

200

the Crab

The Digital Magazine of the Maryland Library Association
Volume 56, Number 1 • Fall, 2025

SHARE the KNOWLEDGE!



Maryland Association of Counties Summer Conference page 14

FEATURE ARTICLES

MACo: The Maryland Association of Counties Summer Conference 14

Maryland libraries were well-represented at the Maryland Association of Counties Summer Conference this year, as library workers from across the state took advantage of opportunities for continuing education, library advocacy, and developing new connections and partnerships.

Citizens for Maryland Libraries Annual Conference 21

On October 11, Citizens for Maryland Libraries (CML) hosted three speakers at the annual CML Conference for Friends, Trustees and Library Supporters. The theme for this year was “Building Coalitions in Our Communities to Support and Advocate for Strong Libraries.”

Imagination Library of Charles County Public Library 23

The Charles County Public Library recently celebrated an exciting milestone of more than 100,000 free books being mailed to children under five through its early literacy program, the Imagination Library of Charles County.

Libraries: Keepers of Imaginative Play 24

The Rosedale Branch of Baltimore County Public Library offered its first “Totally Untidy Toddler Time,” where the goal of the program was to be untidy and get messy through creative play, with customers engaging with five stations of play at their own pace.

Carroll County Public Library’s Adult Battle of the Books Builds Community 27

What began as an experiment in adjusting the format of traditional Battle of the Books events to accommodate an adult audience has transformed into a successful annual program that helps to spread the joy of reading across all ages in the community.



◆ Celebrating 75 Years of St. Mary’s County Library 30

St. Mary’s County Library is celebrating 75 years of standing as a vital community hub, welcoming over 300,000 visitors each year and embracing innovation while remaining a cornerstone for learning, exploration, and connection.

Revolutionary Stitches: Harford Community College Library’s Constitution Day Crafternoon 31

Revolutionary Stitches, a “make and take” homespun activity held on Constitution Day, encouraged participants to learn about colonial and revolutionary crafting and served as the soft launch for HCC’s Hays-Heighe House interactive historical exhibit, “Homespun: Textiles and Revolution.”

A Piecemeal Approach to AI Education: Puzzles as an Inexpensive, Transferable, and Analogue Medium for AI Literacy 37

At Montgomery County Public Library, what started as informational slides for co-workers evolved into a passive program designed to explain telltale signs of AI images to audiences of all skill levels.

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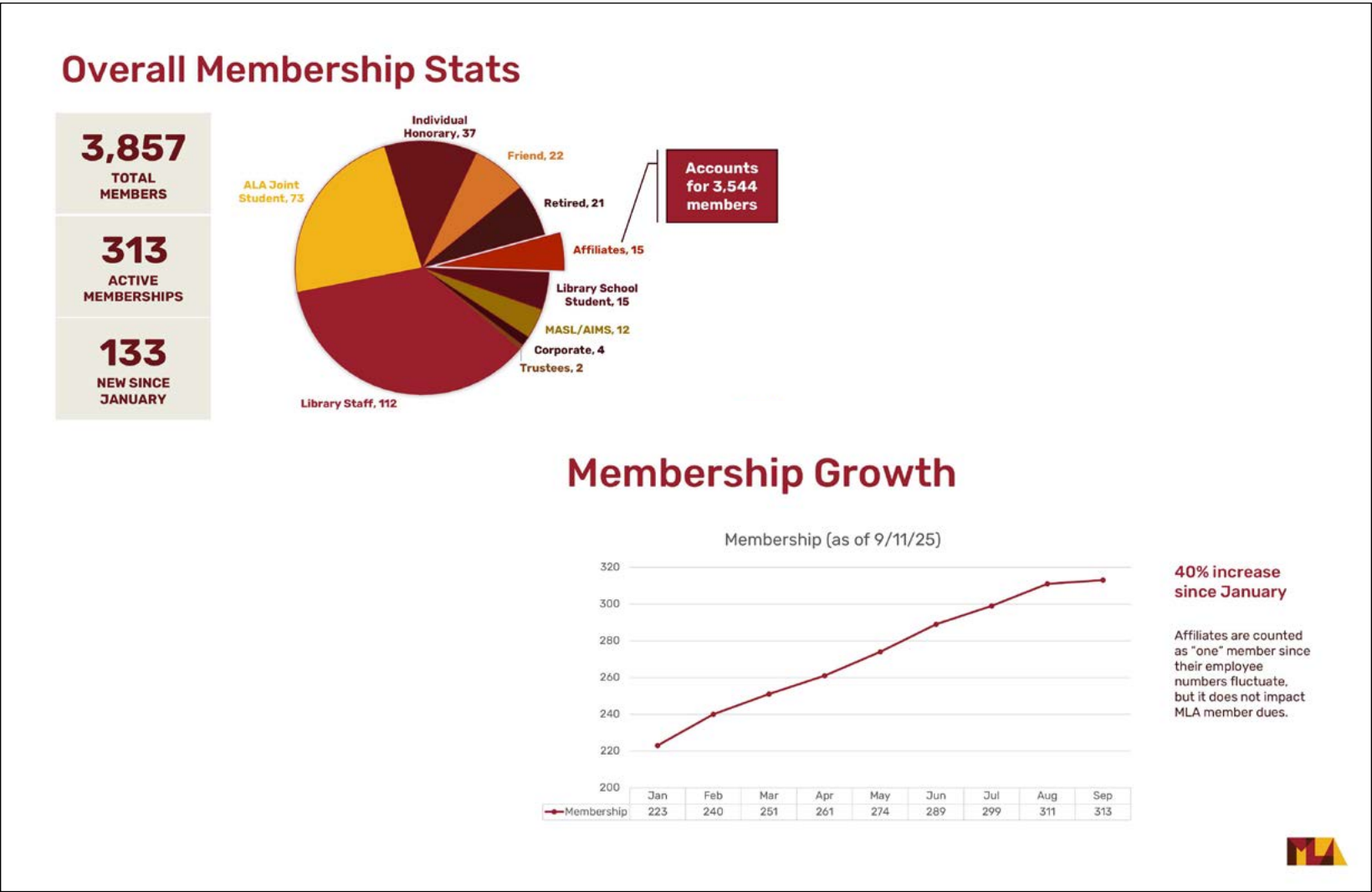
Editor's Note

Happy autumn, *Crab* readers! As always, I love reading about the work of creative, innovative colleagues throughout the state. Dedicated, talented library workers and library advocates are doing so much in their branches, systems, schools, and communities, and I'm so grateful that we have *the Crab* as a place to share news about awards, events and activities, and gatherings of library professionals across Maryland.

Speaking of talented colleagues, special thanks to five people whose editing skills make publishing *the Crab* a smooth and easy process every quarter: Amy Miller Meyers, Regina Rose, Robert Miller, Peter Nguyen, and Ruth Utz. Our copy editors and graphics editor do the lion's share of the work, and their attention to detail is unparalleled. I know our readers also appreciate the result of their dedication and diligence.

We are excited to feature some statistics from the Maryland Library Association (MLA) Office about the growth in MLA membership this year. Thanks to you and your efforts in getting the word out, we have seen a 40 percent growth in membership since January, with a current total of 3,857 members. Opportunities like interest groups, affinity networks, division activities, and the annual MLA/DLA Conference serve to make non-members curious about MLA—whether those opportunities are educational, related to your professional development goals, in support of advocacy, and/or just for fun—so please, keep spreading the word about all the benefits of MLA membership.

Just a reminder that *the Crab* is published for you as library professionals—but it is also written *by all of you!* Your voices and your news are important, timely, and welcome. We invite you to submit articles and features about what you see, share, present, facilitate, teach, experience, and learn in academic, public, school, and special libraries. No idea is too small to share with the wider library



community in Maryland.
Enjoy this issue and please keep us in mind as a forum for future publication.
Share your Knowledge!

Julie Fitzpatrick, MLA Crab Editor
Howard County Library System

President's Message

David Dahl, MLA President

University System of Maryland and Affiliated Institutions Library Consortium

It's an exciting time to be an MLA member! When I ran for president, I was excited to be a part of an organization where our values lead our actions. Over the past several months, MLA has launched several efforts that do just that.

We've relaunched MLA Chats to ensure that this opportunity for members to engage with each other around topics and ideas continues. Past iterations have relied on the extraordinary commitment and effort of individual MLA members. I'm excited that this revamped version of MLA Chats is supported by a newly formed MLA Chats Coordinating Committee, whose membership includes five members of our most recent class of Maryland Library Leadership Institute (MLLI) graduates. I suggested a goal of trying to get one MLA Chats session scheduled before the end of this calendar year, and they have hit that mark and more with one session held in October and another coming in November. I'm excited to see what's in store next year, and I hope you'll take advantage of these opportunities to connect with your colleagues.

In July, our Executive Board agreed to enter into a partnership with the Sustainable Libraries Initiative (SLI). As part of their mission of "empowering library leaders to advance environmentally sound, socially equitable, and economically feasible practices," SLI provides resources, hosts webinars, and certifies libraries for their sustainability practices. Our partnership gives MLA members access to SLI's monthly newsletter, a complimentary 12-month membership, and a 20% discount on the fee for certification. These are resources that you and your library can utilize to build more sustainable practices and operations.

As you'll read in the EDI Panel column in this issue, the Executive Board voted in September to start an Affinity Networks program that will be run by MLA's EDI Panel. This



new type of group within MLA will give our members an opportunity to engage with other members based on shared identities. Please read more about the program and look forward to an initial call for proposed networks later this year.

As MLA members and library workers in Maryland, I hope you'll find these to be fruitful opportunities to engage in the association and advance your work. If you're not a member, there's no better time to join. These opportunities are all the result of the hard work of other MLA members who have the vision and put forth the effort to bring them to fruition. I'm thankful to them and to the Board for their support in making these opportunities available. If you have an idea or see something that we should be doing, please reach out and let's see how we can make it happen.

In closing, I want to underscore just how much public support there is for Maryland libraries. Over the past few months, I've had the chance to chat with community members, journalists, and leaders of values-adjacent organizations. They are interested in hearing about what we're doing, they're interested in understanding the challenges we're facing, and they're interested in learning how they can support us. This broad support for libraries can be difficult to remember amidst the financial and ideological challenges that we face. Thanks to all of you who show up every day and make it possible to share all the good things happening in Maryland libraries! ■

Vice President's Message

Conni Strittmatter, Baltimore County Public Library

Hello, and happy Autumn!

As I write this, the Mariners and the Cubs (two of my teams) are about to play game five of their Divisional Series. Please don't tell past me what happens—I will revel in the possibility of my childhood teams facing each other in the World Series come November! All while listening to the songs from Rolling Stone's latest divisive list, the 250 Greatest Songs of the 21st Century So Far—I'd love to chat with anyone interested about your thoughts!

But I'm not just thinking about baseball and music. Over the past few months, I've been thinking a lot about the Maryland Library Association's Strategic Vision – Collaborate, Advocate, Educate.

Collaborate

Lately, I've been attending some MLA unit meetings. It's been a great opportunity to learn about what divisions and interest groups are up to, and to encourage them to consider taking on a leadership role in the association. MLA exists because of and for the library staff of Maryland. The professional development, networking, and informational chats that take place throughout the year only happen because of folks who come together and collaborate to make something great for their colleagues. MLA is always hoping for new minds, faces, and backgrounds to join that collaboration, whether it's as a regular attendee of a unit meeting, the chair of an interest group, or running for an elected office. If you're hesitant to take on a role, reach out to me. I'd love to talk with you about ways you can collaborate with MLA to build your professional experience!

Advocate

In early October, I had the fortune of attending an author visit presented by the Upper Chesapeake Bay Pride Foundation (UCBPF). After *Flamer* by Mike Curato was pulled from the shelves in Harford County Public Schools, UCBPF decided it was important for the community to hear from the author himself about why he wrote this book. It was a beautiful evening, highlighting all the things we know well in our profession – the importance of a well-placed mirror on a bookshelf. This event also reminded me of the importance of advocacy. While the book has been pulled from the shelf for now, we know there is a process being followed by the state, which was outlined in the Freedom to Read Act, a bill that was co-crafted by Maryland library leaders and championed by the Maryland Library Association.

Advocacy happens in big ways, like when MLA was in Annapolis along with library



staff promoting the importance of this bill. But advocacy does not start and stop there. As a member of MLA, and as a library worker in Maryland, you are able to join that advocacy at whatever level you can! If you haven't yet, [join the mailing list to get advocacy updates](#) and find out ways you can contribute.

Educate

Back in September, I worked at an outreach table for MLA at the Baltimore Book Festival. It was a wonderful atmosphere, full of people who absolutely loved libraries. Many came up to the table just to let us know how grateful they are for libraries in their county. There were a few who were on their way to collecting a card from every county in the state, and many who learned for the first time that this was even possible!

Probably the biggest takeaway for me at this outreach was how much people wanted to know about how libraries are doing, and what we need from them. We talked with some folks at length about what is happening in the world of libraries—IMLS and LSTA, local and state funding worries, the Freedom to Read Act, all the ways that libraries are stepping up to be resources for the community in these difficult times. People were floored to learn everything that the Maryland Library Association has done and is doing to work for libraries and, in turn, our libraries' communities. After learning all of this, many of them scanned the QR code we brought, leading them to learn more about how they can be involved in the effort. Educating people in the community about our work mobilized them.

While there is no question that we've always needed to do this work, today it seems even more vital than ever. We need more people like you to join us as we find ways to Collaborate, Advocate, and Educate. Join an Interest Group or a Division, present on something great your library is doing at the conference or a session throughout the year, attend an MLA professional development opportunity, join the advocacy mailing list, or even consider throwing your hat in the ring to lead with us in some capacity. Keep up the good work, everyone! ■

Report from MLA's ALA Chapter Councilor



Joe Thompson, Carroll County Public Library

In this report, I'll be providing an overview of two Virtual Special ALA Council Meetings that took place on August 27 and September 3, as well as the work of committees that I also serve in the capacity as a Councilor. If you are an ALA member, I encourage you to review the Council documents for additional information, which can be found at <https://www.ala.org/virtual-llx-and-annual-conference-council-meetings>.

The August 27 meeting began with a presentation of the report from the Societal Statements Working Group. This working group was created in June 2024 at the ALA Annual Conference to create a working group to review the ASAE (American Society of Association Executives) Societal Statement Framework and develop a similar set of criteria for the ALA. As part of their report, they presented an ALA Position Statement Framework and recommended that it be implemented on a trial basis. The framework is designed to "help ALA leadership evaluate if, when, and how to issue public statements related to the association's mission and values. This framework is intended to foster thoughtful dialogue and guide decision-making, rather than restrict discussion. ALA will take care when making statements that define a position for the association. ALA must ensure its voice is influential and powerful. To ensure this, ALA will use this tool so that the statements issued are meaningful and demonstrate the stance ALA is seeking to make. ALA aims to respond within 24 to 72 hours of an issue's emergence, balancing timeliness with strategic deliberation and stakeholder engagement." I voted yes in support of the new framework, seeing great value in ensuring that ALA's statements are truly in alignment with the association's core values and directly connect to the work of libraries and ALA. The motion carried and the framework was approved.

The ALA Executive Board then presented a set of five motions, all focused on positioning the association to implement facets of the new ALA Strategic Plan. Specifically, these changes are intended to "shift valuable member and staff resources to strategic and revenue-generating programs" and support "improved member experience by promoting member value, decreasing complexity, and improving association operations."

Motions 1 – 3 were considered together as a group and recommended the following:

-  discontinuation of Forums as a subgroup of Divisions
-  discontinuation of Discussion Groups as a sub-group of Divisions

 aligning all Division Interest Groups as Member-Based

It was noted that member surveys have consistently shown that ALA is perceived as complex and bureaucratic, and the organizational structures within some divisions contribute to that perception. This kind of structural complexity can also result in resource-intensive operations requiring significant staff, members, and technical support. Instead, divisions are encouraged to establish committees, sections, and other subordinate units in a more standardized fashion. I voted yes and motions 1 - 3 carried.

Motion 4 recommended that Round Table elected positions be limited to Chair/President-Elect and Treasurer only. The Round Table Councilor position will continue to be an elected position as governed by ALA bylaws. There was much debate on this motion. An initial amendment to the resolution was proposed, then an amendment to that amendment. The amendment to the amendment was voted down. However, after the meeting time was extended, a vote on the earlier amended motion was taken.


I voted no on this amended motion, preferring the original motion. There was then another vote to extend the meeting longer, but not enough members were still in attendance to count for quorum, so the August 27 meeting ended.

ALA President Sam Helmick called for an additional meeting to complete the agenda, which took place on September 3. Discussion on Motion 4 resumed. I voted yes and the motion carried. What did pass allows for elected positions in Round Tables to include the Chair/President-Elect, Treasurer, Secretary, and Round Table Councilor.

Motion 5 recommended that all ALA, division, round table and office publications (including books and journals) be published by ALA Publishing & Media. It was noted that, while most books and journals are produced through ALA Publishing & Media, exceptions remain, and there are some dedicated publishing staff and workflows outside centralized structures. By centralizing publishing, some duplicative work can be shifted to open staff resources for strategic and revenue-generating programs. I voted yes and the motion carried.


The AI Policy Workgroup then presented an update. The group's timeline has been moved up and a final report is now expected by March 2026 instead of June 2026. The September 3 meeting then concluded.

ALA Councilors are sometimes tasked with serving the association in additional capacities. I have also been participating in the following ways:

 Chairing the ALA Board Election Ad-Hoc Committee. At the 2025 ALA LibLearnX Conference, a resolution was passed, charging the ALA Executive Board to form "an Ad-Hoc Committee to explore the possibility of those standing for election to the Executive Board not be limited to Council members. The Ad-Hoc

Committee will report to the Executive Board with recommendations by October 2025.” Our ad-hoc committee was formed in April/May 2025 and President Sam Helmick asked that I chair it. Our committee accomplished our work over a series of meetings, and I presented our report to the ALA Executive Board when they met on October 2. Our recommendations included expanding the pool of individuals eligible to run for at-large seats on ALA Executive Board beyond current ALA Councilors to include those who have served within the past five years. We also recommended shifting some responsibilities to the ALA Nominations Committee and sunseting the Committee on Committees. The ALA Executive Board offered additional amendments regarding the eligible pool of candidates for election. These proposals will make their way to ALA Council for further consideration. I also met separately with the chairs of the Committee on Organization, the Bylaws Committee, and the Policy Monitoring Committee to answer questions.

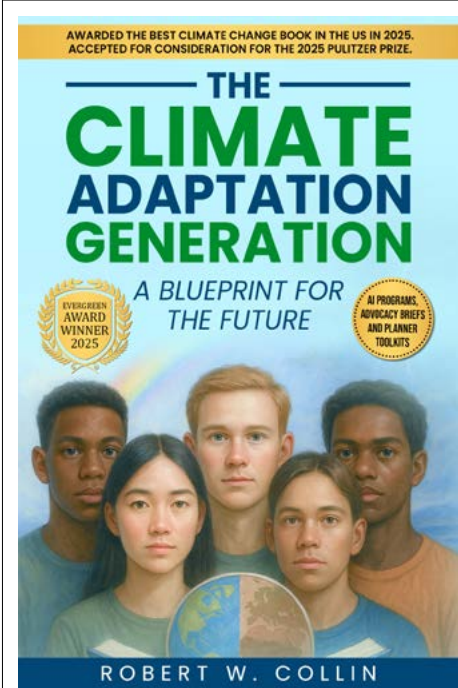
 Serving as a member of the Committee on Committees. I was elected by ALA Council for a one-year term, from 2025-2026. This group works with the Committee on Appointments to help the incoming ALA President with appointments to ALA Committees. The Committee on Committees also finds nominees from among the members of Council to run for ALA Executive Board.

 Serving as a member of the ALA Budget Analysis & Review Committee (BARC). My term just began in July 2025 and is a four-year appointment if I continue serving on Council during that time. So far, we have had an orientation and one joint meeting with the Finance & Audit (F&A) Subcommittee of ALA Executive Board. BARC is responsible for reviewing ALA’s proposed budget, reviewing the financial performance of the association and the budget impact of potential actions of ALA Council, making budget recommendations to the ALA Executive Board, and reporting to Council regarding budget analysis and process.

As of this writing, the next meetings of the ALA Council are scheduled to take place online over January 21, 22, and 28, 2026. There will be no in-person “Midwinter” or “LibLearnX” conference in 2026. The Youth Media Awards (YMAS) will be held on Monday, January 26 at 11:00 a.m. EST with the in-person event taking place at the Hilton Chicago. It will also be streamed online. See the official announcement at <https://www.ala.org/news/2025/09/american-library-association-announces-2026-youth-media-awards-public-announcement>

As always, please reach out to me if you have any questions about the work of the ALA Council or ALA. Please get involved in the work of the association if you can! Thank you again for allowing me to serve as your Maryland representative to ALA Council. ■

■ Award-Winning Climate Books by Robert W. Collin ■

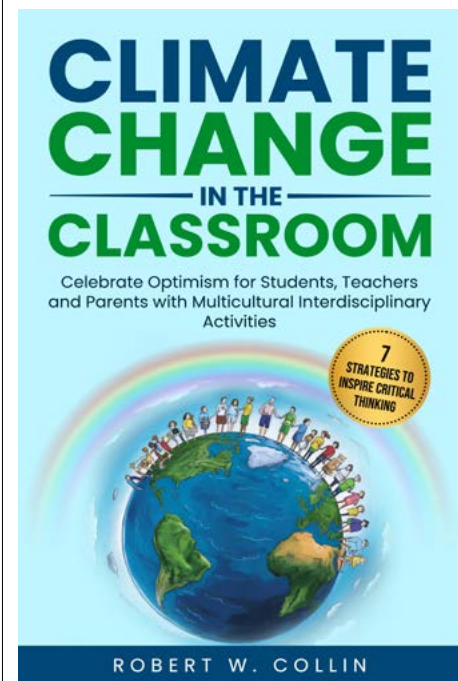


The Climate Adaptation Generation: A Blueprint for the Future

■ Evergreen Awards Winner – Best Climate Change Book in the U.S., 2025

“A landmark in environmental scholarship and policy visioning. This book belongs on the shelf with Pulitzer-worthy works of public impact.” – Pulitzer Review Committee

Available now on Amazon, IngramSpark, and major retailers.



Climate Change in the Classroom: Celebrating Optimism for Students, Teachers, and Parents

A groundbreaking resource for K–12 schools, integrating climate change into science, math, literature, and the arts.

Empowers teachers and inspires students with multicultural, interdisciplinary activities designed for a brighter, sustainable future.

Available now on Amazon, IngramSpark, and major retailers.



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MLA Award Nominations

Catherine Hollerbach, Anne Arundel County Public Library

The Awards Committee is now accepting nominations for the MLA Awards.

Awards include:

- 🏆 Distinguished Service Award
- 🏆 Honorary Membership
- 🏆 Libraries Change Communities Award
- 🏆 The Margaret Carty Emerging Leader Award
- 🏆 MLA President's Customer Service Award
- 🏆 Outstanding Member Award
- 🏆 Outstanding Support Staff Award
- 🏆 Outstanding Volunteer Award
- 🏆 Project of the Year

Award nominations are due on November 18, 2025. More information is available at <https://www.mdlib.org/annual-awards/>.

Law on the Frontlines: Ongoing Legal Reference Training for Public Libraries

Audrey Dingler, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library

It's your average morning at the reference desk. You've just had your first sip of coffee when a patron approaches you and asks: "ChatGPT says my wages may be garnished if I don't pay alimony. Is that legal?"

Later that morning, you're helping a colleague with a "STEAM & Snacks" event for kids. As you're disassembling a leaning tower of toothpicks, marshmallows, and Play-Doh, a parent approaches you and asks: "I need help petitioning the courts for full child custody. I can't afford a lawyer. Is there any way you can help me?"

Towards the end of the day, you're reshelving YA books when a teen approaches you and asks: "Am I allowed to legally change my name?"

By now, you've had your cup of coffee (or several) and you feel pretty confident in the responses you gave to all three patrons. That's because you've attended multiple Law on the Frontlines sessions! You feel cool-headed when helping patrons access legal information and know when to refer forward when the law gets complicated. If you haven't had a chance to attend a Frontlines session, you may be overwhelmed at the thought of legal reference. That's understandable; the law can be confusing! If you haven't heard of Frontlines yet...

About the Project

The Law on the Frontlines project is a continuing education initiative, empowering public library staff to



A ByWater Solutions representative snapped a shot of Frontlines team members Joy Hollerbach and Audrey Dingler at the MLA-DLA 2025 vendor hall, showing off the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library's new catalog (powered by Aspen Discovery).

provide quality legal reference services in their communities. At a typical Frontlines session, facilitators share tips and tricks for how to best address patron questions about the law. Frontlines sessions also explore how knowledge of government structure is crucial for identifying relevant legal information. During all sessions, attendees are presented with sample scenarios and are given the opportunity to put their reference skills to work in a practice setting.

Frontlines is held each Fall and Spring with core sessions – Legal Reference Best Practices and Foundations of Law for Public Library Reference – along with a

topics-based Navigating the Law session. The selected Navigating the Law topic session changes from Fall to Spring. In the past, sessions have focused on finding legal forms, family law, landlord-tenant, consumer, life & health planning, and public benefits law.

At the end of each session, optional surveys are sent out for attendees to complete. Your colleagues from public library systems across the state responded to post-session surveys with the following praise:

“I thought it was fantastic and am SO grateful to have the “For Librarians” page to refer back to this content (and to share with colleagues).”

“Thank you for putting on these webinars. I think I have taken nearly every one you have offered this year. It’s fascinating and really prepares me for my time at the reference desk.”

“Really appreciate your expertise. This is a complex area and having this class gave me a boost of resources to share with our customers. Thank you!”

Frontlines training is made possible through an institutional partnership with the [Thurgood Marshall State Library](#), the [Maryland Access to Justice Commission](#), and the [Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors](#). Since 2016, Frontlines has been able to develop and maintain a standardized state-wide curriculum on public library legal reference, eligible for CEU learning credits.

Upcoming Training Opportunities

If you haven’t had the chance to attend, the next Fall 2025 session will be held on Wednesday, December 3, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. on Zoom. To save your seat, you can visit the Training Sessions landing page on the Thurgood Marshall State Library website. This December session, Navigating the Law: Family Law, will provide an overview of common areas that impact family law in Maryland, including child support, child custody, divorce, alimony, and more. Spring 2026 Frontlines session dates will be announced in February, so be sure to mark your calendars!

Separate from the pre-scheduled Zoom sessions, the Frontlines project provides training in-person for interested Maryland library systems. In the past, Frontlines facilitators have crafted training opportunities for Maryland library cooperatives at staff meetings of all sizes. To discuss local training opportunities, email lawlibrary@mdcourts.gov. ■



FRONTLINES SESSIONS ADDRESS:

-  The role of public libraries in advancing Access to Justice
-  Best practices tips
-  Legal information resources
-  Basics on the structure of law
-  Where to refer moving forward

Brought to you by the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, and the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors

LAW ON THE FRONTLINES: LEGAL REFERENCE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Join us for **Fall 2025's Frontlines Sessions!** Become more confident with legal reference questions and connect patrons to resources that may help them with their legal matter.

UPCOMING SESSIONS

Wednesday, October 8, 2025 | 9:00 – 10:30 AM
Legal Reference Best Practices
 This course provides an overview of best practices when addressing questions about law and legal situations.

Wednesday, November 5, 2025 | 9:00 – 10:30 AM
Foundations of Law for Public Library Reference
 This course lays the groundwork by providing a comprehensive overview of law-making bodies, primary sources of law, and other essential elements for navigating legal resources.

Wednesday, December 3, 2025 | 9:00 – 10:30 AM
Navigating the Law – Family Law
 This course provides an overview of common areas of concern, such as child support, child custody, divorce, and more in Maryland, and points to reliable resources to help inform the public.

Maryland Library for the Blind and Print Disabled Librarian Earns Statewide Award

Tim Pratt, Maryland State Library Agency

The [Maryland Optometric Association \(MOA\)](#) recently named [Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled \(LBPD\)](#) Marketing and Outreach Librarian Ashley Biggs the 2025 recipient of the V. Eugene McCrary Award. The award is presented annually to a person outside of the optometry profession in recognition of significant contributions to the enhancement of eye care for the residents of Maryland. Biggs, who has served blind and low-vision Marylanders at LBPD since 2017, received the award at MOA's annual membership meeting on September 6.

"Ashley connects with our partners, like MOA, and demonstrates the value of LBPD services to their patients," said LBPD Director John Owen III. "Building those relationships raises awareness of LBPD services across a broader scope of potential library patrons. I appreciate MOA recognizing Ashley's excellent work with this award. It's well-deserved."

MOA praised Biggs' "amazing" ability to relate to doctors and explain the resources available through LBPD. She has staffed exhibit tables at MOA conventions and provided educational sessions about LBPD resources. Her partnership with MOA is part of LBPD's marketing strategy to educate professionals who certify LBPD's application for service. These professionals are trusted advocates for their patients and can point patients to services

like LBPD's.

"I am deeply honored to receive the V. Eugene McCrary Award," Biggs said. "I want to sincerely thank the Maryland Optometric Association for this recognition. I'm humbled to be associated with Mr. McCrary and excited to be part of this important effort to expand access to quality eye care — and reading — across the state."

The award is named for former MOA President V. Eugene McCrary. Past recipients of the award include Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk and former U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski.

About the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled

The Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBPD) is a division of the Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) that provides comprehensive accessible Library services to residents of every county in the state. LBPD distributes books in digital audio and Braille in print and electronic formats, and connects with innovative programming, assistive technology training, textbook conversion for college students and locally recorded materials in an accessible format. It has nearly 6,800 registered, active users.

About the Maryland Optometric Association

The Maryland Optometric Association (MOA) serves as the voice of optometry in Maryland to protect doctors and their patients. MOA advocates, educates and connects optometrists with strong advocacy efforts, providing premier educational resources, and engaging events that bring doctors and industry partners together. ■



Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled Marketing and Outreach Librarian Ashley Biggs, left, receives the V. Eugene McCrary Award from Maryland Optometric Association President Dr. Vicky Wong. Photo courtesy of John Owen III, Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled.

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

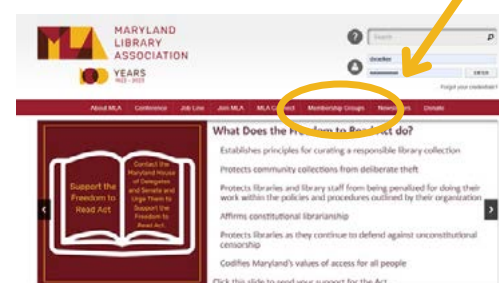
COMMITTEES & PANELS

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.



Maryland Association of Counties Summer Conference

Photographs courtesy of Joseph Thompson, Carroll County Public Library, and Tim Pratt, Maryland State Library Agency.

FUNDING THE FUTURE: The Evolving Role of Local Government, the 2025 Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Conference, took place from August 13 to 16, 2025 at the Roland Powell Convention Center in Ocean City. Featured events and networking opportunities included an exhibit booth trade show, a tech expo trade show, state agency briefings, regional county meetings, a golf tournament, a Taste of Maryland Reception, and speakers from the public and private sectors at the affiliate sessions and solutions showcase sessions. Tim Rahschulte, PhD, the CEO of The Professional Development Academy, delivered the opening keynote presentation on Thursday, and the Honorable Wes Moore, Governor of Maryland, delivered the closing capstone address. Maryland libraries were well-represented at the MACo Conference this year, as library workers from across the state took advantage of opportunities for continuing education, library advocacy, and developing new connections and partnerships.

Save the date!

The MACo Winter Conference will take place December 10-12, 2025, at the Hyatt Regency in Cambridge and the next MACo Summer Conference will be August 12-15, 2026, in Ocean City.

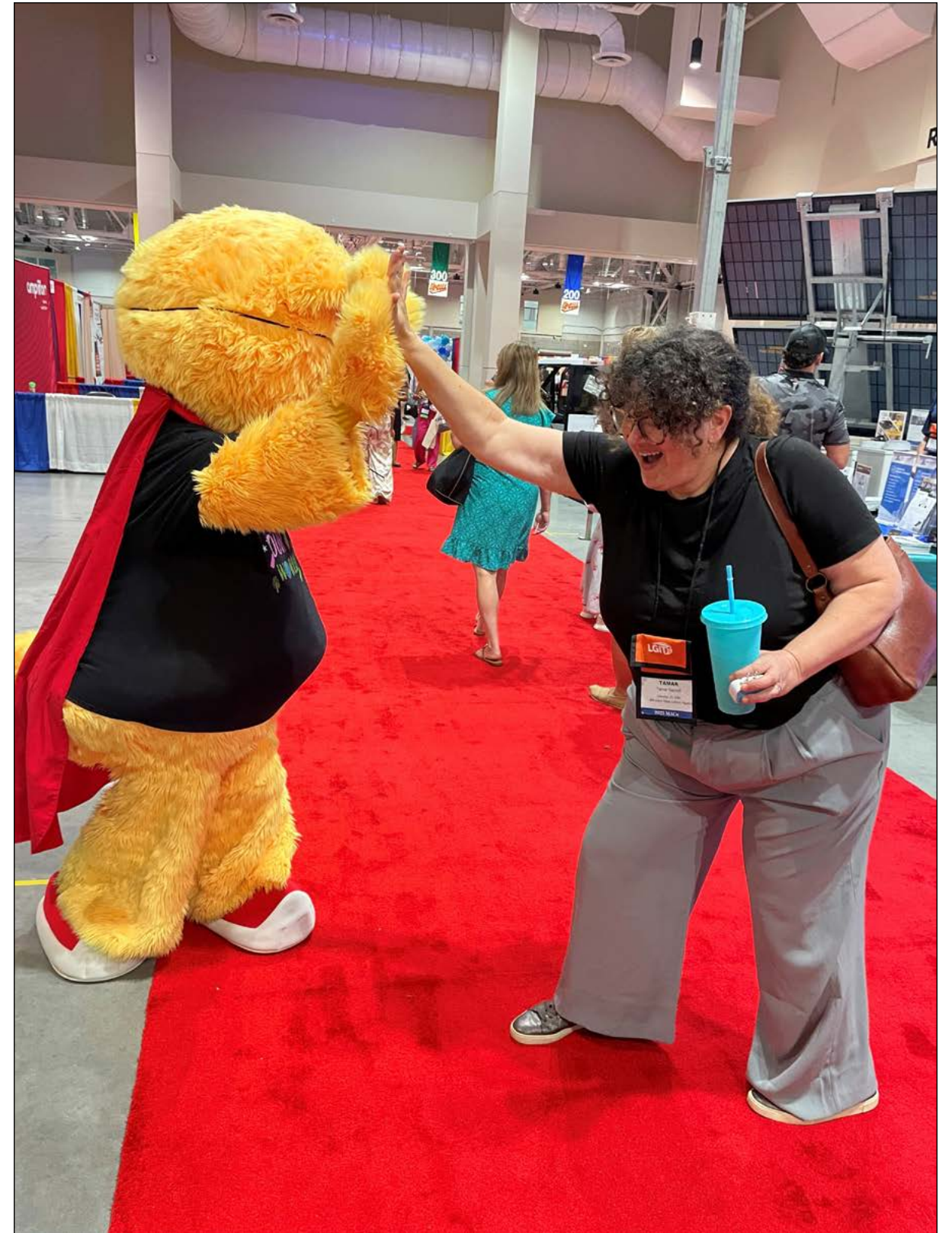
Library leaders from across the state gather at the Maryland Libraries booth during the Maryland Association of Counties Summer Conference in Ocean City. Photo courtesy of Tim Pratt, Maryland State Library Agency. 📷

Decorations, materials and ephemera fill the Maryland Libraries booth at the Maryland Association of Counties Summer Conference in Ocean City. Photo courtesy of Tim Pratt, Maryland State Library Agency. 💡

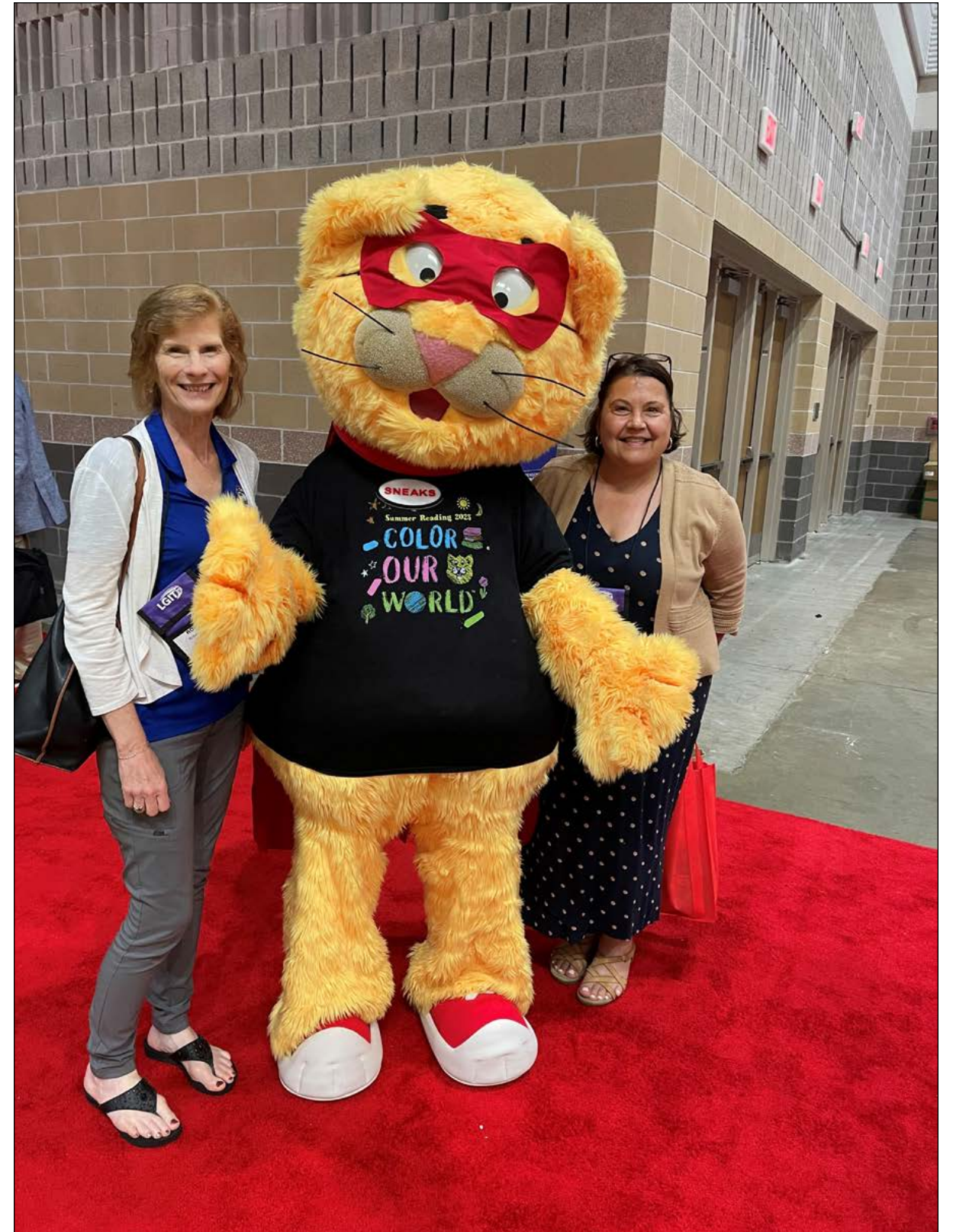
Coming up, photos courtesy of Joseph Thompson, Carroll County Public Library.


















Citizens for Maryland Libraries Annual Conference: Building Coalitions in Our Communities to Support and Advocate for Strong Libraries


Jim DeArme, Citizens for Maryland Libraries

ON OCTOBER 11, Citizens for Maryland Libraries (CML) hosted our annual CML Conference for Friends, Trustees and Library Supporters at the Busch Annapolis Library in Anne Arundel County. Our theme for this year was "Building Coalitions in Our Communities to Support and Advocate for Strong Libraries." Attendance was good and our lineup of speakers kept the group interested and engaged. After an introduction by the CEO of our host library, Skip Auld of Anne Arundel County Public Library, we heard from Maryland State Librarian Morgan Lehr Miller. The group was fascinated by her report on the Maryland State Library Agency's broad variety of responsibilities and was eager to hear about the State Librarian's activities locally, nationally, and internationally.


Three speakers filled the day with theme related talks and presentations:

 Maria McCauley, President Elect, American Library Association and Director of Libraries, Cambridge Public Libraries (MA).

Ms. McCauley spoke about the importance of building relationships and telling user stories to form a strong base of support for libraries. She highlighted how particularly important it is to have that community support when standing up against book bans. She made the strong point that libraries are not the gatekeepers of information; rather, it is a library's responsibility to provide patrons with a diverse array of perspectives and empower them to choose reading materials for themselves.

 Qiana Johnson, Associate Dean of Libraries, Collections and Content Strategies, Dartmouth Libraries.

Ms. Johnson's talk, "Making Connections: Expanding Your Advocacy Base Through Shared Values," focused on the need to identify common ground between your library and other organizations and the importance of building partnerships that provide mutual support. She pointed out that building relationships takes time and that it is important to identify clearly what each partner can do to support the other.

 Sophia Sotilleo, Immediate Past President, Freedom to Read Foundation; Vice-Provost and Dean of the Albin O. Kuhn Library and Gallery, University of Maryland Baltimore County.

Ms. Sotilleo presented a hands-on workshop entitled "Unlikely Allies: Building Partnerships to Defend the Freedom to Read." In this session, small groups brainstormed ways to identify new allies in our communities, strategies to build relationships and to identify and overcome challenges. The overall message was that libraries cannot fight book bans alone. Success requires community support and strong relationships with groups that share the library's values.

The day ended with a panel discussion featuring our speakers and led by Joseph Thompson, Director of Public Services, Carroll County Public Library. Based on the energy in the room and the active participation of the attendees, it was clear that the day was a success. Please be on the lookout for the next CML Conference in Autumn 2026. ■

*Morgan Lehr Miller, Maryland State Librarian.
Photo courtesy of Joseph Thompson,
Carroll County Public Library.*



The day wrapped up with a panel discussion on building coalitions to support and advocate for strong libraries. Left to right: Joseph Thompson, Director of Public Services, Carroll County Public Library; Qiana Johnson, Associate Dean of Libraries, Collections and Content Strategies, Dartmouth Libraries; Maria McCauley, Vice President/President-Elect, American Library Association, and Director of Libraries, Cambridge Public Library (MA); and Sophia Sotilleo, Immediate Past-President, Freedom to Read Foundation, and Vice-Provost and Dean of the Albin O. Kuhn Library and Gallery, University of Maryland Baltimore County. Photo courtesy of Sabine Simonson, Talbot County Free Library.

Imagination Library of Charles County Celebrates Over 100,000 Books Gifted!

Ashley Littleton, Charles County Public Library

Images courtesy of Ashley Littleton, Charles County Public Library.

THE CHARLES COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY (CCPL) recently celebrated an exciting milestone of more than 100,000 free books being mailed to children under five through its early literacy program, the Imagination Library of Charles County!

Launched in 2021 in partnership with **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**, the **Southern Maryland Regional Library Association (SMRLA)**, and the **Citizens for the Charles County Public Library, Inc. (C4CCPL)**, the program provides a new, age-appropriate book each month, mailed directly to a child's home at no cost to families.

Since its start, more than 5,400 children in Charles County have been enrolled, building home libraries and encouraging early literacy.

"This milestone is a testament to the incredible support from our community and the unwavering belief in the power of books to shape young minds," said Kenneth Wayne Thompson, Executive Director of CCPL.

The Imagination Library of Charles County is a library initiative supported in part by community donations and C4CCPL. Research shows that receiving books in the mail not only excites children about reading but also increases the amount of time families spend reading together.

To celebrate the 100K milestone, CCPL partnered with the Charles County Government's Media Services Division to share a short video highlighting the program's impact. We invite you to watch the video [here](#).

For more information about the Imagination Library of Charles County, visit ccplonline.org/imagination-library.



WELCOME TO THE

Imagination Library
OF CHARLES COUNTY

FREE Books for Kids Under 5!

Sign up today to receive a
FREE book every month!

For full program details
scan the code
or visit:
ccplonline.org

¡Bienvenidos a la

Imagination Library
OF CHARLES COUNTY

¡Libros Gratis para Niños Menores de 5 Años!

Regístrate hoy para recibir
un libro **GRATIS** cada mes.
Para obtener detalles
completos del programa,
escanee el código de aquí
abajo o visite:
ccplonline.org

Libraries the keepers of Imaginative Play

Varshea Smith, Baltimore County Public Library

Photos courtesy of Francine Lane, Baltimore County Public Library.

THE LIBRARY IS GREAT at offering a variety of creative programming for all ages. Family story times are one of the most attended programs at the Rosedale Branch of Baltimore County Public Library. This year, we set a goal to explore preschool-aged programming beyond our typical story time. We chatted with families within our community to better assess their needs. Many expressed an interest in having art-based activities available for their little ones. It was then decided that Rosedale would offer its first “Totally Untidy Toddler Time” program.

The goal of this program was—you guessed it!—to be untidy and get messy through creative play! Creative play is an essential part of a child’s physical, social, and emotional development. The program was loosely structured, allowing participants to engage with stations at their own pace. Five stations of play were made available: sensory, fingerpainting, water play, building, and an area to rest and read.

Families were encouraged to bring a change of clothes, and the floor was covered with a tarp to allow families to get as messy as they wanted. Despite it being our first time hosting this program, it was a success with a total 46 attendees. We plan to continue to offer “Totally Untidy Toddler Time” for families once a month. We will alternate between offering the program during weekdays and weekends to accommodate more families.

It is nice to note that no matter how much the world changes, libraries remain a pivotal part of childhood development and family bonding. ■



Librarian Varshea Smith (green SRC shirt) chats with families while they fingerprint.



Father and children play with Play-Doh at the sensory station.



Family engages with water play station.



- ◆ *The Rosedale Branch of Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL), one of two Storyville locations at BCPL. Storyville (also located at the Woodlawn Branch, which is currently under renovation) is a play-and-learn center designed to promote early literacy and school readiness skills. This child-sized village features developmentally appropriate books, toys and activities for children birth to age 5 and their parents or caregivers.*
- ◆ *Families play in “dirt” at the dig site. The dirt is actually Cocoa Pebbles cereal.*

Carroll County Public Library's Adult Battle of the Books Builds Community

*Lisa Picker and Ian Trawinski,
Carroll County Public Library
Photos courtesy of Carroll County
Public Library staff.*



BATTLE OF THE BOOKS reading competitions for students take place all over the country in many different formats. Carroll County Public Library started its Battle of the Books program in 2012, and focused on two age divisions: elementary and middle schools. The popular program quickly grew and gained momentum, until one day there was a request to adapt the fun and educational initiative to engage an *adult* audience.

Library staff were quick to meet the challenge and designed a program that would combine the typical Battle format with a pub trivia night feel. The result is the Battle of the Books After Hours, an adult-only reading trivia competition where teams of three to five answer questions relating to the content of six pre-determined books to see who knows the books the best. This approach makes reading a social activity and encourages adults to not only read but to share the experience with friends and family.

Over the course of the past four years, the scope of these events has expanded from two battles with just over 200 participants to three battles in the fall of 2025 with over 400 participants in total. Thanks to a combination of lively emcees, partnerships with local breweries and bookstores, a curated selection of books, thought-provoking questions, and venues with great atmosphere, food, and drinks, each battle is filled with enthusiasm.

According to one Battle of the Books After Hours attendee, "We appreciated the care and service of our hosts, as well as the clarity of rules and expectations of the battle. We had a great time and will do it every year, even if we have no hope of winning it! Ha-ha! Thanks for a great event for our book club to attend each year!"

The library recruits prominent faces in the community to serve as emcees, increasing library awareness and community engagement. Host breweries open on a night they are usually closed, happily supporting the library while profiting from packed houses of thirsty and hungry competitors.

School staff, businesses, book clubs, families, couples and more, form teams with clever names like "Lit Wits," "Not Your Mother's Book Club," and "Pints and Pages." Many teams

take part every year. Tickets for the three battle nights sell out within hours and a waitlist forms almost immediately due to the popularity and high demand. One attendee commented, "I love this event! I literally stalk the website for when registration opens!"

What began as an experiment in trying to see how Carroll County Public Library could adjust the formula of traditional Battle of The Books events to accommodate an adult audience has transformed into a successful annual program that helps to spread the joy of reading across all ages in our community. While the competition continues to grow and gain fans, the focus is on continuing the original winning formula, with another attendee reporting, "I have now participated in every Battle of the Books After Hours event, and it just keeps getting better and better! It's one of my favorite nights of the year."

To learn more about Carroll County Public Library's Battle of the Books After Hours reading competition for adults, visit <https://library.carr.org/programs/BoBafterhours.asp>. ■



Battle of the Books After Hours draws hundreds of adult readers each year to participate in a fierce night of reading trivia.



Participating for the first year, Lady Readers of a Certain Age named their team after Killers of a Certain Age by Deanna Raybourn, one of the six books from the 2024 reading list.



Competitors react as a correct answer is revealed by emcee Debbie Scheller during the 2023 Battle of the Books After Hours presented by Carroll County Public Library.



The Overbooked book club poses with their medals after winning one of three Battle of the Books After Hours held in 2024 by Carroll County Public Library.



Part of the fun of CCPL's Battle of the Books After Hours is in the creative names and spirit wear that the teams come up with like Pints and Pages did in 2024.



Celebrating 75 Years of St. Mary's County Library

Laura Boonchaisri, St. Mary's County Library

IN 1950, the St. Mary's County Memorial Library opened its doors in Leonardtown. The first public library in St. Mary's County opened thanks to the generosity of Mrs. Mary Patterson Davidson, who donated historic Tudor Hall and provided the necessary funding. What began with just a few thousand volumes in a historic home marked the start of a library system dedicated to meeting the needs of our community.

Over the past 75 years, the St. Mary's County Library updated our name and eventually expanded to include three library buildings and a new Mobile Library! St. Mary's County Library has embraced innovation while remaining a cornerstone for learning, exploration, and connection.

Today, the St. Mary's County Library stands as a vital community hub, welcoming over 300,000 visitors each year. Our mission remains clear: to connect people with ideas and information, promote literacy, and create spaces that inspire curiosity and creativity.

"Libraries have always been more than books—they are places where people come together, discover new opportunities, and feel connected," says Deputy Director Mary Anne Bowman. "As we celebrate 75 years, we are proud of our history and excited about the future."



“Revolutionary Stitches”!

Andie Craley, Harford Community College Library

Committee members: Andie Craley, Lois Entner, Jen Hart,

Julie Mancine, Amna Zigic

Photos courtesy of Andie Craley, Lois Entner, and Jennifer

Hart, Harford Community College Library.

HARFORD COMMUNITY COLLEGE LIBRARY had a great day and turnout for our “Revolutionary Stitches” Constitution Day Crafternoon held on the Library Patio to celebrate the 238th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution by the Constitutional Convention. See the Constitution Day and America 250 resources at https://harford.libguides.com/Constitution_Day, which also includes a “HCC Library Celebrates America 250” column with our “America 250 Spotlight Series” which documents our government information display that highlights monthly themes that “Celebrate America.”

“Revolutionary Stitches!” Crafternoon was a “make and take” homespun fun activity held on September 17, Constitution Day, to learn about handcrafting in the time of the early colonies and the Revolution. Almost 30 participants including students, staff, and community residents enjoyed learning embroidery, crochet, knitting, weaving on cardboard looms, and learning about drop spindle spinning. We also enjoyed a visit from a Founding Father passing out pocket Constitutions, with big thanks to Behavioral and Social Sciences Assistant Professor Jon Carpenter!

It was the perfect event to soft launch the Hays-Heighe House interactive exhibit, “Homespun: Textiles & Revolution,” looking forward to America 250 and scheduled for September 2025 through July 2026. The exhibit unveils the original “maker spaces” where American women helped to spin and weave the way to independence from Britain in the market disruptions before, during, and after the Revolutionary War. There will be demonstrations showcasing the steps involved in processing fiber into fabric. A variety of events are in association with a grant awarded through the WETA PBS station in DC, giving access to a future screening reel from Ken Burns’ upcoming documentary “The American Revolution” (premiering November 16) and a Transcription Party through the Library of Congress to help improve access to some of its historical collections. Our grant proposal stood out among more than 440 applications from libraries across the country. See the Hays-Heighe House Exhibit and Events at Harford LIVE for details on the



exhibit and programs: <https://www.harfordevents.com/p/presented-shows/live-at-harford/hays-heighe-house>.

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

Harford Community College Library is one of 53 Federal depository libraries in the region of Maryland, Delaware, and Washington D.C. all covered by the Regional depository

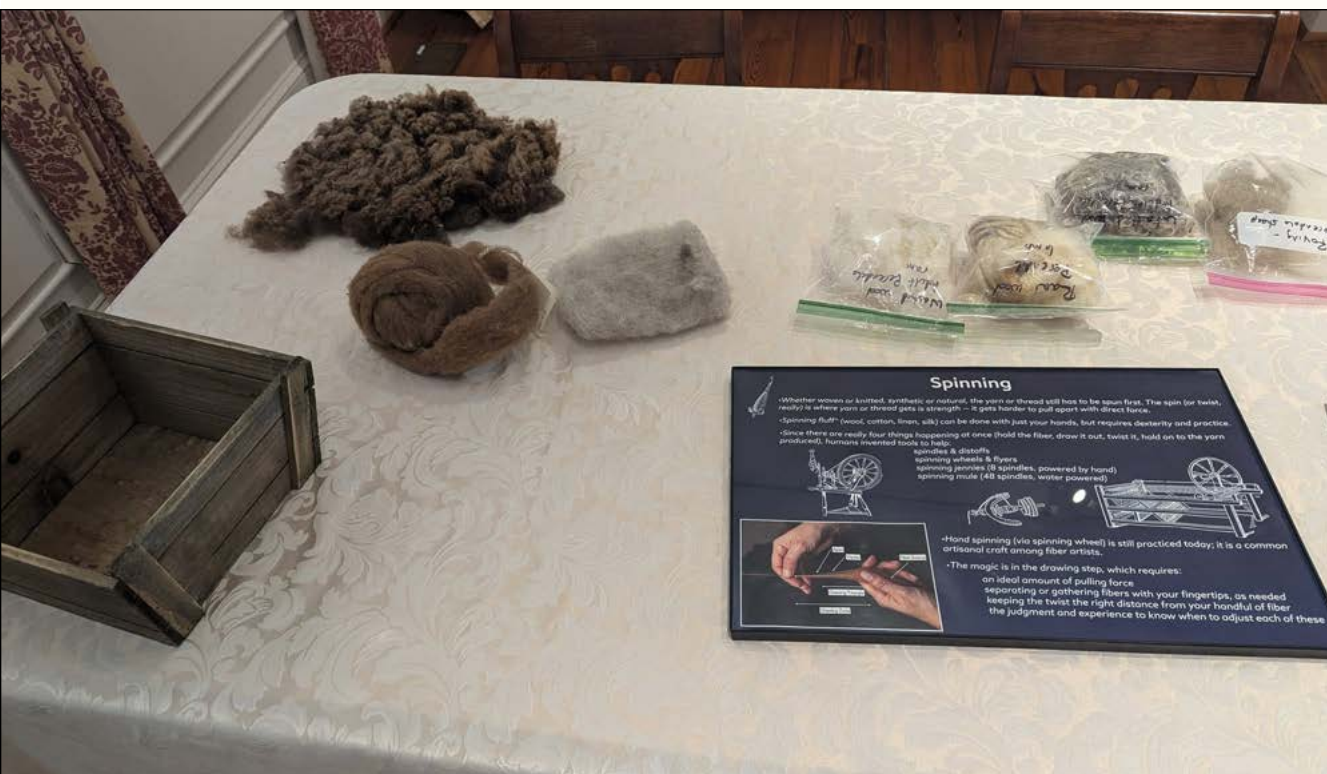
library at McKeldin Library at University of Maryland College Park. HCC Library is only one of two community college depositories in this region, the other being in Delaware. The library is also one of seven community college depository libraries in the [Northeast National Collection Service Area \(NCSA\)](#). For more information about Harford Community College Library’s involvement in the Federal Depository Library Program, see our [Federal Depository Library Program webpage](#) and our [Government Information at HCC Library LibGuide](#).

Hays-Heighe House at Harford Community College was built in 1808 and renovated in 2007. The house was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 and is the first place in Harford County to be put on the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. In 2010, the house held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to open its first exhibit and in 2011 it was opened for community use and special events. The property is used as a museum that highlights points in history through active exhibits, tours, and event programming, as well as event space for classes, meetings, and special rentals. For more information about the Hays-Heighe House history and current exhibit, see [Hays-Heighe House History](#) and [Hays-Heighe House Events](#). ■

Continue on to the Revolutionary Stitches photo gallery.











A Piecemeal Approach to AI Education

Puzzles as an Inexpensive, Transferable, and Analogue Medium for AI Literacy

Skylar Hoffman, Montgomery County Public Libraries

Photos courtesy of Skylar Hoffman, Montgomery County Public Libraries.

THE RAPID IMPROVEMENT of generative AI has been a seismic shift in the information landscape of late, prompting us as librarians and as a society to ask deep questions about fair use, copyright, media literacy, education, and more. But perhaps the most unsettling of these questions for the average person is: can I recognize AI? Is that picture, video, or soundbite real? And, for those with a handful of kids running around: how come they can tell when I can't?

Moreover, AI generators are increasingly leveraged by scammers to churn out polished text and glossy graphics at the click of a button, streamlining the process of fleecing the unsuspecting. As such, the ability to recognize AI assets has become an important first line of defense against everything from online retail scams and phishing emails to deepfakes.

At MCPL, I have found an unusual analogue tool to help teach these skills: puzzles. A few Decembers ago, a coworker brought in a puzzle to our breakroom for staff to assemble. I immediately clocked the seasonal art as AI generated and did a double take. (Dear god, it's escaped the screen.) What started as informational slides for my coworkers has since evolved into a passive program to help explain telltale signs of AI images (what I call AI Artifacts) to audiences of all skill levels. Using other puzzles with AI-generated graphics from the same company, this activity encourages patrons to learn while they play.

Set Up

The program's setup is simple and easily replicable. You'll need:

- 🧩 A puzzle printed with AI art (I've been using 500-piece Springbok puzzles—be aware that not all of their catalogue is AI! Some investigation is required.) These puzzles usually

cost \$15 - \$20, not including shipping.

- 🧩 Printed and laminated slides with instruction and examples
- 🧩 A table or counter large enough to accommodate the materials (with extra space to spread out all the pieces)

I usually leave each puzzle out for a month and a half, disassembling parts of the puzzle each time it is completed.

I recommend you select puzzles with whimsical fantasy art full of saccharine colors and intricate detail. This is the kind of art that people refer to when they say that something looks like AI. For each puzzle, comb through the image looking for the artifacts that will be most recognizable to a general audience when pointed out. Take an HD image of the art and cut out those artifacts (the masking tool in GIMP makes this easy) to create slides pairing examples with explanations. Then print out and laminate the slides to display alongside the puzzle. (Often, I try to make the image larger than life on the slides so the details will be more noticeable and will be accessible to older patrons with poor eyesight.)

These example slides aim both to explain how this particular image is a product of AI generation and to teach the broader concepts that will be applicable to recognizing AI images in the wild. As patrons study the pieces to decide where in the puzzle they belong, I hope they will take the time to internalize what they've just learned and find other instances of that kind of artifact elsewhere in the puzzle.

In addition to the example slides for that puzzle, I also made a handful of slides that I reuse with every puzzle explaining higher-level concepts like saturation and contrast, which are best seen at a glance. These skills will help participants to pick out an image



Uncanny or False Objects

These candy canes seem to squirm off the page. Is the red item on the right a ribbon or a shoe? Is it sitting on a present, or a bitten pastry? If an object in the image seems to be melting or spliced with something else, it's probably AI.

Logical Inconsistencies

People think of computers as logical and

Detail Showing an AI Artifact: slide example showing how artifacts are cut out and enlarged (Hot Cocoa Season by Springbok).

from a Google search at home and flag it for closer inspection. (This is the skill that most children from grade school to high school rely on to recognize AI images.)

Finally, I made six slides that I display nearby which provide background information (with citations!) on what AI is, how it works, and some current information about what it can and can't do. For example, I highlighted the way that Google embeds an AI Summary as the first "search result" to help patrons recognize and evaluate the information they consume when they search on their own.

Impact

Our patrons often complete the 500-piece puzzles nearly 10 times in their six-week run. We've seen a lot of interest from seniors, as well as groups of kids and teens who will work on the puzzle together as a social activity. Many parents use the puzzle as an opportunity to spend a few minutes sitting down not entertaining their children.

When I see people working on the puzzle, I try to sidle over and ask if they realized the image was AI generated. Based on several months of impromptu surveys, I've found that most kids who are school-aged recognize that it's AI without prompting based on vibes. It's their parents who are shocked! My conversations with parents and seniors reinforce that breaking down AI images and discussing the artifacts are of great benefit to these audiences, who need additional guidance. It's also common for patrons to spend half an hour working on the puzzle, completely oblivious to the fact that the slides on the table with it are relevant. (As we've joked at every library I've worked at: no one ever reads the signs.) Interacting with patrons as they work on the puzzle is a great way to prompt engagement with the educational side of the activity.

My favorite interactions are when parents will work on the puzzle with their kids while discussing the slides. It's very rewarding to overhear a mother discussing AI datasets with her 10-year-old and to know that I laid the groundwork for an impromptu lesson about personal security while browsing the internet. One of my coworkers relayed a very touching compliment given to me by a family on a day I was not at work. The family came in and worked on the puzzle together for a while. Afterwards, they stopped at the information desk to explain how meaningful it was to them personally, as both parents work in fields heavily impacted by AI. They asked if we had any other AI education programming planned, because they felt it was so important for young people to develop literacy around AI tools. I love how interactions like this broaden the potential reach of what could be seen as a simple passive program, through connecting the material to ongoing family conversations and to other, more in-depth library programming.



Puzzle Station showing the completed puzzle and slides arranged on a card table (Fruitful Dream Village by Springbok).

Difficulties

Alongside the positive engagement, there have also been some downsides:

- 🪞 Cost of puzzles
- 🪞 Missing pieces
- 🪞 Patron demand (the double-edged sword)
- 🪞 Unexpected conversations (neutral or contentious)

As expected, it is basically impossible to keep all 500 pieces from wandering off. So far, I've had only one puzzle which ended its 45-day run intact (a very exciting feat, because I was able to box it back up and send it to a different branch for reuse). Puzzles are

generally \$15-20 without shipping costs, which can get expensive. Losing just a few pieces is especially frustrating in light of the fact that all the work done on creating the slides is completely transferable to another library, if only the puzzle could be reused! Patrons often finish a puzzle early in its run and start asking when the new one will be put out. While this is great from an engagement perspective, I have had to develop a handful of tactful responses that do not point out how expensive it would be to buy a new puzzle every two weeks, nor how time-consuming it is to set up more slides. The activity sometimes sparks conversations from people who want to tell me all about how they use AI chatbots to suggest recipes for them, and I have to be very professional about telling them that's not a great idea. (I count my blessings that no one has yet told me they ask Chat GPT medical questions...)

Finally, a minority of patrons will become a little... combative on the topic of AI. Because AI is more than a technology in many peoples' minds, they often have emotional reactions, attachments, or reservations about it (myself included!), and so responses to the material can be unpredictable. From teenagers who express disbelief at AI's limitations or ethical concerns, to adults who become defensive and refuse to engage with the AI side of the program, it can be difficult to anticipate who will push back and when. I take each new interaction as it comes, knowing that experience will be my best teacher, and try to redirect into something constructive like Socratic questioning. However, considering how contentious AI discussions are today, I have been pleasantly surprised by how few negative interactions I've had over the program. Mostly people are just excited to work on a puzzle!

Conclusion

I am optimistic that by breaking down AI images and explaining them, our patrons will begin to see AI as less mystical and recognize it for the technical tool it is, with all the opportunities and pitfalls inherent in it. I want them to feel empowered to examine images themselves, rather than depending on their grandkids or nieces and nephews to tell them "Yes, that's AI." I want to move the conversation beyond "Is this AI?" and towards "How do we behave safely with AI? What regulations should we have? How can humans protect their work from being scraped?" These more nuanced questions feel impossible to discuss when so many people don't understand what AI is.

By introducing this information in bite-sized pieces with a fun activity, I hope to lay the groundwork for more in-depth education later. At least two of my colleagues at my branch are also interested in hosting AI education programs; we strategize on how our ideas can dovetail into each other to promote more holistic learning for our patrons. I also offer my slides to other branches within my system, so if they want to buy a copy of one of the

puzzles, they can print off my materials and set it up easily at their own library.

I hope my account of this program will help inspire others to think about analogue ways to approach AI education. While buying puzzles every other month isn't exactly cheap, it's far cheaper than a digital set-up. It's also more approachable for many patrons who feel uncomfortable with technology—who need this information just as much as everyone else. For colleagues, this program suggests that even modest, analogue activities can become stepping-stones into larger digital literacy initiatives. I look forward to the wave of creativity my fellow information professionals will unleash as we find new ways to tackle our emerging media literacy challenges. ■





Citizens for Maryland
LIBRARIES



MARYLAND
LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION

Become a Maryland Library Advocate!

OutRAIGeous Reviews

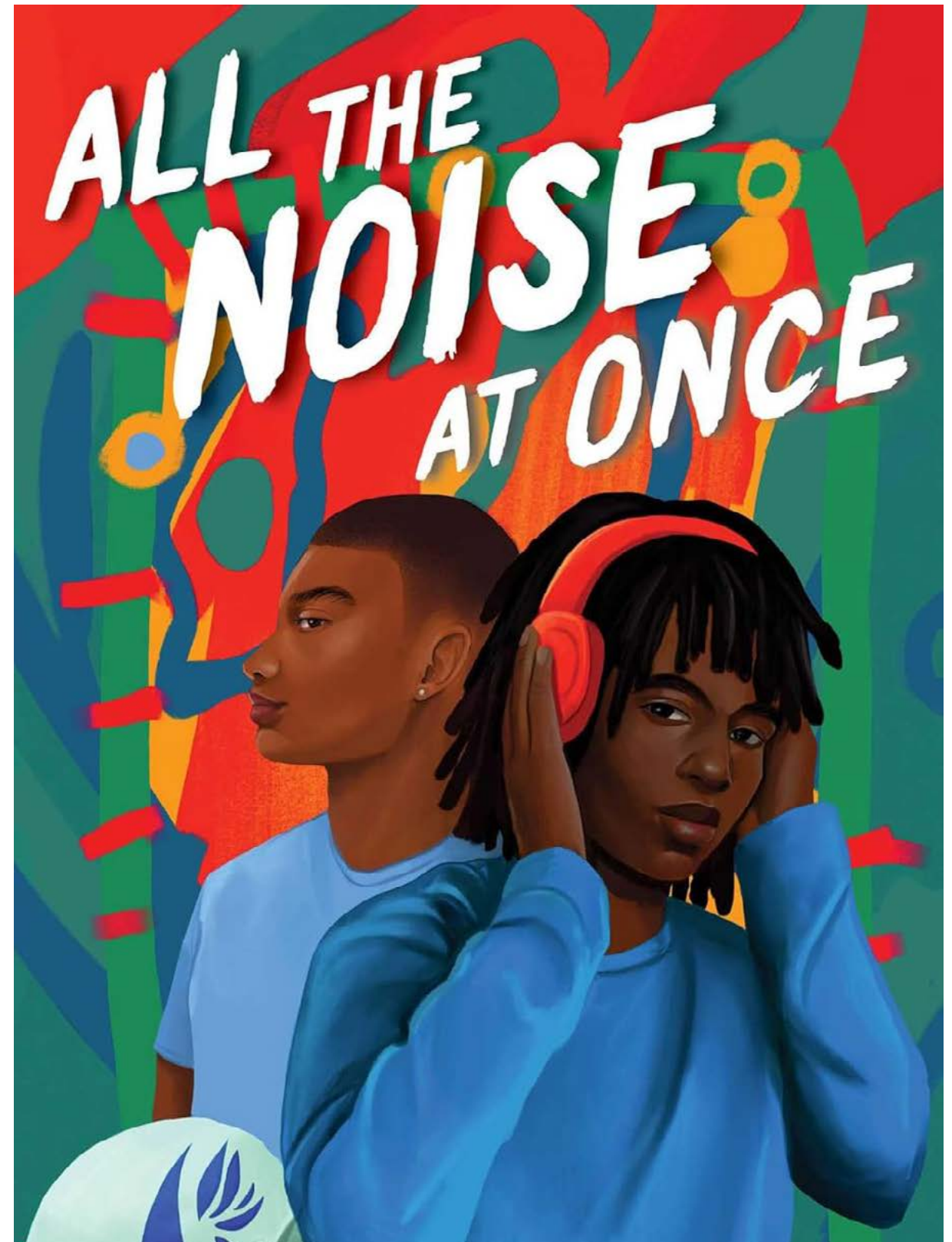
*Books recommended by members of
the Reader's Advisory Interest Group*

All the Noise at Once, by DeAndra Davis (Atheneum Books for
Young Readers, 2025)

Review by Theo Scully

Aiden's biggest wish is to join his high school football team and play alongside his older brother, Brandon, before he goes off to college. However, as an autistic Black teen, Aiden faces more challenges than the average high schooler; when he has a meltdown during tryouts, he thinks that his dream is lost. When a spot on the team opens up and Aiden fills in, his teammates are not so pleased and make it known. A verbal altercation between Aiden and several teammates turns into a physical fight; when Brandon intervenes, the cops are called and Brandon is arrested. He is charged while his white teammates are released, and Aiden can see everything Brandon has worked for slipping away. As Brandon's trial approaches, Aiden begins looking for a way to clear his brother's name, all while navigating being Black and autistic.

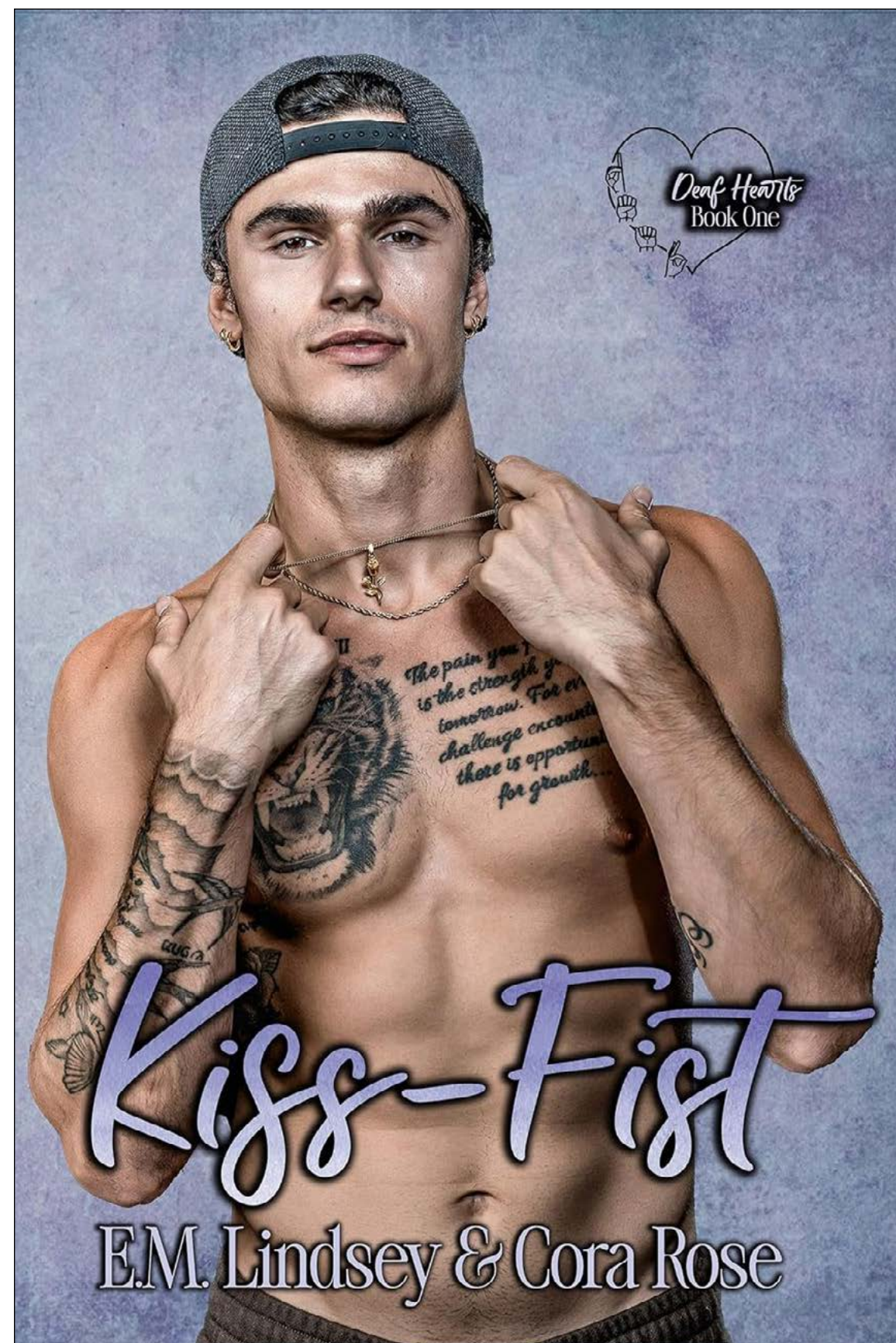
The autistic representation in this book is heartfelt, accurate, accessible, and poignant—even as the reader learns about Aiden's diagnosis and the way it affects every part of his life, we are also shown the accountability he has to take for his actions. The discussions around race—how while it may not be the only factor, it is still absolutely one of the biggest factors in a criminal case—is incredibly important for teens to hear and is discussed in an accessible and factual manner. Furthermore, the sports sequences are not alienating; as someone who is NOT a sports fan, I found the passages about football to be engaging and entertaining. Fans of *The Luis Ortega Survival Club* and *Dear Martin* will love *All the Noise at Once* and any reader can be sure to count this as one of the best debut titles of 2025. ■



***Kiss-Fist* by Cora Rose and E.M. Lindsey**
(independently published, 2025)

Review by Amanda Crabill

Kiss-Fist is the first book in a new series called “Deaf Hearts.” The first main character we meet is Robbie, who is an Ancient History professor at a community college. He is sassy, dramatic, hilarious, and happens to be deaf. Our other main character is Thom (pronounced Tom), who co-owns a gym with his brother. He is a sweet, encouraging gym-bro and happens to struggle with severe ADHD and dyslexia. There is a hilarious meet-cute at the gym, which continues with the men struggling to understand each other and facing the instant attraction they have towards each other. This book is spicy, hilarious, and full of emotions. You feel the characters’ frustrations, sadness, and happiness. From the viewpoint of a hearing person, it was interesting to learn about the intricacies of the Deaf community and how Robbie struggles against his personal reasons for not wanting to be involved with someone from the hearing community. Thom’s challenges include his struggles to communicate via text, his own insecurities with self-worth due to his learning disabilities, and his ardent desire to learn how to talk with and get to know Robbie. This was a great read and I can’t wait for the next story in the series. *Kiss-Fist* is available as an e-book, audiobook, and physical edition. ■

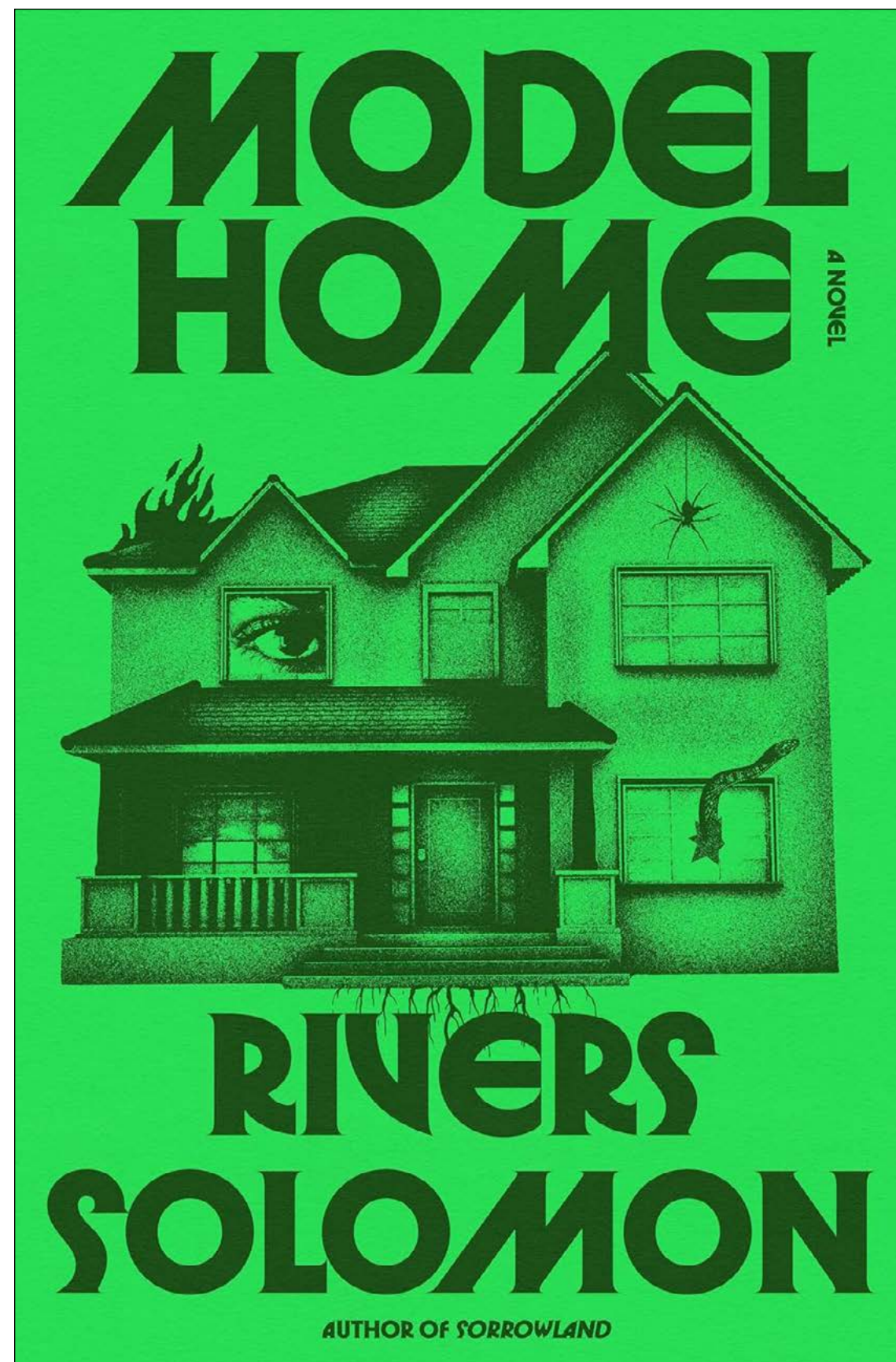


***Model Home* by Rivers Solomon, narrated by Gabby Beans (MCD/Macmillan Audio, 2024)**

Review by Tracey Gilchrist

Fat, Black, queer, racism, generational trauma horror? I would say sign me up, but I've finished listening to the audiobook and now I feel emotionally wrecked. This is a heavy read with a slew of triggers, so take that into account before you pick this up. The author's writing style seems to be a barrier to people connecting with this story, so I highly recommend the audiobook. Solomon's prose style translates well to the lyrical voice of the narrator, Gabby Beans.

This is a horror book where metaphors are heavily used to portray what's really scary about the plot and what's haunting the Maxwell siblings. For me, it's executed expertly. This book made me want to ask the author what the hell is wrong with them and then immediately follow up to ask if they're okay. I give *Model Home* 4.25 stars out of 5. ■





Maryland Library Association's Future of Libraries Interest Group



In an efficient future, the library provides a shuttle bus to the moon, that makes people feel charmed. With a lot of employment opportunities relocated to the moon, the library's shuttle bus provides free transport to job sites. Library materials included on the bus for customer convenience.

Things from Future Libraries: The Futures Bazaar

Tracy Miller, Harford County Public Library

Photographs courtesy of program participants.

On Thursday, October 2, the Future of Libraries Interest Group (FOLIG) sponsored the "Things from Future Libraries" program at the Abingdon branch of Harford County Public Library. This in-person, interactive program allowed participants to time-travel to the future and bring back "artifacts" from libraries there.

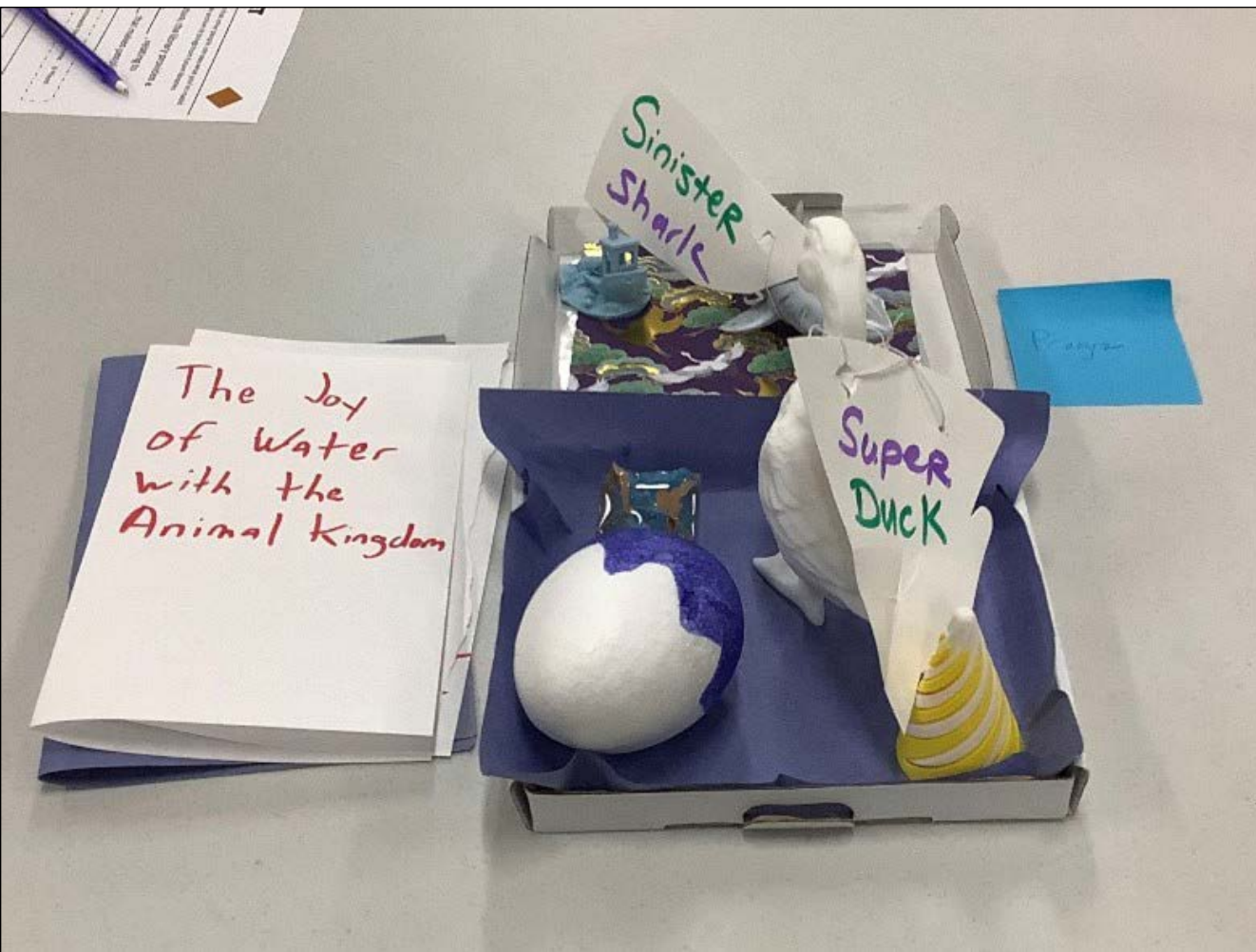
This fun workshop was based on an activity created by Situation Lab, "Futures Bazaar." The Futures Bazaar is described as "a design jam or creative gathering, where people bring in 'junk' items from home, and transform them into unique 'artifacts from the future,' to provoke, amuse, and inspire one another. Every participant helps imagine and produce these future artifacts, and every artifact tells a story." More information is available here: <https://www.bbc.com/gel/features/futures-bazaar-toolkit>.

The Futures Bazaar was adapted (with permission) for use in libraries by staff at the Idaho Commission of Libraries. Libraries are filled with creative people—and lots of random 'junk!'—so it seemed like the perfect fit. The Idaho Commission for Libraries created materials and trainings in support of future thinking in libraries, so they are a great resource if you are interested in the topic. More information is available on their website: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/splat/library-futures/>.

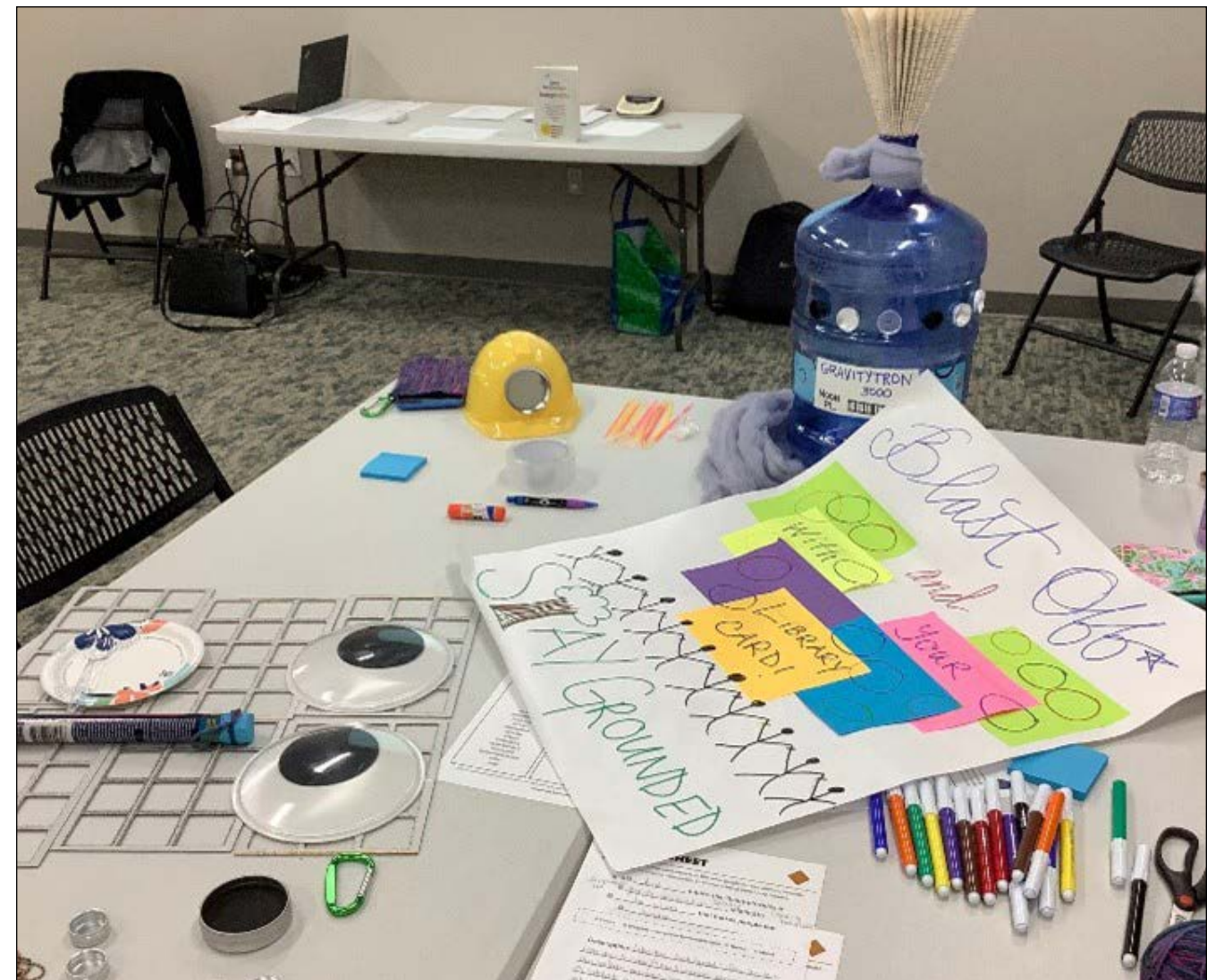
Participants in the program completed a number of activities to learn more about future thinking and to warm themselves up for the main activity: creating a service, a program, and a borrowable item for their future library. Each future library had a particular theme, mood, and future. For example, one team imagined their library in a future world that was kind, full of wonder, and had a lunar theme. Using that description, the team created a "Goodnight Earth" storytime for future library customers on the moon. The story was an adaptation of the classic tale, designed for ages zero to five. Current librarians will recognize the basic structure of this storytime, focused on gross and fine motor skills.

Another team created a library for a joyous future, relating to the theme of water that made people feel dignified. They imagined a water purification service for their library of the future, as well as water-life-cycle-themed programming for children and a cleaning robot to borrow. The third team was challenged with an efficient future that was focused on the moon and also made people feel charmed. Their library focused on a future moon workforce, providing transportation, entertainment, and useful items to navigate zero gravity.

Check out the photographs of what the teams created! And if a program like this sounds fun and interesting to you, we hope to facilitate another opportunity to participate at the MLA/DLA Conference in May 2026.



In a joyous future, the library provides a program related to water that makes people feel dignified. A children's program in the summer teaches kids about the water life cycle through play, with a children's book featuring Super Duck and Sinister Shark. The program uses purified water and is intended for outdoor use only.



In a kind future, the library provides a borrowable item related to the moon that makes people feel wonder. The water bottle object at the back is a machine that simulates the "gravity on earth" experience. Some younger customers have never experienced full gravity. It has cozy touches like paper (which is very rare on the moon) to remind people of home.



Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Panel

Affinity Networks: Spaces Worth Building

William Wallace, Wicomico Public Library

In a time of political pressure and budget strains, it's tempting to step back from equity work. But the need for it is plain: when we build spaces that honor identity and lived experience, everyone—veterans, seniors, LGBTQ people, disabled patrons, working parents, rural communities—benefits. Maryland Library Association members have asked for such spaces, and MLA has answered with Affinity Networks.

Affinity Networks (often called Affinity Groups) are member-led spaces for people who share a specific identity to gather, reflect, and support one another. Within them, members discuss how their identity shapes their work in libraries, the challenges, the joys, and the strategies for navigating bias and assumptions. These are not committees or public programs; they are protected circles of conversation and care.

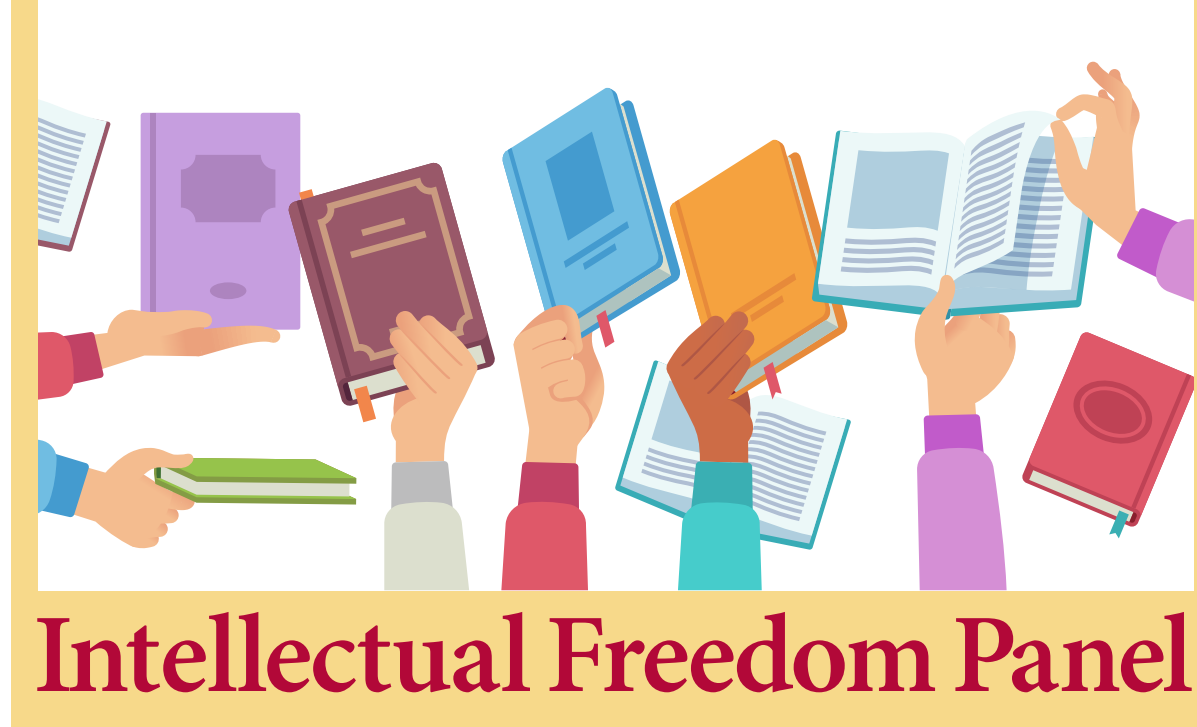
Each network will be guided by a volunteer facilitator chosen and trained by MLA's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Panel. Networks will meet monthly—virtually or in person—to share stories and build community. There is no expectation of programming or public output; the work itself is the connection. Over time, these conversations can spark ideas that make Maryland libraries more inclusive, responsive, and resilient.

Why join? Because these spaces strengthen us. They give us room to breathe, to listen, to learn, and to return to our libraries with renewed insight and energy. Even if you do not share a particular identity, your support matters. Recognizing and respecting these networks affirms that every part of our profession belongs.

Libraries exist because knowledge leads to freedom. Affinity Networks carry that principle inward as they let us learn from each other's lived realities so we can serve our communities with intention and care. As activist Mia Mingus reminds us, "Solidarity is not a checklist, it is a practice." Joining, or simply championing, an Affinity Network is one way to practice that solidarity.

Calls for new networks will open twice a year in May and December. If you see a need, step forward: propose a network, volunteer as a facilitator, or lend your perspective to an existing group. Each voice adds depth, and each hand lightens the load.

This work is not performative. It's rooted in compassion, accessibility, and justice; the same values that define our libraries at their best. Let's meet each other where we are, walk together toward where we dream to go, and build spaces worthy of the people we serve. This work is worthy. It needs you. ■



Intellectual Freedom Panel News

Lloyd Jansen, Charles County Public Library

Maryland Intellectual Freedom Round-Up

Perhaps the biggest Maryland-related intellectual freedom story of the moment is the Harford County School Board banning the book *Flamer* by Mike Curato on the grounds it contains graphic language and vulgarity. The school board decision, made behind closed doors and after an internal review committee and the superintendent supported retaining the book, prompted [protests](#) from parents and educators. An appeal over the decision to remove the book from Harford County Public Schools is going to the Maryland State Board of Education.

There is still quite a bit of buzz about the Montgomery County [Mahmoud v. Taylor](#) Supreme Court decision, which said the school district had to allow parents to opt-out of classroom curricula if the parents believe there is a threat of undermining the family's religious beliefs. Parents objecting to LGBTQ+ books included in the public-school curriculum prompted the case. An important fact to remember is that this decision is limited to the classroom curriculum and does not include school libraries.

There's Nothing Scariest Than Banning Books! IFP Book Discussion

The Intellectual Freedom Panel (IFP) held an online banned book discussion via MLA Connect on October 30 where participants spoke briefly about their favorite banned books. The *Crab* deadline was prior to the event taking place, but I am confident the discussion

was a raging success! More details and a recap will be in this space in the winter edition of *the Crab*.

SIFnet News

A new 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 July 16, August 20, and September 17. Many thanks to Witt Salley for representing the IFP at the September meeting.

Alaska

Senator Scott Kawasaki's office is convening biweekly meetings on a Freedom-to-Read bill with participation from the Alaska Library Association, the American Library Association (ALA), and Penguin Random House. | The Matanuska-Susitna Library Board adopted a Material Selection Approval policy requiring pre-purchase lists to go to the board.

Arkansas

The Central Arkansas Library System (CALS) produced a [video](#) showing the work, training, and expertise that goes into selecting materials for a library collection. In other words, this is professional work and not something easily taken over by inexperienced board members or politicians.

Connecticut

Some districts are excluding school librarians in policy drafting despite statutory expectations. Advocates are seeking to restore Department of Education representation for school libraries.

Florida

U.S. District Court Judge Carlos E. Mendoza **struck down** significant portions of Florida's House Bill 1069.

Maine

The New England Intellectual Freedom Helpline launched; volunteer training is underway.

Michigan

Hart Area Public Library board **retains** *Gender Queer* after challenge.

Judge **denies request** to toss school librarian's harassment suit against Moms for Liberty parent.

The **Michigan Right to Read petition** has approx. 4,000 signatures, and organizers plan to deliver it to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in October.

New Jersey

The Freedom to Read Act takes effect December 6, 2025, and requires public and school libraries to maintain selection and reconsideration policies under state oversight. The Department of Education has issued model policies, and subscription policy services have released aligned templates.

At least one district requires two weeks' advance publication of read-aloud lists to facilitate parent opt-outs.

A school district requested three years of circulation history with student names; stakeholders flagged potential FERPA implications.

North Carolina

Jackson County (Western NC) votes to leave regional system over LGBTQ+ materials.

Governor veto on **H805** was **overturned**. Cleveland County Schools ended student-ID access to public-library materials on October 22. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, with approximately 141,000 students, instructed teachers the day before school began to inventory every classroom-library book for public listing. ACLU of North Carolina is collecting burden reports. Wake County retained *The Kite Runner* in high-school libraries.

Pennsylvania

West Shore School District sent a proposed library policy back for further work after criticism that included 22 of 26 emails and six public comments opposing or raising concerns that the policy could restrict access to classic literature by the likes of Chaucer and Shakespeare.

Rhode Island

Governor McKee Signs **Freedom to Read Act**

Tennessee

Sumner County policy to ban "transgender books" **fails** to pass a third time.

Chair of Library Board tries to use **Little v. Llano County** decision to justify the policy, which appears to be very similar to the Rutherford County policy that was rescinded after the PEN America and ACLU of TN lawsuit was filed.

Tennessee Association of School Librarians are meeting with Rep. McKenzie (Knoxville), EdTrust Tenn., and Skip Dye (Penguin Random House) to start working on a new Right to Read bill.

Survey trends (2022-2024): Administrative intervention in book removals reached 65%, district-level involvement reached 62%; reports of self-censorship increased; some titles supporting Greek and Roman civilization, art, and mythology were removed; a district implemented an AI tool to review entire collections.

Texas

There has been **pushback** over the state's book banning law. There is also reported scope creep in state education guidance, causing confusion. Examples include directing districts to catalog classroom-library materials in the school ILS and label them accordingly; and expecting board approval for weeding.

Some advocates have urged law enforcement to pursue criminal complaints and have pressed public libraries to move specific materials to adult collections or to limit minors' borrowing.

Wyoming

The Wyoming Library Association, library directors, and library supporters testified against a draft bill copy/pasted from Iowa legislation, **"Sexually explicit materials in libraries,"** on August 12. The Joint Judiciary met on October 13 at 9:30 a.m. to discuss the draft bill.

A consultant's initial recalibration report suggested removing 143 full-time employees from school-library staffing.

A county library board removed all references to ALA from its policy documents.

Princess Princess Ever After by Katie O'Neill was retained in the children's section at Natrona County Library. ■

LGBTQ+ Interest Group

Overlooked Local, Queer History

Benjamin Egerman, Enoch Pratt Free Library; Taryn Tranby, Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled; and Shannon Carney, Baltimore County Public Library

Because being queer has not always been accepted in society, much of queer history was not written down. Our legacies are often kept alive through oral tradition. Wider acceptance of the queer community, along with the advent of the internet, has made our stories much easier to share. In honor of LGBTQ History Month in October, we compiled five local, queer history facts that may sometimes end up being overlooked.

📖 The first national group for Black LGBTQ+ people, the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays, was founded in Columbia, Maryland in the 1970's. They were one of the first organizations to initiate HIV/AIDS prevention methods in the black community. They published a quarterly magazine titled *Black/Out* that highlighted black erasure from LGBT spaces. Unfortunately, the group dissolved by the 1990s.

📖 The first lesbian organization on the East Coast was started in 1958 by Barbara Gittings. Barbara was a librarian who also organized the earliest American protests for gay rights and later founded the ALA's Rainbow Round Table. She regularly advocated and campaigned for materials in libraries that depicted homosexuality in a positive light.

📖 In the 1960 and 70s, a popular drag bar called The Gold Key Club turned a struggling Southern Maryland beach town into DC and Baltimore's premier gay getaway every summer. The club's location is now the Twin Beaches branch of Calvert Library.

📖 Rachel Carson is the author of *Silent Spring* and is considered by many the mother of the modern environmental movement in the US. She was also queer! She had a very close relationship with Dorothy Freeman in Southport, Maine. In true historical fashion

and typical erasure of Queer history, they have been remembered as "very close friends."

Carson passed from metastatic breast cancer in Silver Spring in 1964, but before that, she and Freeman reportedly destroyed hundreds of written correspondences they shared.

Taken from the Wikipedia page on Rachel Carson: "One of the letters from Carson to Freeman reads: "But, oh darling, I want to be with you so terribly that it hurts!", while in another, Freeman writes: "I love you beyond expression... My love is boundless as the Sea." Carson's last letter to Freeman before her death ends with: "Never forget, dear one, how deeply I have loved you all these years." "

📖 The first official gay bar in Baltimore was called Leon's. Originally known as the Georgia Tap Room in the 1800's, the bar had always been a home to the gay community. It survived through prohibition by operating as a speakeasy. In 1957 Leon's, named for Leon Lampe, the bar's owner in the 1930's, officially became a gay bar and still operates on Park Avenue.

We hope this inspires you to find more queer history around you and serves as a reminder that we have always been here! ■

Youth Services Division

Youth Services Division News

Jessica Letizia, Baltimore County Public Library

Happy Fall, YSD Members!

Now that the excitement and chaos of summer is over, I hope you are all settling into a new routine at your branches as the temperatures begin to cool down. If you are like me, you may be feeling anxious about the swiftly changing headlines. I can almost always find comfort in a book, whether I'm guiding my second grader through First Readers, reading aloud an old favorite picture book at Storytime (my favorite is *Little Blue Truck*!) or curling up with historical fiction just for me. In a world that feels very uncertain right now, I'm seeking out what makes me feel safe, and many of our library visitors may feel the same way. As library workers we may be tired, we may be worried, but what we do every day makes a difference.

Division Updates

The 2026 Kids are Customers Too Conference Planning Committee has hit the ground running and is currently deciding on our Keynote Speaker, date, and location! More information—including how to apply to present at the conference in early spring—will be available soon.

The Fall Black Eyed Susan Tapestry was held virtually on Thursday, October 16, featuring author David LaRochelle as guest speaker! I would like to extend big "thank-yous" to the Planning Committee, Joe Farmarco, and Noel Knepper. We are always looking for more Group Discussion Leaders; please reach out to Joe and/or Noel if you're interested for next year.

Our November meeting will be at the Largo-Kettering Branch of Prince George's County Memorial Library System! Please consider joining us in-person! If that's not possible, the meeting will also be offered virtually on MLA Connect.



Content Wanted!

You've put in the time and creativity to develop educational and engaging programs—now it's your time to shine!

This is your space to proudly showcase your hard work and share your successes with fellow educators and peers. Inspire others, celebrate your impact, and keep the momentum going!

The MLA Youth Services Division's quarterly newsletter highlights recent library programs, upcoming events & opportunities, tips and ideas, and trends in children's library services in Maryland. Current & past issues may be viewed [here](#).

ISSUE	DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS	PUBLICATION DATE
Summer	June 15	July 1
Fall	September 15	October 1
Winter	December 15	January 1
Spring	March 15	April 1

Alyssia Gilmore, Harford County Public Library

About Alyssia's job and MLA responsibilities

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

I'm the Circulation Manager at the Edgewood Branch of Harford County Public Library. My journey in the library world began as a student worker at Albert S. Cook Library at Towson University, where I developed a passion for the field. As a student librarian, I handled tasks like shelving books, assisting patrons, coordinating programs, and maintaining the library's organization. Now, as a Circulation Manager, I oversee the lending process, manage library resources, and ensure smooth operations for our community.

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

As the Marketing Committee Chair



for MLA, I have a pivotal role in shaping the outreach and engagement strategies. My involvement in conference planning meetings has been invaluable, ensuring that our events are well organized and impactful. Currently, the Marketing team's work on the Social Media Content Development Strategy and Social Media Editorial Calendar is set to enhance our online presence significantly. Furthermore, my volunteer efforts at MLA events such as the Baltimore Book Festival, Poe Fest, and the Festival of Trees, along with my assistance at the MLA/DLA Conference, will undoubtedly contribute to the success and vibrancy of the organization.

How are you involved in the wider community?

As a Circulation Manager, I am deeply involved in the community by building partnerships with local schools, organizations, and businesses to support literacy and learning. I assist with developing programs that address community needs, such as job skills workshops and resources for seniors. Additionally, I work to make the library a welcoming and inclusive space for everyone, ensuring it is a vital hub for connection and growth.

What is it about libraries that inspire or motivate you?

I am inspired by the fact that libraries are not mere repositories of books; they are vibrant community hubs. Libraries continue to creatively adapt to meet the evolving needs of patrons, offering innovative programs like maker spaces, technology workshops, and community gardens. It is incredibly inspiring to see libraries actively working to bridge the digital divide, promoting literacy, and fostering a lifelong love of learning. Ultimately, libraries resonate with me because they empower individuals, strengthen communities, and champion the transformative power of knowledge.

About Alyssia

Favorite movie, TV show, or play?

Currently, my favorite movie is *K-Pop Demon Hunters*. I love the sing-along version the best!

Favorite sport and/or sports team?

Despite the fact that I've lived in Maryland since age five, I am a Steelers fan.

What was your first job?

I was a teacher's assistant for Samuel F. B. Morse Elementary/Middle School when my siblings were in first grade. I organized small groups for advancing reading skills and comprehension for this class.

Do you have pets? What kind?

I have a huge Maine Coon cat named Cheese, an

excitable beagle named Happy Gilmore, and my puppy nephew is Broly the Super Saiyan pitbull.

What book is currently on your nightstand?

Wrath of the Dragons by Olivia Rose Darling.

Do you read more than one book at a time?

Currently, I have 40 books checked out. Usually, I rotate between series, so I have variety. I love all genres, but my interests seem to fluctuate between sci-fi and fantasy.

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

A week-long trip to Japan to fully immerse myself in the Japanese culture that I witness from anime.

Do you speak other languages?

I can read and write in Spanish fluently, but I can converse extraordinarily little in Spanish. However, I am currently learning Japanese and hope to be fluent one day.

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

The normal belief about libraries is that they are quiet, which is not always true in modern libraries.

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

I am very well-versed in getting technology to work when it gives other people a tough time. The equipment at my library always works when I start to tinker with it, probably because I tell them they can be replaced with newer models sometimes. ■



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mla@mdlib.org

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

CAUCUS

Black Caucus of the Maryland Library Association (BCMLA)

DIVISIONS

Adult Services and Reference Division
Association of College and Research Libraries, MD
Leadership Development Division
Support Staff Division
Youth Services Division

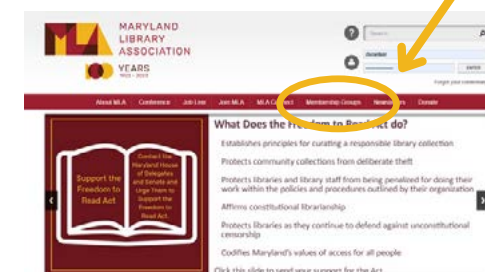
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Awards Committee
Intellectual Freedom Panel
Legislative Panel
Marketing Committee
Maryland Author Award Committee
Professional Development Panel

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.



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- If you want something to get out to ALL MLA members, email dvoelker@mdlib.org or mla@mdlib.org and we will email it out.

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