "An Evening With..." Thank you to Doug, Brenda and the entire staff for being so wonderful. And thank you all for packing the house and being such an amazing audience. In times like these inclusive events at places like libraries are so important. It reaches people who aren't bar/club people. The more these events are attended, the more than can do them. My heart is full and thank you all for being a part of a truly lovely evening.

Love,
Pandy

2

3

Liked by realitee_w and others

pandoraboxx

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**Teresa Miller (She/Her/Hers) Prince George’s County Memorial Li-
brary System**

Photographs by Giovanni Martinez and Maribel Rodriguez

Prince George’s County Memorial Library System’s Rainbow Festival, a community-wide celebration, took place from 11 am to 3 pm at the South Bowie Branch. The event included activities like a dance lesson presented by Rumba Queer; a lip sync drag performance by Angelica Lize; special craft programs, storytime, and face painting; and a groovy “Bibliobop” dance party, all leading up to a fun pride parade through the branch at the end of day.



Shannon Carney (She/Her/Hers) Baltimore County Public Library

We hosted a gender affirming clothing swap that received a lot of attention online! We advertised the event on our gable sign, and a picture was posted to a Facebook page that was unaffiliated with the library. The post received a lot of attention—both positive and negative.

We were worried about how the negative attention would affect the event, but it was a stunning success! Wonderfully, there was no negativity or disruption to the event. We saw 65 people spanning all different age groups. There were family units, pairs, groups of friends, and people on their own. Every table in our meeting room was filled with clothes.

One woman came to donate some of her deceased daughter’s clothing—she had been donating with intention and felt that our event was a good place for those items.

It truly was a beautiful night, and I hope it strengthened our community.

Support Staff Division

Support Staff Division News

Lou Sica, Baltimore County Public Library

The Support Staff Division (SSD) of MLA has been having a great year. We are so pleased to have first-time officers in two roles. Albina Schafert from the Reisterstown Branch of Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL) is the new SSD Secretary. Jill Murphy from the North Carroll Branch of Carroll County Public Library is our new SSD Vice-President/President-Elect.

SSD held our June meeting at the Catonsville Branch of BCPL. This meeting also offered a virtual option for those who couldn't make the trip.

SSD had a great time at the annual MLA/DLA Conference in May! This year we sponsored two programs. In *Let's Talk Stuff*, a panel of Maryland and Delaware libraries shared exciting accomplishments and innovative initiatives from their systems. In the second program, *Keeping You and the Library Safe: How to Handle Contaminated Materials*, participants were equipped with the knowledge and tools to safely identify, isolate, and manage contaminated or infested materials while minimizing disruption to services.

SSD also sponsored two chocolate-themed baskets for the silent auction; both were well received. SSD steering committee members happily volunteered at the registration desk and silent auction.

Unfortunately, SSD had to postpone our standalone program, *How to Effectively Manage Organizational Change*. We are hoping to reschedule it for a future date in the fall. We are hard at work on that as well as scheduling our meetings for the fiscal year. We also have a few ideas for 2027 MLA/DLA Conference programs, so we are already ahead of the game.

Happy summer, everyone!



Youth Services Division



Youth Services Division Newsletter: Letter from the President

Dwyn Griffin, Prince George's County Memorial Library System

My name is Dwyn Griffin, and I am thrilled and honored to begin my tenure as President of the Maryland Library Association Youth Services Division (YSD). I have worked in libraries for over 15 years and currently serve as Branch Manager of the Largo-Kettering Branch of Prince George's County Memorial Library System.

For those who know me, you know I love libraries and the connections we build through them. Youth Services has always been my passion – my philosophy is simple: if we captivate children and families from birth, we create library lovers for a lifetime. And whether you're visiting a branch, attending a community event, or standing behind me in the grocery line, there's a good chance I'll find a way to tell you about Libby or my latest audiobook recommendation. Occupational hazard!

A heartfelt thank you to our Past President, Jessica Letizia, for her leadership and dedication this year. Thank you also to Karen Earp, who has graciously transitioned from Secretary to Vice President—we are so fortunate to have you. And to everyone who completed our recent survey: we heard you! We're working to make YSD more accessible by adjusting meeting times and keeping sessions to one hour.

Thank you to everyone who attended, presented, or volunteered for Kids Are Customers Too and the Maryland-Delaware Annual Conference—these events thrive because of you. Stay tuned for volunteer opportunities on the 2027 conference committee! Congratulations to Teresa Frost and Judy Ehrenstein, Co-Chairs of the FY27 Blue Crab Committee,

and thanks to Joe Farmarco and Noel J. Knepper for their continued work on the BEST program. This year's keynote speaker is Zoe Persico, author of *How to Talk to Your Succulent*—join us October 15!

I encourage you to get involved this year – join a committee, share an idea, present a program, or simply jump into the conversation. There is so much talent within this division, and we want to hear from you.

Thank you for all you do for children, teens, and families across Maryland. I look forward to serving alongside each of you. ■

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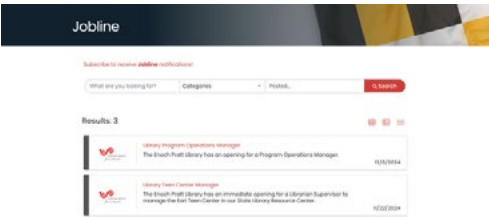
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If you are interested in advertising with the Maryland Library Association, contact Joshua Stone at mlaexec@mdlib.org.

AshLee Bass, Technical Services Clerk for the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association and Co-Editor of *the Crab*

About AshLee's Job and MLA Responsibilities

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

I currently serve as a Technical Services Clerk with the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association (SMRLA), where I support the processing, cataloging, and preparation of library materials for circulation. My experience includes organizing library collections, maintaining accurate records, and ensuring materials are processed efficiently for patrons.

Prior to my library position, I worked for Follett Bookstores at both The Catholic University of America and American University in Washington, D.C. In these roles, I assisted students, faculty, and staff with textbooks, course materials, merchandise, and customer service while maintaining inventory and supporting bookstore operations.

What work have you done within

MLA and what are your hopes and goals for *the Crab* in the coming year? What are you most excited about? How can the MLA community support you in achieving your goals?

Although I am relatively new to active

service within the Maryland Library Association (MLA), I have been engaged in learning about the organization, participating in professional development opportunities, and connecting with colleagues who share an interest in advancing library services. I am eager to become more involved by contributing to committee work, volunteering for projects, and supporting initiatives that strengthen the profession. In the coming year, I hope to help foster collaboration, encourage member engagement, and contribute to programs that support professional growth, networking, and the exchange of ideas. I am particularly interested in initiatives that promote equitable access to information, technical services, and opportunities for librarians at all career stages to develop new skills and leadership experience.

What excites me most is the opportunity to learn from experienced colleagues while bringing my own perspective from technical services and academic bookstore operations. I look forward to building meaningful professional relationships, contributing to projects that benefit members, and helping create welcoming spaces where all



members feel encouraged to participate. The MLA community can support me by providing opportunities to collaborate on committees and working groups, sharing mentorship and guidance, and encouraging new members to become actively involved in leadership and volunteer opportunities. I also value opportunities to learn from others' experiences and contribute wherever my skills can be most helpful.

How are you involved in the wider community?

I believe in giving back to my community through service, professional engagement, and lifelong learning. In my current role with SMRLA, I contribute to ensuring that library resources are accessible and well-organized for the communities we serve. I also enjoy supporting educational environments and have experience assisting students and faculty through my work with Follett Bookstores at The Catholic University of America and American University. Professionally, I stay engaged by participating in library and information science organizations, attending workshops and conferences, and seeking opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and expand my knowledge. I value building connections with others in the profession and sharing ideas that improve library services. I am committed to serving diverse communities by promoting access to information, supporting literacy and education, and contributing my time and

skills to initiatives that strengthen libraries and the people they serve. I look forward to increasing my involvement through volunteer service, committee work, mentorship, and outreach opportunities within the library profession and my local community.

What is it about libraries that inspires or motivates you?

What inspires me most about libraries is their ability to connect people with reliable information, educational opportunities, and lifelong learning. Libraries are welcoming spaces that serve people from all backgrounds, providing equitable access to resources that can enrich lives, support research, and strengthen communities. I am especially motivated by the important work that happens behind the scenes in technical services. Ensuring that library materials are accurately processed, organized, and accessible allows patrons to discover and use the resources they need. Knowing that my work contributes to a seamless library experience is both meaningful and rewarding.

I am also inspired by the collaborative nature of libraries. Whether working with colleagues, students, researchers, or community members, I value being part of a profession that is committed to service, innovation, and continuous learning. Libraries continually evolve to meet changing community needs, and I am motivated by the opportunity to grow professionally while contributing to an organization that makes knowledge accessible to everyone.

About AshLee

Favorite movie, tv show, or play?

Macbeth (play).

Favorite sport and/or sports team?

Basketball—the Los Angeles Clippers.

What was your first job?

Subway sandwiches worker.

Do you have pets? What kind?

I have one dog, a girl. Her name is Phoenix and she is a Staffy and Bully mix.

Favorite type of music?

I love all kinds of music.

Favorite smell or sound?

My favorite sound is rain or ocean sounds.

What book is currently on your nightstand?

Peter Pan.

Do you read more than one book at a time?

Of course! That is the only way.

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

My dream destination would be somewhere that is quiet, with a small river or brook, with trees and flowers and a small cabin.

Do you speak languages other than English?

Some Spanish.

If you could be a superhero, who would you choose and why?

I honestly would not like to be a superhero.

What is a book you've read that changed how you think about a topic or about your life?

The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz.

What is something that you think would surprise someone about you or your job?

The quantity of books I have actually read.

What is your hidden talent or an unusual fact about you?

One unusual fact about me is that I genuinely enjoy organizing and bringing order to complex collections and information.

Leah Snow, incoming ILS Administrator for the Western Maryland Regional Library and Co-Editor of *the Crab*

About Leah's Job and MLA Responsibilities

I am excited to announce that I accepted the position of ILS Administrator for the Western Maryland Regional Library (WMRL), and I will be starting my journey with WMRL in the last week of August.

However, at the initial time of writing this article and at the time of this summer issue's publication, I am acting as the Assistant Head of Information Services for the Washington County Free Library (WCFL) at the Alice Virginia & David W. Fletcher Branch in Hagerstown. Often referred to as the Reference Department, or previously the Adult Services Department, my team and I primarily serve the adult demographic of our communities through reference services, programs, tech assistance, readers' advisory, and outreach. Prior to this position, I started my journey with public, Maryland libraries as a Service Specialist with Allegany County Library System at the Washington Street Library in Cumberland. Aside from these most recent positions, I worked as a Circulation Clerk and Special Collections Assistant at the Lewis J. Ort Library during my time at Frostburg State University, as well as a clerk at numerous, small, Pennsylvania libraries.

While co-editor of *the Crab* is my first official position within MLA, I have been interested in becoming more involved for some time. I really have Joe Thompson to thank for initially steering me in the right direction and helping me have the confidence to dive straight in. Co-editing *the Crab* felt like the perfect opportunity to both contribute something at-large to Maryland libraries, while also exposing me to all the wonderful things that staff at all levels across all library types in Maryland are participating in. There's also something to be said about seeing the struggles libraries are facing as well, and through that, learning ways to support not only our home libraries and communities, but those of our neighbors as well.

As far as being involved in the wider community, there's definitely a lot more that I hope to do. While I participate in outreach events as my schedule allows and am a member of



my county's emergency preparedness committee, a lot of the direct service I provide to my community is through one-on-one tech appointments with our patrons. One huge issue I encounter often is the digital divide: not just in terms of who has access to technology, but in who understands how to use the technology that is available to them. I see this most often with older adults trying to change careers or re-enter the job market. For many, the switch to online applications and digital interviews is nearly unnavigable without initial assistance.

Originally, one of my goals for this new fiscal year was to help establish additional systems for the library to consistently provide our community with the means for better workforce development through digital literacy. However, my direct goals and influence are likely about to change drastically with my acceptance of this new position with WMRL. That said, WMRL's mission is to enhance its member libraries' ability to serve their communities, so I hope to still play a part in supporting WCFL staff in pursuit of my initial goals.

What is it about libraries that inspires or motivates you?

Truly, what is there about libraries that isn't inspiring? Libraries are one of the last spaces that are for everyone. It's always a delight to see how amazed people are when I tell them about something that the library offers. There are really so many incredible resources at any library, and a lot of members of our communities don't even know they're available. Libraries remain safe spaces that encourage both learning and general entertainment largely for free, regardless of anyone's particular lot in life. ►

About Leah:

What was your first job?

My first job was also my first experience with a public library beyond the bookmobile's visits to my small hometown. During my first year at college, I was able to work at a tiny, public library nearby through a partnership between it and my college. This job is really what initially inspired me to pursue a library career.

Do you have pets? What kind?

I have one cat. Her name is Little Bean, although she isn't so little anymore. She does have a little nub tail, though, and her favorite person in the whole world is my husband.

Favorite type of music?

A lot of what I find myself listening to while working on something is lo-fi or electro swing, though my husband is both a musician and a diverse music buff, so I'd say I listen to, and enjoy, just about anything on a given day.

Do you read more than one book at a time?

I can't recall a time in my life when I wasn't partially through at least three books at a time.

If you could be a superhero, who would you choose and why?

I don't think I'd want the stress that comes with being a superhero, but if I could choose a superpower, I'd love the ability to control or freeze time. There are so many things I want to do, and there just doesn't feel like enough time in the day to do them all. ■



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