

the Crab

The Digital Magazine of the Maryland Library Association
Volume 56, Number 2 • Winter, 2026
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OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026

Save the Date: May 6-8

the Crab

The Digital Magazine of the Maryland Library Association • Volume 56, Number 2 • Winter, 2026

FEATURE ARTICLES

Highlights from the Fall 2025 Maryland State Library Resource Center (SLRC) Conference 17

The 2025 conference, with the theme of “Convergence, Technology, Equity, and the Future,” gave 160 attendees ample opportunities to learn about DEI topics that focused on artificial intelligence, cultural preservation, digital accessibility, extended reality, and robot-proofing.

LATI Graduation 20

On Wednesday, November 5, 2025, public libraries in Maryland celebrated the latest LATI cohort graduation. Thirty-four library associates from ten different Maryland counties presented their capstone projects and received graduation certificates as the culmination of their training.

Building Bridges: Strengthening Public and School Library Partnerships 32

Flower Hill Elementary School and the Gaithersburg Library of Montgomery County Public Libraries have developed a fulfilling partnership that benefits students by strengthening the school-public library connection and increases collaboration and connection with families and the community.

MD Tech Connect Conference Highlights 36

At the 11th Annual Maryland Tech Connect Conference, over 120 library staff from various locations across the state gathered to discuss technology and its impact on our communities. This year’s theme, Technology as a Community Building Tool, was selected to broaden our discussion on the technology libraries can utilize to enhance our community’s prosperity.



Mahjong at the Library: Building Social Connection One Tile at a Time 38

The new mahjong program at Quince Orchard Library of Montgomery County Public Libraries demonstrates how mahjong builds connection through routine, conversation, and shared problem-solving. Mahjong at the Library offers a consistent, welcoming space where adults and older adults gather to play American-style mahjong, practice skills, and build community.

THIS ISSUE

Editor's Note	4
President's Message	5
ALA Councilor's Report	6

NEWS

MILEX Award News	11
Law on the Frontlines: New Handbook and Ongoing Legal Reference Training for Public Libraries 	12
2026 MLA/DLA Conference Update	13

COLUMNS

OutRAIGeous Reviews Books Recommended by the Members of the MLA Reader's Advisory Interest Group (RAIG)	43
Future of Libraries Interest Group (FOLIG) Personal Foresight: The Change Matrix and Future Scenarios	46
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Panel Word on the Street: Talking About Disability with Respect	47
Intellectual Freedom Panel (IFP) Maryland Intellectual Freedom Round-Up There's Nothing Scariest Than Banning Books! IFP Book Discussion State Intellectual Freedom Network News	48
LGBTQ+ Interest Group Cheers to the New Year!	50

Materials Interest Group (MIG) Understanding MARC Records: A Beginner's Guide	51
--	----

Youth Services Division (YSD) Announcements from the YSD President	52
---	----

LIBRARY PEOPLE

Meet Tisha Chakraborty	53
------------------------	----

LAW ON THE FRONTLINES:

Legal Reference for Public Libraries

Join us for **Spring 2026'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:

LAW ON THE FRONTLINES: LEGAL REFERENCE BEST PRACTICES

This course provides an overview of best practices when addressing questions about law and legal situations.

 Wednesday, February 18, 2026
 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM (EST)
 Virtual - [Registration Link](#)

LAW ON THE FRONTLINES: FOUNDATIONS OF LAW

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, March 18, 2026
 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM (EST)
 Virtual - [Registration Link](#)

LAW ON THE FRONTLINES: NAVIGATING THE LAW - LIFE & HEALTH PLANNING

This course provides an overview of common areas of concern such as Advance Directives, Estate Planning, Guardianship, Powers of Attorney, Assisted Living, and more, and points to reliable resources to help inform the public.

 Wednesday, April 22, 2026
 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM (EST)
 Virtual - [Registration Link](#)



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.



THESE SESSIONS ADDRESS:

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

Editor's Note

I hope all of you enjoyed the winter holidays and had a very happy New Year! As I write this, libraries and schools across our region are closed for a winter storm and the snow is still falling, but it is great to see how libraries make the best of things even in the snow and sleet. Many systems are posting on social media about the availability of digital materials, 24/7, including electronic media, research databases, and streaming services. Even when our buildings are closed, we're bridging the digital divide and providing accessible materials for our patrons.

In this issue, you'll read about library workers across the state doing all kinds of outreach, educating colleagues through conferences and workshops, and making customers aware of our services. From the fall State Library Resource Center conference to the ever-popular Law on the Frontlines trainings provided by the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, we have frequent opportunities to discover something new, refresh our knowledge and skills, and learn from our colleagues. Strong partnerships between school and public librarians, like the one you'll read about between Flower Hill Elementary School and the Gaithersburg Library, demonstrate how librarians are meeting our young customers in their schools and encouraging lifelong reading, introducing them to all that the public library has to offer. For adults, programming like the mahjong sessions offered at the Quince Orchard Library provides a space to develop interpersonal relationships, foster a sense of community and belonging, and have fun whether a beginner or an experienced player.

The Crab is designed to be a forum for you, our readers, to share your own stories – about programming, outreach, learning opportunities, community activities, and milestones worth celebrating. We want to publicize



and promote all the great things you are doing! Please consider submitting a feature or an announcement for a future issue; your ideas, news, and special recognition are worthwhile and worth sharing with the MLA community and the wider community of Maryland libraries.

Thank you for reading, and I wish you a wonderful 2026.

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

Happy New Year!

AND A WARM (NOT SO MUCH) WELCOME TO 2026! In this season of resolutions, goal-setting, and fresh starts, I'd like to spend some time reflecting on the third pillar of my presidential framework for the year: "Construct our Future." It's perhaps appropriate that the beginning of each year aligns with the opening of the Maryland legislative session. The legislative and financial planning that happens during the session lays the foundation for the resources and tools that inform our work in libraries for the remainder of the year and beyond. Your advocacy during this time, highlighting all the positive contributions that libraries and library workers make to our state, is critical to what we'll be able to do in the future. I look forward to welcoming you to Annapolis for Library Legislative Day on Tuesday, February 10, as we help our legislators understand the importance of libraries to our state's future and how they can best support our efforts.

For myself, I was privileged to have the opportunity to attend a "Chapter Advocacy Workshop" developed and hosted by the American Library Association (ALA) in December (in Chicago, *very* cold!).

MLA is a state chapter of ALA, and this was an opportunity to gather with leaders of other state library associations and state school library associations. The current challenges to intellectual freedom are sobering. Our best path forward is to continue to work together across state lines, learn from each other's experiences, and amplify the transformative impact of libraries on individuals and communities. I appreciate ALA's investment in this workshop; it signals their recognition of the important role that state library associations like ours play in advancing the mission of our profession.

Speaking of investments, our future selves require continuous investment. I was honored to be able to attend my first Library Associate Training Institute (LATI) graduation



in November. The graduates' energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to growth were inspiring, as was the unwavering support from colleagues, mentors, and supervisors who encouraged graduates along the way.

Through professional development and networking, I hope you're finding opportunities to invest in yourself through MLA. Our divisions, interest groups, and other units work hard to develop relevant, high-quality opportunities for you to grow and connect. And, of course, registration for our marquee event - the MLA/DLA Annual Conference - is now open. The committee has been working hard to prepare another great conference. I hope to see you in Cambridge, Maryland from May 6 to 8!

MLA members will soon have the opportunity to vote in our annual elections. This is your chance to have a say in the future leadership of MLA. We have a strong slate of candidates, and I want to thank everyone who put themselves forward to carry MLA into its future. With our volunteer leaders, our members, and the support of the broader Maryland library community, our future is bright! ■

Report from MLA's ALA Chapter Councilor

Joseph Thompson, Carroll County Public Library

Though there was no American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter or LibLearnX conference this year, the ALA Council did meet online for three meetings over January 21, 22, and 28. In this report, I'll provide a review of the actions taken during these meetings. If you're an ALA member, the Winter Council Documents can be found at <https://www.ala.org/virtual-llx-and-annual-conference-council-meetings-0>, which includes reports from the ALA committees.

ALA continues to work through a broad process called ALA Forward, which is focused on making the association more efficient and responsive. Much of what Council accomplished during these meetings aligned with those goals.

ALA President Sam Helmick called the ALA Council I meeting to order. The first vote taken followed the presentation of the report from the chair of the Committee on Organization (COO). COO had begun a review of all 38 ALA committees starting back in 2022 and these recommendations resulted from that comprehensive work. We were presented with 10 motions that were taken as a single vote, which included substantial changes to a number of ALA committees. I voted yes. In total, there were 116 votes yes, 1 no, and no abstentions. The motions carried and were approved. As a result, five ALA committees will be reimagined, including one that I serve on, the Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC). BARC will be combined with another Executive Board committee to form a new Finance Committee. Four committees are being sunset entirely, with their responsibilities folded into other standing committees. One committee, the Policy Monitoring Committee, will have its membership reduced from 11 to five. Some of these changes require additional action by the ALA Executive Board and votes by ALA membership to change the Bylaws. Assuming those additional actions go forward, the changes will take effect in July 2026.

The next action item pertained to ALA Board Eligibility & Elections. I was called upon multiple times by President Helmick to offer information on this topic, since I had chaired an ad-hoc committee that worked last year to come up with initial recommendations on how to expand eligibility for the ALA Executive Board. During Council debate on Motion 1, the motion was modified to allow for an even further-expanded pool of potential

candidates for the Executive Board, to include those who have served on Council, Division, or Roundtable leadership, or as chair of a standing committee within the past five years. I voted yes on the motion to amend, which passed. I then voted yes on the amended motion, which carried (103 yes, 9 no, 3 abstentions). The Bylaws Committee will come back to Council III with the actual language to make this change happen. So, going forward, there will be a few hundred more people who potentially can run to serve on the ALA Executive Board. It will not be limited to just the current Councilors.

Motion 2 was to discontinue the Committee on Committees and to redistribute its work. This was the second time in a matter of a couple of hours that I took a vote to eliminate a committee of which I am currently a member! The Committee on Committees is responsible for selecting candidates for Executive Board and for helping the ALA Vice-President/President Elect appoint members to ALA committees. I voted yes on this motion, which also carried (110 yes, 1 no, 3 abstentions).

The last action taken during Council I was to consider an interpretation of one of the ALA Core Values. This one was focused on the "Public Good." I voted yes. There were 112 votes yes, 0 no, and no abstentions, so the vote carried unanimously. The Council I meeting then adjourned.

Council II began with reports from the Intellectual Freedom Committee and the Committee on Legislation. The Membership Committee then presented the Policy and Procedure for removal and reinstatement of ALA Members. There was a motion to refer, on which I voted yes (113 yes, 0 no), and the motion carried. The Code of Conduct Committee then presented their report, noting that ALA currently maintains three separate codes of conduct, creating potential confusion for members. They offered a motion to create a task force that would comprehensively review all existing codes of conduct and address inconsistencies. The motion was amended but then passed. I voted yes (115 yes, 1 no, no abstentions). The task force should present their report by the winter meeting in 2027.

Another interpretation of the ALA Core Values was then presented, on "Equity." I voted yes (116 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention). The motion carried.

The last item discussed at Council II was a resolution to Support and Commend the Work of Librarians and Institutions Preserving Government Information Since

January 21, 2025. There was an amendment to include archivists, on which I voted yes (113 yes, 0 no, no abstentions). The amendment passed, but time ran out to vote on the resolution. This was scheduled for the next meeting. Council II adjourned.

Council III was called to order by Vice-President/President Elect Maria McCauley. Seven memorial resolutions were presented honoring individuals who have passed. The ALA Election Committee then presented the results of the Executive Board election that had taken place online following Council II. Lesliediana Jones and Shauntee Burns-Simpson had the highest number of votes and will begin terms on the Executive Board in July.

The Bylaws Committee then presented a set of three motions, addressing

-  1. Clarification of what happens when the position of ALA President-Elect is vacated
-  2. Clarification of the distinction between a Session and a Meeting of Council
-  3. Election of At-Large Members to the ALA Executive Board

I voted yes on all three motions. There was some debate on a motion to remove the term “at large,” which was voted down. Each motion carried. Now, the process to fill vacancies in the offices of President and Vice-President/President Elect is much clearer. What constitutes a session versus a meeting of Council is now also clarified. New language was also approved to allow for the merger of Divisions and Roundtables. The expanded eligibility for the pool of people to run for the Executive Board was also approved here.

The ALA Treasurer’s report was then presented. I would recommend reading Larry Neal’s column in the January/February 2026 issue of *American Libraries*, where he succinctly describes ALA’s budget deficit and, more broadly, the challenging financial situation faced by the Association. He describes the work underway to address the problem.

A robust discussion then took place regarding a proposed change to the Endowment Policy. Over the past five years, there have been transfers from ALA’s Endowment to the operating budget. These transfers are scheduled to be paid back to the endowment. The proposed change is that, under exceptional circumstances, the repayment requirement may be suspended or waived by the Executive Board in consultation with the Endowment Trustees. I voted yes on the proposed change (85 yes, 16 no, 7 abstentions). The motion carried.

There were still multiple action items on the meeting agenda, but time ran out. There was a vote to end Council III and schedule an additional meeting. I voted yes (95 yes, 13 no, 1 abstention). The motion carried and the meeting adjourned.

I expect that the additional Council meeting will be scheduled online sometime in February. I will report on that meeting in my next column! Council will then meet again during the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago, June 25-29.

I hope these columns help to keep you up to date on some of the inner workings of the

American Library Association. I encourage you to get involved if you have the time and the will! It is our ALA and it is what we make it. As always, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions. Thank you again for allowing me to serve as your Maryland representative to ALA Council. ■



OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026

May 6-8, 2026

Early Bird Registration Rates Expire March 23rd!

Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Golf Resort, Spa, and Marina
100 Heron Blvd.
Cambridge, MD 21613



<https://www.mdlib.org/annual-conference/>



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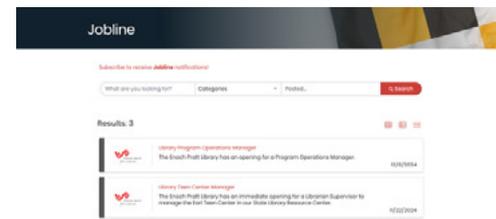
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2025 MILEX Information Literacy Hot Topic Award Winners

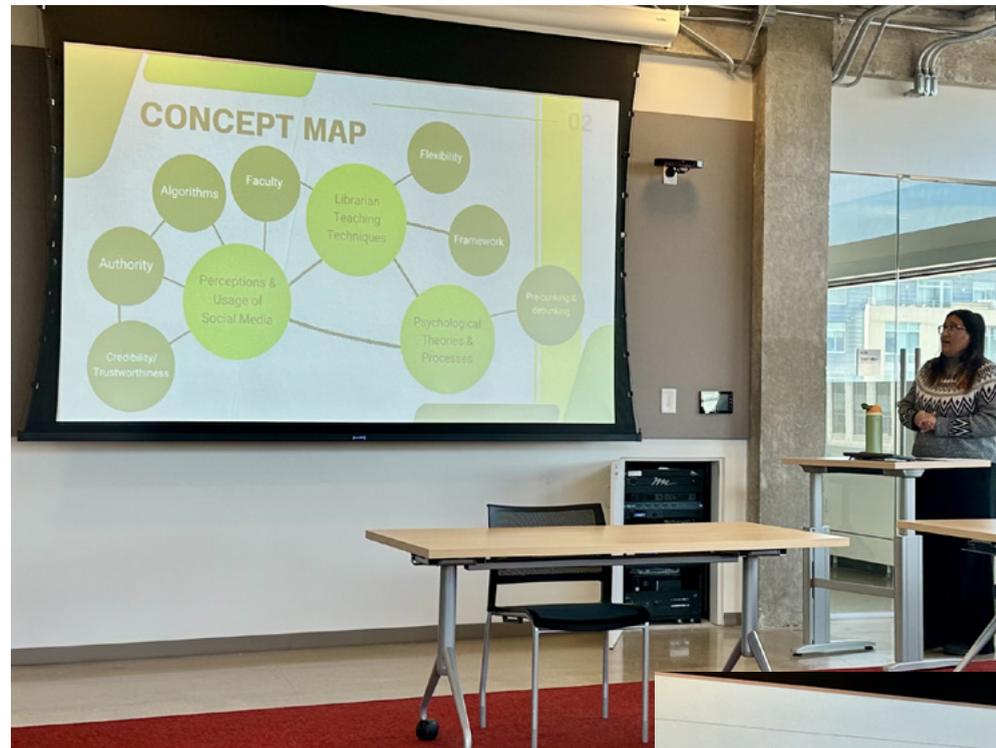
*Brandy Whitlock, Andrew G. Truxal Library,
Anne Arundel Community College*

The Maryland Information Literacy Exchange (MILEX) is a regional collaborative of academic librarians for promoting information literacy in higher education. In celebration of 20 years as an organization, MILEX announced the 2025 MILEX Information Literacy Hot Topic Awards, given for the most compelling Information Literacy Hot Topic literature reviews submitted by library school students or early-career academic librarians living or working in Maryland.

The top prize went to “The Role of Information Literacy Instruction in Teaching about Social Media and Misinformation” by Amna Zigic, Student Success and Outreach Librarian at Harford Community College. Earning honorable mentions were “Critical Information Literacy: Definitions and Uses in Academic Libraries” by Hayley Holloway, Reference & Instruction Librarian at the University of Baltimore, and “AI Ladder for the Ivory Tower: Artificial Intelligence as a Tool for Research Instruction among First Generation College Students” by Lily Salvatore, Graduate Assistant for Research Education at the University of Maryland’s McKeldin Library.

Award recipients presented their winning literature reviews at MILEX’s 2025 Fall Workshop, which was held at the University of Baltimore’s Robert L. Bogomolny Library on November 7. Winners also received monetary awards, complimentary MILEX memberships for the next academic year, and support for placing their work

in professional publications and conferences. The next round of MILEX Information Literacy Hot Topic Awards is planned for 2027. Learn more about joining MILEX and about our work at milexmd.org. ■



◆ *Amna Zigic, Student Success and Outreach Librarian at Harford Community College.*

Lily Salvatore, Graduate Assistant for Research Education at the University of Maryland’s McKeldin Library. ◆



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

Audrey Dingler, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library

The *Law on the Frontlines* team is happy to announce we have published the *Law on the Frontlines: Legal Reference for Public Libraries Handbook!* The revised content includes simpler navigation, added resources, and an enhanced visual structure. Whether you're new to libraries or a library veteran, this publication is for you! The new and improved *Frontlines Handbook* includes the following units:

-  Introduction to Frontlines
-  What is Access to Justice – and Why Are We Talking About It?
-  Best Practices for Legal Reference
-  Legal Information Sources (Secondary Sources)
-  Foundations of Law for Public Library Reference (Primary Sources)
-  Finding Maryland Legal Forms
-  Finding Maryland Referrals
-  Working with Law Topics

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions about training sessions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us (lawlibrary@mdcourts.gov; 410-260-1430).

As this Handbook is a supplement to *Law on the Frontlines*, please consider building your legal reference skills by participating in one of our upcoming *Law on the Frontlines* sessions:

-  Wednesday, February 18, 2026: Legal Reference Best Practices.
-  Wednesday, March 18, 2026: Foundations of Law for Public Library Reference.
-  Wednesday, April 22, 2026: Navigating the Law – Life & Health Planning. ■

LAW ON THE FRONTLINES: Legal Reference for Public Libraries



Join us for **Spring 2026'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:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>LAW ON THE FRONTLINES: LEGAL REFERENCE BEST PRACTICES</p> <p>This course provides an overview of best practices when addressing questions about law and legal situations.</p> | <p> Wednesday, February 18, 2026</p> <p> 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM (EST)</p> <p> Virtual - Registration Link</p> |
| <p>LAW ON THE FRONTLINES: FOUNDATIONS OF LAW</p> <p>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.</p> | <p> Wednesday, March 18, 2026</p> <p> 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM (EST)</p> <p> Virtual - Registration Link</p> |
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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.

THESE SESSIONS ADDRESS:

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

MLA/DLA Conference Update

Paula Mitchell, Enoch Pratt Free Library and Maryland State Library Resource Center and Stephen "Mike" Kiel, University of Baltimore

The Conference Planning Committee has been hard at work finalizing this year's amazing slate of programs for the conference, and we're just about there thanks to the hard work of all the committee members. We'll share some highlights of individual programs and pre-conferences in the next issue, but for now we want to share some basic conference details and highlight our great slate of keynote speakers.

Reminders

Save the Date

We're returning this year on May 6–8, 2026 to the beautiful Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Golf Resort, Spa, and Marina in Cambridge, Maryland.

Theme:

Our theme this year emerged from conversations about how libraries contain stories in all forms. Not only are these stories on our shelves in all the materials we provide, but also in the lives of our patrons, and the impact our staff have in our communities in Maryland and Delaware. We hope you'll join us as we share "Our Stories, Our Shelves."



Keynote Speakers Announcement

MLA-Hosted



Sam Helmick

Sam Helmick (they/them) is the 2025-2026 ALA President. Helmick served as a member on the ALA Executive Board and a past president of the Iowa Library Association. They previously served as former chair-elect on the Intellectual Freedom Round Table and chair of the Iowa Governor's Commission of Libraries. They have served on committees for the Network of the National Library of Medicine, the Stonewall Book Awards, the ALA Policy Monitoring Committee, Young Adult Library Services

Association (YALSA) Michael L. Printz Committee, the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) Sophie Brody Award Committee and the YALSA Fundraising Task Force. Helmick is a 2016 Emerging Leader, as well as an author, consultant, and instructor for social media marketing and graphic design. (from the ALA website) *Photograph by Sam Helmick, CCo, via Wikimedia Commons*

Liz Gotauco

Liz Gotauco (she/her) is a librarian, author, and



performer from Rhode Island. She's also known online as the Cosbrarian, combining her love of cosplay and librarianship. Liz is the creator of the web series "F*cked Up Fairy Tales" and the recent book inspired by it, *F*cked Up Fairy Tales: Sinful Cinderellas, Prince Alarmings, and Other Timeless Classics* (adapted from her website).

Photograph by Brittany Taylor.

DLA-Hosted



Cyndee Landrum

Cyndee Landrum is Acting Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) as of January 20, 2025. She previously served in the position from March 21, 2024, to October 22, 2024. In her current role she collaborates with IMLS's senior leadership to support

agency priorities, policy, and partnerships, and provide leadership and direction for the library grant programs. Landrum oversees the agency's largest program, Grants to States, which is the primary source of federal funding for library services in the United States, and the agency's discretionary grant programs, including National Leadership Grants for Libraries, the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian program, Native American and Native Hawaiian Library Services, and the newest library grant initiative, Accelerating Promising Practices for Small Libraries. Prior to her IMLS appointment, she served as CEO-director of the Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library in Indiana (adapted from the IMLS website).

Photograph courtesy of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Social Events

We're also excited this year to continue many of our great social events from previous conferences, including the Pub Quiz, and the return of karaoke and morning yoga after a hiatus last year, as well as the ever-popular fundraisers, the silent auction and the 50/50 raffle. Relax with a visit from Pets on Wheels and enjoy meetups for groups including the Black Caucus of the Maryland Library Association (BCMLA) and Academic Librarians on Wednesday night. Plus, this year we have a new event... a ghost tour in Cambridge! ■

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.



Overall Membership Stats

JANUARY 2026

3,872

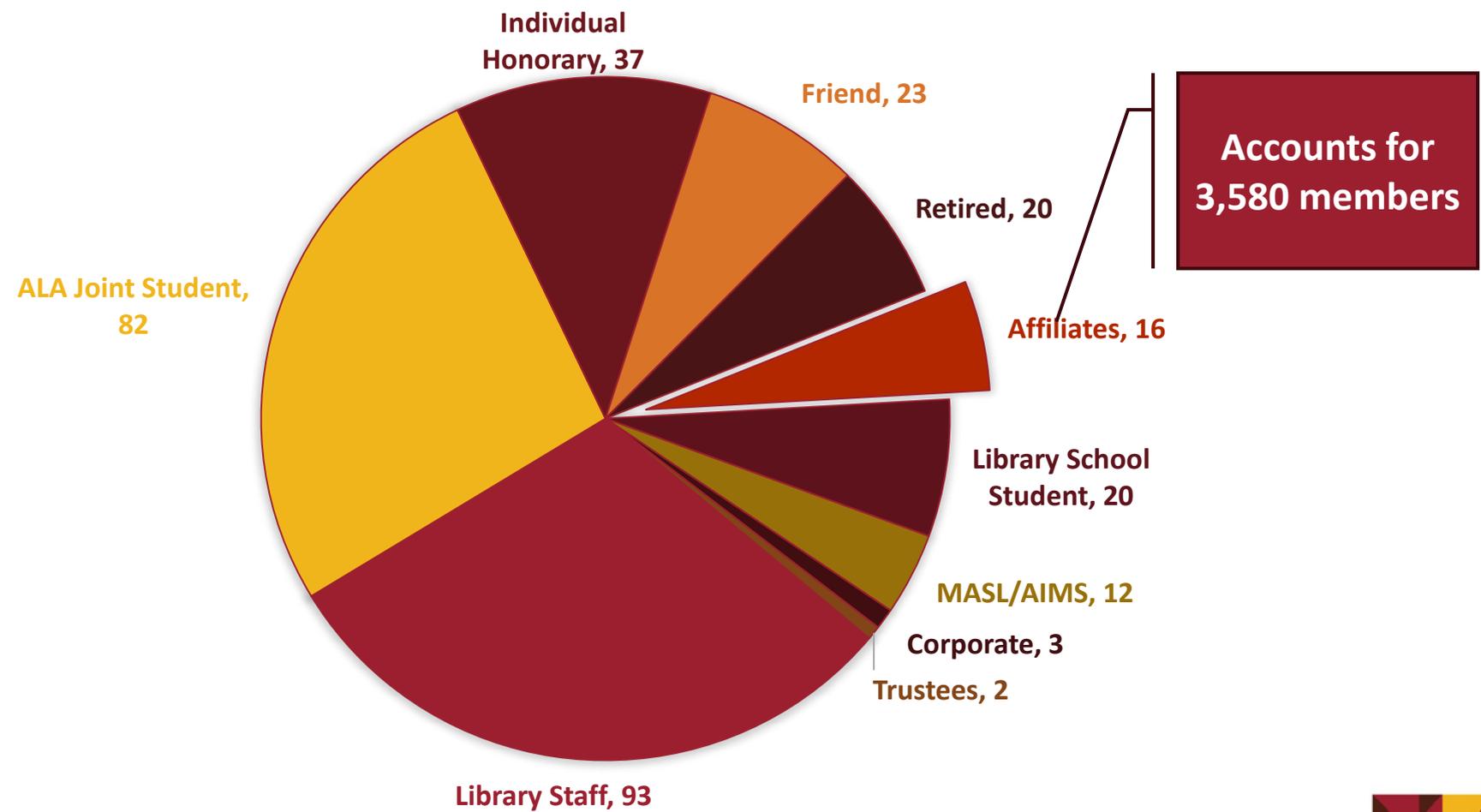
TOTAL MEMBERS

308

ACTIVE MEMBERSHIPS

5

NEW SINCE JANUARY 2026



Highlights from the Fall 2025 Maryland State Library Resource Center (SLRC) Conference: Convergence: Technology, Equity, and the Future

Paul Chasen, Enoch Pratt Free Library/Maryland State Library Resource Center

Photographs courtesy of John Cassini, Enoch Pratt Free Library/Maryland State Library Resource Center

On Monday, October 28 and Tuesday, October 29, 2025, the conference gave the 160 attendees ample opportunities to learn about DEI topics that focused on artificial intelligence, cultural preservation, digital accessibility, extended reality, and robot-proofing. Attendees also had opportunities to consider the following question while learning: Why is it important for DEI initiatives and projects to directly impact technology that needs to be accessible to all?

Monday, October 28, 2025: The Virtual Day

The virtual day, held entirely on Zoom, started with Dr. Heather Willever-Farr, an Assistant Teaching Professor, College of Computing and Informatics, Drexel University, educating us on Generative AI in the Classroom: Challenges and Opportunities. Heather taught the attendees about the opportunities to critique answers that are generated by AI tools, and also dove into the challenges of creating assignments and assessments that are as AI-proof as possible. What we ultimately discovered was that the opportunities and challenges of teaching college students with Generative AI in full force apply to library customers of all ages and educational levels.

Emily Singer Lucio, the ADA/504 Coordinator, University of Maryland, educated us on "The New Title II Digital Accessibility Regulations: Steps You Can Take To Work Toward Timely Compliance." This topic is critically important as all Maryland library workers need to know what can be published online that meets the regulations by April 25, 2026. Emily gave us a deep dive into what social media content, digitized materials, and other digital documents have to include to be fully accessible.

Our Keynote speaker based in California, Brandie Nonnecke, closed the day by presenting "Demystifying AI: Navigating the Laws and Policies Shaping Our Digital Future." She

"All of the workshops were engaging and informative!"
"Well organized as always and beneficial for my work."

These are a couple of the comments from attendees at the Fall 2025 SLRC Conference, with a DEI theme of "Convergence: Technology, Equity, and the Future."

"Sessions were good, but Demystifying AI was outstanding in its quality of content and presentation."

Tuesday, October 29, 2025: The In-Person Day

The Central Library/SLRC conference day had representation from a variety of libraries. Two-thirds came from public libraries, and the other third from academic, school, and governmental and special libraries. The day started with Vivienne Ming giving an inspiring keynote presentation about robot-proofing kids. Attendees learned more about robot proofing in general. Like a special author event, they also got a sneak preview of Ming's *Robot-Proof: When Machines Have all the Answers, Build Better People* set for release in 2026.

Similar to the virtual day, attendees had the opportunity to learn about AI in multiple ways: in connection to ethics and policy from Allison Jennings-Roche (University of Baltimore's Robert L. Bogomolny Library), or the differences in AI tools from Maurice Coleman (Coleman & Associates).

Our speakers ranged from public and academic libraries, to library organizations, and even speakers representing extended reality and accessibility companies. Attendees had opportunities to learn about two different philosophies and strategies for creating physical and digital archives with Shane Moran's (St. Mary's College of Maryland's)

adapted a presentation primarily targeted to academic librarians at the 2025 ALA Annual Conference, to target front-line library staff from all types of libraries. Brandie made Marylanders aware of the federal laws and policies that we need to know, but also shared how we can learn from the few states, like hers in California, that have made laws and policies that impact libraries.

The attendees reacted positively to the entire day:

"All presenters were very knowledgeable in their fields and had current information to help keep us up to date."

"AI topics are so vital in our industry and we don't want to be left behind...all three sessions helped me to see where I need to grow."

“Compassionate Cultural Preservation” and Corey Lewis (Maryland State Archives) and Megan Kean’s (Enoch Pratt Free Library) “People Powered Preservation.” They also had multiple opportunities to learn from Barnard Smit (Enoch Pratt Free Library/SLRC’s Best & Next Department) and Don Bunting (Enoch Pratt Free Library/SLRC’s Teen Center) about how the Best & Next Department and Teen Center develop makerspaces and creation stations that can be adapted by other libraries.

Attendees who were unable to attend the virtual day and learn from Lucio’s session could learn about a related topic with Brittini Ballard (Towson University’s Cook Library) and Katherine Klosek’s (Association of Research Libraries) “Equity by Design.” By the end of the conference, the attendees still had ample opportunities to network, snack on sweet treats, or catch up with colleagues who they may have not seen in person in several months.

The attendees reacted positively to the entire day:

“The What to Know Before You Dip Your Toe into [an] AI workshop [presented by Maurice Coleman] was the highlight of my day. The presenter was so engaging. It was like watching an informative comedy show. As a person who avoids AI at all costs, I thought it was great to have a session that literally talked about the basics.”

“I thought the maker space for the adults and especially the teens were very inspirational and a great way to reach troubled teens and educate both demographics about science and expressing yourself artistically.”

“SLRC staff were amazing, thank you and great job on the conference. Everyone I met in the departments on the tour were very welcoming and helpful.”

Please be on the lookout for more opportunities to attend SLRC conferences and training sessions in the [Professional Development menu of our website](#). ■



Vivienne Ming, the Fall 2025 SLRC Conference’s in-person day keynote speaker, presenting in a TED-Talk style.

The picture gallery continues!



◆ *“The Future of Extended Reality in Life and Work, and How It Relates to Diverse and Disabled Communities” panelists (L-R): Panel Moderator Joel Benge (Principal Nerd That Talks Good, MessageSpecs Consulting), Rebecca Rosenberg (Founder, ReBokeh Vision Technologies), Jason Michael Perry (Founder and Chief AI Officer, PerryLabs), and Will Gee (Co-Founder, Balti Virtual), deep diving into accessibility with virtual reality, augmented reality, and more.*

▣ *Lydell Hills, AV Studio Engineer of the Enoch Pratt Free Library/SLRC’s Teen Center, educating attendees on creating the best beats in a sound studio.*

◆ *John Damond, Enoch Pratt Free Library/SLRC’s Business, Science, and Technology Department Manager and Natalie DeMuro, Enoch Pratt Free Library/SLRC’s Special Collection Department’s Archivist (not pictured) introducing the conference attendees to a room full of rare materials.*



Celebrate the Fall 2025 LATI Cohort Graduates

ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2025, public libraries in Maryland celebrated the latest LATI cohort graduation. Thirty-four library associates from ten different Maryland counties presented their capstone projects and received graduation certificates at the Miller Branch of the Howard County Library System. Graduates were joined by Maryland State Librarian Morgan Lehr Miller who congratulated each Library Associate, presenting them with a signed certificate. The cohort was also treated to a keynote by Howard County Library System's President and CEO Tonya Aikens.

What is LATI?

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

Fall 2025 LATI

The cohort of LAs spent the fall engaged in instruction from expert trainers across all Maryland public libraries. One highlight included when LAs had the chance to learn about and perform hands-on experimentation with AI at the Exploration Commons at Carroll County Public Library, as well as touring the makerspaces and the teaching kitchen there. The cohort also visited the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, learning about statewide services, and attended the Fall 2025 SLRC Conference centered on the theme of "Convergence Technology, Equity, and the Future" at the Enoch Pratt Free Central Library, Maryland State Library Resource Center in downtown Baltimore.

Support for LATI

Thanks go to the Maryland State Library Agency for their support of LATI through LSTA grant funds. State Librarian Morgan Lehr Miller proudly supports each LATI graduate. Sheila McDuff, LOC Chair and Associate Director at Frederick County Public Libraries, gave the introductory remarks, Howard County Library System President and CEO Tonya Aikens delivered the keynote address, and David Dahl, Associate Dean, Digital Services and Technologies, University of Maryland Libraries, and current MLA President, shared a brief snapshot of the history, current state, and future plans of the Association.

LATI Oversight Committee (LOC)

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

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

[Continue to the picture gallery!](#)



◆ *Maryland State Librarian Morgan Lehr Miller proudly supports each LATI graduate.*

▣ *Howard County Library System President and CEO Tonya Aikens delivered the keynote address to the LATI graduates and their guests.*

◆ *Maryland Library Association President David Dahl, Associate Dean of Libraries, Digital Services and Technologies, University of Maryland Libraries. David spoke to the Library Associates and their guests about the history, current state, and future plans of MLA.*

Photographs courtesy of Doug Kapustin, Howard County Library System.





Anne Arundel County Public Library cohort. Michele Noble, Samantha Zline, Abby Greenfeld, Camilla Bergin Rhodes (LA), Kacey Nichols, Erin Whitman (LA) Morgan Lehr Miller, Jayne Walters, Maddie Ward (LA), Andrea Douglas (LA).



Baltimore County Public Library cohort. Mike Jackson, Cindy Swanson, Morgan Lehr Miller, Martha Berkheimer (LA), Mattie Miklochik (LA).



Calvert Library cohort. Heather Thielker (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Carrie Willson, Stacy Allen (LA).



Cecil County Public Library cohort. Priscilla Garvin, Stephanie Stevens (LA), Carly Dabbs (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Rachel Wright, Jaclyn Cassidy, Dennis Tierson (LA).



Enoch Pratt Free Library cohort. Mirna Turcios, Suzanna Eldridge (LA), Barnard Smit (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Jake Ciarapica, Nigel Meiko (LA), Paul Chasen.



Frederick County Public Libraries cohort. Kaitlyn McCray, Krystina Galler (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Emily Strubert (LA), Rae Daniel (LA), Rebecca Reeves.



Howard County Library System cohort. Mary Brosenne, Angela Best, Micaylah Jones, Aimee Chong (LA), Stevia Morales, Debbie Bellamy, Hallie Illy (LA), Paige Woolf (LA), Ian Lyness-Fernandez (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Charles Smalls (LA), Jillian Magee (LA), Pat Saunderson (LA), Tonya Aikens.



Montgomery County Public Libraries cohort. Liz Bowen, Gaby Garcia (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Dianne Whitaker, Patrick Fromm.



Prince George's County Memorial Library System cohort. Johanna James, Precious Abujana, Tamika Sanders, Paige Woolf (LA), Teresa Miller, Michelle Cavanaugh, Isaiah Everheart (LA), Nancy Coleman (LA), Sang-Hee Park (LA), Dan Ramirez, Morgan Lehr Miller, Joseph Vincent, Belmar Sorto (LA), James Phelps (LA), Vanessa Chandler, Melanie Townsend Diggs.



Washington County Free Library cohort. Lauren Buechmann, Laura Tietz (LA), Leigh Anne Snyder (LA), Morgan Lehr Miller, Jennifer Keysor, Stephanie Weddle.

Building Bridges

Strengthening Public and School Library Partnerships

Melissa King, Flower Hill Elementary School, Montgomery County Public Schools, and Erika Walston, Montgomery County Public Libraries

Connecting

Several years ago, elementary school librarian Melissa attended the 2017 Maryland Information Literacy Summit at the Maritime Institute in Linthicum Heights, Maryland, where one of the topics was the importance of strong partnerships between school and public librarians. Attendees were reminded of the importance of working together because libraries are available for people throughout their entire lives. As a lifelong public library patron, a mom of four children who were active library users, and an elementary school librarian, Melissa was inspired to develop a relationship with the children's librarians at the Gaithersburg Library, the closest branch to her school, Flower Hill Elementary.

During this same time frame, The Interdivisional Committee on School/Public Library Cooperation (SPLC) developed the [ALA Public Library and School Library Collaboration Toolkit](#) over a three year period (2015-2018) with input from American Association of School Libraries, Association for Library Service to Children, and Young Adult Library Services Association representatives. With both local and national library organizations working independently on this, public and school partnerships were clearly of importance to many in the field. In Montgomery County, each public library branch is assigned to a specific cluster of schools; Flower Hill ES is one of 13 schools assigned to Gaithersburg Library. In the past, Gaithersburg Library branch and Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) outreach staff visited Flower Hill ES to promote MCPL's Summer Reading Challenge as well as promote library services during family events such as Literacy Nights and Back to School Nights. While Melissa had developed relationships with previous Gaithersburg Library children's librarians, it was when Erika Walston joined MCPL as Gaithersburg Library's Head Children's Librarian that this school-public partnership really leveled up.

The two children's librarians have built a strong partnership over the past three years, and it all began when Erika reached out to Melissa and (then) art teacher, Judy Fang, proposing a collaboration. Melissa was excited since she had wanted for years to do this type

of collaboration, and they quickly started planning their first open house, a winter-themed event that was attended by nearly 100 children and their families.

This partnership has been fulfilling for Erika and Melissa as they not only build their professional relationship but also continue to strengthen existing relationships with Melissa's students and their families, as well as create new connections with the community. The two librarians have definitely created a "glows" partnership between the two libraries.

Since 2023, the two have collaborated on two to three events per year, and have presented their partnership at three conferences: the [Maryland Library Association 2024 Conference](#), the [MCPS School Library Media Program Back-to-School 2024 PD Day](#), and the [Maryland Association of School Librarians 2024 Conference](#). They have linked the presentations and invite you to view them as each is slightly different, as the conference themes vary, as well as the intended audiences.

Building The Program

Melissa and Erika's ultimate goal is to encourage students on their journey to become lifelong readers, which is accomplished by making students and their families feel comfortable in the public library by introducing them to the many free resources and programs the public library offers. The two librarians looked for a programming format that would allow for flexibility, which led them to the idea of a two-hour-long open house. The open house format provided a relaxed atmosphere that let the Flower Hill families drop in as their schedules permitted. This also allowed Melissa and Erika to design a variety of literacy-focused activities to highlight the different types of children's programs the public library offers, such as art, STEAM and book clubs.

Themes

To assist in planning activities, choosing read-aloud books, and selecting community partners, Melissa and Erika picked various themes to help narrow the scope of the open house. Some popular themes were "Healthy Body, Healthy Mind," "Imagination," seasons and holidays, and anything STEAM-related.

Books

Melissa and Erika selected a variety of 10-20 themed picture book read-alouds. The large book selection allowed them the freedom to read books based on the mood and interest of the group. The breadth of the selection also provided families with the opportunity to check out books they enjoyed listening to or ones they saw on display.

Melissa enjoys reading aloud with **Novel Effect**, which is a subscription-based interactive music and sound app that responds to the read-aloud, turning every book into a unique experience. She finds her students are often more engaged in the story when the app is used - and they ask for it with every book she reads to them.

To ensure families got to experience a little bit of everything during the open house, Erika and Melissa interspersed the activities with reading books, where they typically alternated between readers. This gave the children time to work on some of the activities between book readings and helped build connections and familiarity with both the public librarian and school librarian.

<https://noveleffect.com/>

Activities

Understanding that everyone loves a good hands-on project, Erika and Melissa arranged a variety of crafts and hands-on activities during every open house. These activities were related to the theme but were also good examples of what happens during the public libraries' programs. Some activities included building popsicle stick catapults, constructing robots from recycled materials, painting sunflowers like Van Gogh, writing about what they were "grape"-ful for, and stretching their bodies through yoga.

To encourage the children and their families to explore the children's area of the library, Erika designed a library scavenger hunt. Not only was the scavenger hunt a fun way to essentially do self-guided tours, but it also was an excellent tool to highlight activities, programs, and collections of particular interest to the students. For example, past scavenger hunts included MCPL's Winter Reading Challenge Sign-up, visiting SNAP-Ed community partners, and the World Language collection, for bilingual families.

Student Art Exhibition

A big highlight of the Open House was collaborating with Flower Hill art teacher Judy Fang to display students' artwork on a huge blank wall in the Children's Department. Judy worked with students to create beautifully creative pieces inspired by the diverse artists they had learned about in school. This exhibition not only brightened up the Children's Area, but it also celebrated creativity in the community and gave the students a time to shine

beyond the walls of the school. There is real joy seeing parents visit the library with their young artists and feeling their excitement and pride upon seeing their artwork on display. As Judy so beautifully shared, "The community partnership that transpired from passionate librarians like Melissa and Erika provided a platform outside of school to showcase student artwork in an elevated manner similar to a gallery exhibit. Beautifying these public areas not only provides more meaningful community spaces, but instills so much collective pride, honor, and confidence. The best part of intentional, thoughtful partnerships like these is the passion that transcends from the visions of Melissa and Erika to the next generation.

Each shining smile, awestruck recognition, and acknowledgment of knowing their creative voices were relevant was the best part!"

Community Partners

Throughout the years, Erika and Melissa have included community partners in their open house events. For many years, the University of Maryland Extension ran the **SNAP Education program** in Maryland. Melissa's school had partnered with this program for nearly three years and included the SNAP Ed curriculum in her school library media program. One open house theme was about encouraging good health, and Pam Hosimer, Nutrition Educator, was able to attend and support families with a book giveaway and healthy tips for families.

The 2025 Back-to-School Open House included a visit from MilliporeSigma's Curiosity Cube, a mobile science lab that features interactive, hands-on experiments. This year's experiments were centered around AI and provided new experiences for students and their families while highlighting the different types of STEAM programs the library provides.

The two also partnered with **FableVision Learning**, and hosted a cozy afternoon "Creating Bravely" with picture books by Peter H. Reynolds and related activities that encouraged the kids and their adults to be creative together.

Promotion

Melissa promotes the events to her school families via email and includes details of the event. She also shares the event directly with her students during library media classes for two weeks prior to each event to stir up excitement.

Since Melissa led her school to become a sustainability- and environmentally-focused Maryland Green School, she avoids sending paper flyers and instead uses digital means of announcing events. For example, Melissa emails all parents and includes the informational flyer and details in each family's home language. Fortunately, the parent communication program that MCPS utilizes automatically translates email in the preferred language of each family, which is extremely helpful, and welcoming to families.

Melissa's school principal, Dr. Joshua Fine, includes the library events in his weekly announcements to parents through MCPS's system-wide ConnectEd program, which sends a telephone call and email, as well as via text through the Remind App. As MCPS communication platforms change over the years, so have their methods of communication, but they always include reaching out to staff, parents, and students.

Gaithersburg Library promotes the events through their monthly online and print Children's events calendar, branch event email newsletter and community event on Nextdoor.

Melissa and Erika also reach beyond the Flower Hill ES school community; the two have expanded to include all 13 of the elementary schools that Erika supports and have encouraged other school librarians to invite their school communities as well. During the events, all children with their families are invited to participate in the Open House activities, so they often have participants who just happened to visit the branch that day. Both Erika and Melissa are warm and welcoming to all who join in as they both believe in the importance and impact of a child having a positive experience at the library.

Growing Our Connection

As Erika and Melissa continue to work together, they hope to grow their programs strategically to reach as many families as possible while also making the workload sustainable.

Some Next Steps

- 📦 Rebrand the events from the stand-alone "Open House" concept to something that highlights building community between the two libraries, such as: "Family Fun Afternoon with Mrs. King & Ms. Erika."
- 📦 Continue building partnerships with other community organizations.

Have your school and public librarians had successful, ongoing relationships that build community? We'd love to hear from you!



Robot STEAM. Photograph by Melissa King.

Building Bridges



Healthy Body Healthy Mind yoga. Photo by Georgann Witt. ◆

Healthy Body Healthy Mind book display. Photo by Melissa King. ▣

Melissa King, Erika Walston, and Judy Fang. Photo by Juan Montiel. ◆



2025 MD Tech Connect

Eleventh Annual Tech Connect Conference Highlights Technology as a Community Building Tool

Yesenia Garcia-Navarro, Washington County Free Library

AT THE 11TH ANNUAL MARYLAND TECH CONNECT CONFERENCE, over 120 library staff from various locations across the state gathered to discuss technology and its impact on our communities. The conference took place in Rockville at the Universities at Shady Grove on December 11, 2025. This year's theme, "Technology as a Community Building Tool," was selected to broaden our discussion on the technology libraries can utilize to enhance our community's prosperity.

The conference began with insights from the Maryland State Librarian, Morgan Lehr Miller. Morgan emphasized the hard work library staff across the state do to commit to community engagement and innovation. She wrapped up by honoring the positive impacts libraries provide for our communities through technology, research, support, and knowledge.

The discussion continued with selected keynote speaker Dr. Sheena Erete, Associate Professor at the College of Information at the University of Maryland, as well as founder and director of the Community Research and Design Collective. Dr. Erete emphasized the importance of community participation in decision-making in support of Arnstein's Ladder of Public Participation.

The keynote expressed the significance of co-designing technologies, practices, and policies as libraries engage in social context. The values of libraries can excel if we lead with interdisciplinary approaches and partner with marginalized communities to build technology



Opening keynote speaker, Dr. Sheena Erete from the University of Maryland, livens up the morning with a presentation on Power and Participation in Designing AI Systems.

Photo by Franklin Ofsthun, University of Maryland Libraries.

knowledge. These highlights from the keynote's discussion livened the conversation of the participants at the conference, and it left them with a question to take back to their own library: what are the values at your library and how can you use those values to build technological knowledge and shift power towards your community?

Multiple breakout sessions were provided for conference attendees to select the session that fit their learning needs. The sessions covered a variety of topics, such as discussions on privacy literacy, multimodal access and AI literacy, the preparation of homeschool students for college-level research, creating Cricut classes with or without Makerspaces, harnessing AI to empower school libraries, and partnering with State Archives. These sessions provided great discussions and collaboration amongst library staff from different systems and experiences. Information on the sessions and presenters is available on the [MD Tech Connect website](#) with slides and resources for reference.

The Tech Expo and Poster Session were featured during the conference lunch hour, which provided attendees the opportunity to engage with and learn from library colleagues around the state about community-building tools and technologies used in their library systems. The tools and information presented included Nearpod, a driving simulator (SSI System), robotics, coding, a mobile record-

ing studio, and so much more.

The conference ended with the closing keynote speaker, Candace Birger, manager of Exploration Commons at Carroll County Public Library and owner of Plexi Cosplay LLC. Candace led a presentation about libraries and their hard work to cement themselves as dynamic hubs for collaboration with community stakeholders, entrepreneurs, local businesses, guest

presenters, and others. She expressed how evolving libraries are offering more services in the tech field, and how their innovative programming fosters connection, learning, and growth for their local communities and beyond.

The discussion continued with more technological topics through the **Tech Connect Extended** virtual program series that is open to any library staff local to Maryland. These sessions are related to the theme of the 2025 Tech Connect Conference. The next session will take place on Tuesday, February 17. Jack Etienne Garrard, Web Accessibility Specialist at the University of Maryland, will present “Bring Your Own PDF” and will discuss the basics of PDF remediation. Information about the 2026 conference registration for Tech Connect Extended sessions is available at the **Tech Connect website**. Join the **MD Tech Connect Committee** today!



◆ Breakout session, *Cricut Craft classes with or without a Makerspace* with Christine Biglin and Emma Rawlinson from St. Mary’s County Library, provides attendees with insight on their community’s crafting potential with Cricut.

◆ Conference attendees engage and learn at the poster sessions: Haley Galloway from St. Mary’s College of Maryland presents *Nearpod as a Community-Building Tool in One-Shot Library Sessions*; Gabby Norton from Anne Arundel County Public Library presents *Ready, Set, Click! Discovering the Benefits of Driving Simulators in Libraries*; and Melissa King from Montgomery County Public Schools presents *Building Bridges: A Community-Centered Approach to Library Collaboration*.

Photos by Yesenia Garcia-Navarro, Washington County Free Library

MAHJONG AT THE LIBRARY

Building Social Connection One Tile at a Time

A Program Spotlight from Montgomery County Public Libraries' Quince Orchard Library

Witt Salley and Rena Dirckx, Montgomery County Public Libraries

Photographs courtesy of Montgomery County Public Libraries

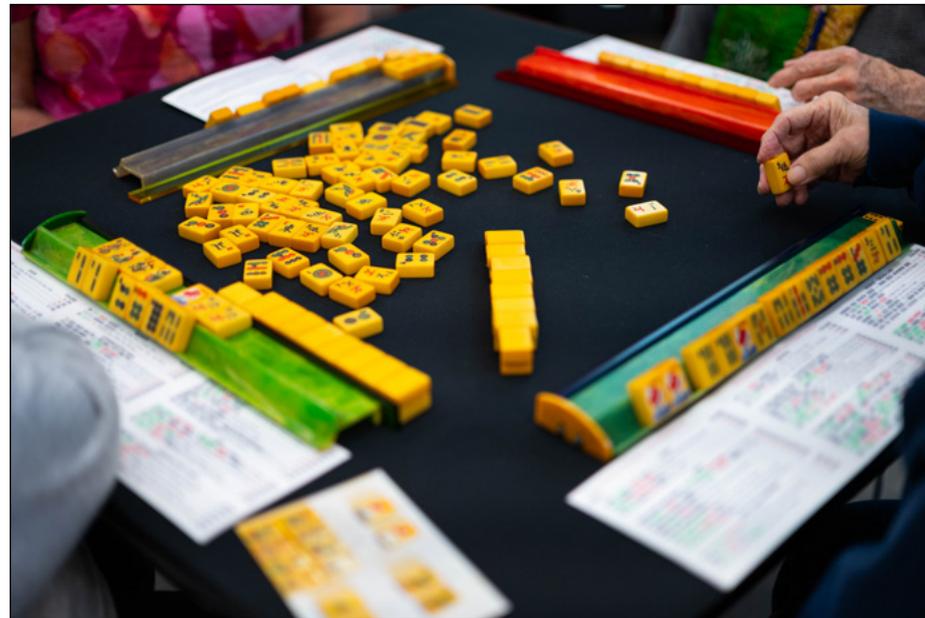
Introduction

A recent *Washington Post* feature describes a surge of interest in mahjong among millennials, including pop-up game nights, instructors, and social media energy around a game many people still associate with “grandma’s table” (Judkis, 2025). This portrayal of mahjong not only as a pastime but also as a social ritual matches what library staff have observed at Quince Orchard Library, part of Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL). Mahjong can build connection through routine, conversation, and shared problem-solving.

Public libraries already operate as “social infrastructure,” meaning a community place that supports relationships and belonging through low-barrier, recurring opportunities for people to be together (Klinenberg, 2018). A weekly mahjong program fits that mission well. Quince Orchard’s Mahjong at the Library program offers a consistent, welcoming space where adults and older adults gather to play American-style mahjong, practice skills, and build community.

What Mahjong at the Library Looks Like at Quince Orchard

Mahjong at the Library launched in February 2023 and meets weekly on Mondays from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Participants drop in, join an open table, and play at a comfortable pace. Participants are also welcome to observe games, whether to learn the flow of play or to accompany a partner or friend while still participating in the social group. Sessions meet



Tiles and racks during play.

in the library’s meeting room, which also serves as the branch’s primary programming space. The meeting room location keeps tile sounds and conversation out of the open library area and helps protect quiet study spaces. Regular attendance matters less than a welcoming entry point, so staff and the program facilitator focus on friendly norms and clear expectations rather than rigid structure.

American-style mahjong uses an annual card that lists winning hands, plus a set of tiles, racks, and a few basic table procedures. Two major organizations publish American Mah Jongg cards, including the National Mah Jongg League and the American Mah Jongg Association. Four players draw and discard tiles in turn, aiming to complete a hand that matches

a pattern on the card.

Many patrons first encounter digital “mahjong solitaire,” so the program description benefits from clarifying that this group plays the social, table-based game. Many players know the game as “Mah Jongg,” “mah-jongg,” or “mahjong,” and multiple rule traditions exist across regions and communities. Quince Orchard’s tables use the National Mah Jongg League (NMJL) annual card, including large-print cards for accessibility. A clear program description matters because “mahjong” can mean different games to different people, and identifying the style of play at the tables prevents avoidable confusion.

The library maintains four mahjong sets, and regular participants bring additional sets as needed. Player turnout typically fills four tables and can reach five or six. This combination of library-owned and participant-provided equipment lets the program scale without requiring a high materials budget. The program began modestly and has grown steadily over time.

When the library closes, participants sometimes arrange informal offsite meetups to stay connected. Those meetups remain participant-organized and not staff-run. This

boundary protects staff time and clarifies responsibility while still recognizing the community value created through the library-based program.

A Drop-In Program Can Still Support New Players

As the event listing notes, the program involves no formal instruction. Mahjong at the Library does not function as a class, and staff do not deliver a structured lesson plan. Participants who arrive without experience can observe and join when ready, and the program facilitator and regular players offer informal guidance at the table as needed. A facilitator protects the program's psychological safety by reinforcing welcoming norms and by redirecting competitive tension into respectful play.

Volunteer leadership plays a central role in sustaining Mahjong at the Library as a welcoming, durable program rather than a one-time meetup. A strong program facilitator supports table culture by setting expectations, encouraging respectful play, and helping newer participants enter the game without embarrassment. The facilitator role also includes maintaining a steady rhythm at the tables so that experienced players continue to find the program engaging while newcomers build confidence over time. Steady, informal coaching at the table can also help new players become regular participants, which supports long-term growth.

Libraries planning mahjong programs should anticipate the importance of this facilitation role and plan accordingly. Volunteer facilitators benefit from clear staff support, including a consistent schedule, access to supplies, and a simple escalation path if group dynamics affect participation. Early sessions can draw unpredictable turnout, so launch planning should include at least two confident players who can welcome newcomers and share the teaching load. A backup plan for coverage matters, as well, since continuity helps maintain trust and routine among regular participants. Strong volunteer leadership, paired with light but consistent staff oversight, supports both inclusion and program longevity.

Informal learning works because mahjong provides repeated, low-stakes practice in pattern recognition, memory, and strategy. Participants start as beginners, attend consistently, and gain confidence through play. This learning path matters for older adults and working-age adults who want skill-building without the pressure of a formal course or a



Players sorting tiles as a new hand begins.

registration barrier.

The program also benefits from “just-in-time” learning supports. The facilitator maintains a resource sheet for newer players that points to reputable online practice options and video tutorials. This approach aligns with a library value: meeting learners where they are and then offering tools that support self-directed learning between sessions.

Why a Weekly Mahjong Program Matters for Older Adults

Older-adult programming often gets framed as “nice to have,” even when older adults face serious risks from isolation. Public health research connects social isolation and loneliness with negative health

outcomes, and scholars call for community-based responses that strengthen relationships and routine connection points (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020; Office of the Surgeon General, 2023). Stronger social relationships also correlate with improved health outcomes across many studies (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). Libraries can contribute meaningfully because they offer trusted, neutral, non-commercial gathering spaces.

Mahjong at the Library provides a specific kind of support: predictable social connection that does not demand performance, purchasing, or a preexisting friend group. Participants arrive with a shared activity that makes conversation easier. The tiles supply a natural rhythm, and the table supplies a reason to return.

This routine helps participants sustain relationships over time. Regulars notice absences, welcome newcomers, and build a sense of continuity that many adults lose after retirement, relocation, or life transitions. A weekly “third place” inside a library can function as both recreation and community care, with minimal cost and high relational value (Klinenberg, 2018).

Intergenerational Potential and a Shifting Public Image

The *Washington Post* reporting reveals a cultural shift: younger adults increasingly view mahjong as a social connector, and some newcomers want to learn the game to play with family members across generations (Judkis, 2025). This trend matters for library programming because it broadens the potential audience. Mahjong can become a bridge

activity, not only an older-adult activity.

Quince Orchard’s current weekly time slot naturally serves adults and older adults who can attend in the afternoon. Even with that schedule constraint, the broader public conversation around mahjong invites libraries to think strategically about expansion. A year-round program can support intergenerational participation when scheduling and age-range policies allow, and an occasional evening or weekend “Learn and Play” session can make participation possible for working adults and for family pairs who want to learn together. Libraries can also pilot a family-friendly introduction or a multigenerational pop-up tied to a cultural heritage display, a community storytelling program, or a summer reading challenge.

Interest in mahjong programming extends beyond Quince Orchard Library. Within MCPL, colleagues have developed similar offerings at other branches, including a regular American-style mahjong program at Davis Library and additional learn-to-play or drop-in groups at Olney Library. This cross-branch activity suggests a systemwide appetite for game-based, relationship-centered adult programming that supports routine participation and social connection.

Other public libraries in the region—including D.C. Public Library, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Howard County Library System, and Loudoun County Public Library—have hosted free-play or facilitated Mah Jongg programs for adult audiences. Taken together, these programs point toward opportunities for future comparison across sites, including participant retention, newcomer onboarding, accessibility practices, and the role of volunteer leadership in sustaining table culture. For Maryland libraries, these examples function as reference points rather than prescriptive models, underscoring the value of adapting mahjong programs to local space, staffing, and community context.

Cultural Note: Respect, Origins, and Responsible Programming

Mahjong has roots in Chinese history and culture, and the game has traveled through many communities with meaningful variation. Contemporary writers describe mahjong as a living tradition shaped by migration, community, and “house rules” that reflect local identity (Wong, 2025). American-style mahjong, including NMJL play, represents one community-specific adaptation with a long history in many U.S. social circles, including many



Players gathered around the table during a weekly session, showing the tactile and social side of table-based mahjong.

Jewish-American friendship groups (Judkis, 2025).

A library program benefits from respectful framing. A short cultural note in signage or handouts can acknowledge the game’s origins and its many living traditions. This framing can reduce stereotyping, avoid “novelty” treatment, and invite curiosity rather than caricature.

Responsible programming also requires attention to appropriation and representation. Public discourse around the recent mahjong “trend” includes concerns about aesthetic rebranding that erases cultural context, along with reminders that American enthusiasm has sometimes carried Orientalist tropes (Judkis, 2025). Libraries can respond with straightforward practices: name the style of play, acknowledge origins, recommend resources created by Asian diaspora

writers and educators, and avoid marketing language that treats the game as a costume or gimmick.

Lessons Learned for Libraries Considering Mahjong

A successful mahjong meetup does not require extensive staffing or expensive equipment. The program benefits most from clear expectations, accessible materials, and an environment that supports both regulars and newcomers. Outreach can stay simple, including a flyer, in-branch signage, and word of mouth, especially when a program meets consistently week to week. Focus on the social and practical fundamentals first and then refine.

Libraries planning a similar program can start with five high-impact decisions:

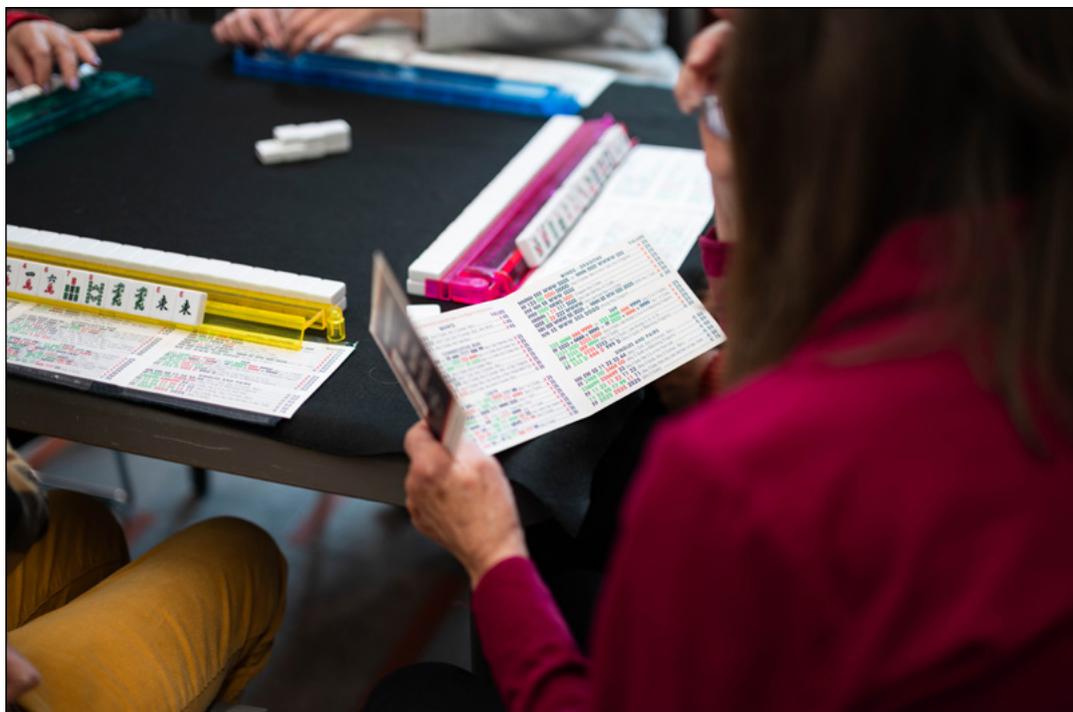
1. Choose and name a rule set clearly (e.g., American-style mahjong using the NMJL annual card).
2. Build accessibility into the basics by offering large-print cards and adequate table spacing.
3. Create a newcomer pathway that welcomes observation and light coaching without promising a full class.
4. Set simple community norms that support a friendly atmosphere.
5. Track attendance with a low-effort workflow so staff can document value and plan capacity.

Quince Orchard Library uses a simple paper attendance sheet kept with program supplies. The facilitator records the participant count, and staff then enter the number into the library's event management and attendance reporting system. This workflow stays lightweight and consistent, and this consistency supports program sustainability.

Libraries should also make careful choices about copyrighted materials. The annual NMJL card functions as a core component of American-style mahjong, and the League sells standard and large-print versions (National Mah Jongg League, n.d.). Encourage participants to purchase their own cards and follow the League's guidance on appropriate use. This approach supports ethical programming and reduces staff risk.

Reader Resources

Nicole Wong's (2025) *Mahjong: House Rules from Across the Asian Diaspora* offers a useful lens for libraries planning culturally respectful mahjong programming and collections work. Libraries can also build a small "mahjong corner" display near the program space that features beginner-friendly guides, cultural histories, and community-created resources. The pairing of play and learning helps position mahjong as both recreation and literacy, including cultural literacy and media literacy around what counts as respectful adaptation.



Over-the-shoulder view of a participant consulting a reference card while planning a hand.

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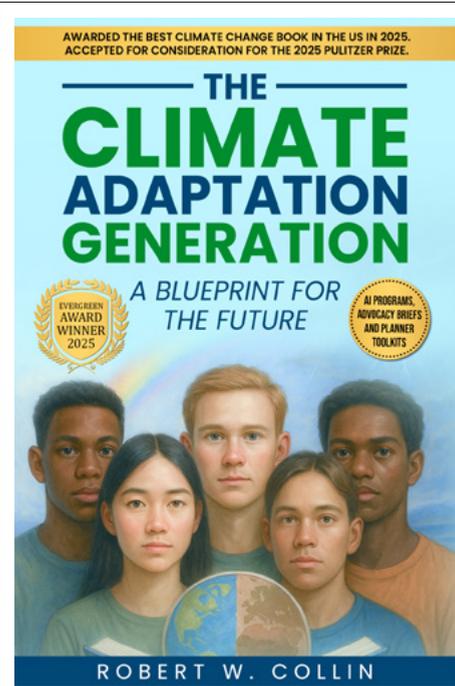
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■ Award-Winning Climate Books by Robert W. Collin ■

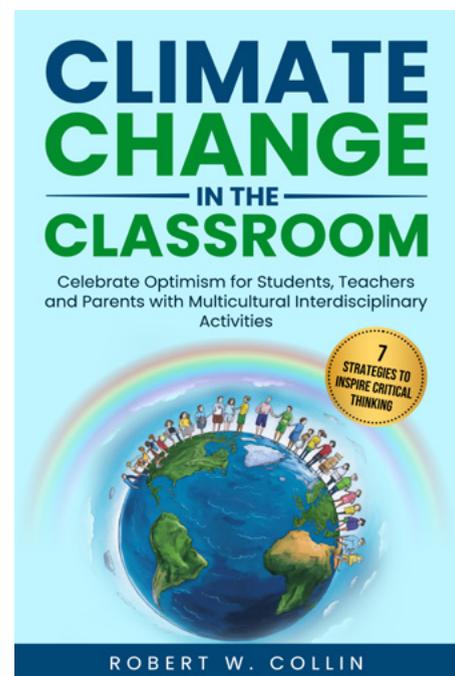


The Climate Adaptation Generation: A Blueprint for the Future

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Citizens for Maryland
LIBRARIES



MARYLAND
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OutRAIGeous Reviews

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

Split the Sky by Marie Arnold (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2025)

Review by Theo Scully

Lala Russell doesn't want to have to worry about the rampant racism that makes her Texas hometown of Davey a "sundown town," especially once a Black organization attempts to create accessible housing in the nearly all-white part of Davey. She wants to focus on her musical training as a gifted cellist, and on her twin brother, her aunt, and her dad. If that wasn't enough, Lala has been blessed with prophetic visions since a young age. Now, her visions have changed from harmless to threatening on Lala's fifteenth birthday as she "sees" a Black teenage boy being shot in the chest by a white homeowner a week from now. Her first thought is to find the boy and prevent the tragedy from happening, but her Grandma Sadie believes that if Lala stops the vision, she will also prevent protests and legal change that would help Black Americans all over the country. Lala must choose between saving a friend or saving many people in the future, all while learning more about Black injustice in the United States.

If you had told me at the start of the year that one of my favorite books in 2025 would be a speculative middle grade novel about systemic racism and legacy wrapped in the Trolley Problem, I would have begged you to get it to me sooner. *Split the Sky* is thought-provoking, with the narrative working overtime to convince not only Lala, but also the reader, to fight for social justice. Lala is such an empathetic character, with her love for her family and friends balancing the fear and exhaustion that comes with living as a Black person in modern-day America. Arnold kept switching out the train tracks from underneath my expectations as we moved along, all while keeping true to the ending that, once read, you realize couldn't go any other way. Spoiler alert, it is also heartbreaking – I finished this during a lunch break and had to go to an empty hallway to have a quiet cry afterwards. This is a hardcore read and one that is sorely needed by readers of all ages. I would highly recommend this for fans of *The Cost of Knowing* by Brittney Morris, *Dear Martin* by Nic Stone, and *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas.



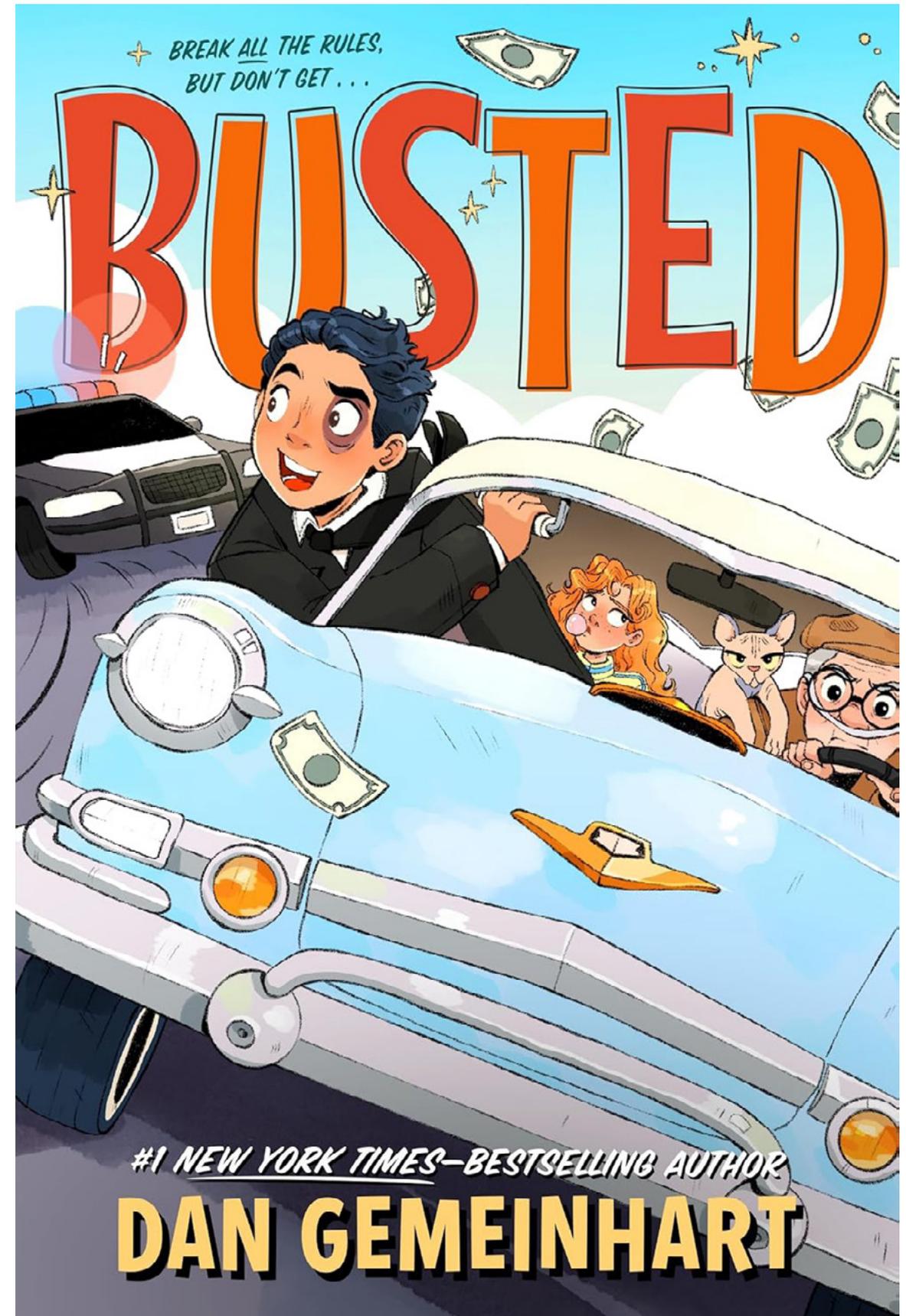
***Busted* by Dan Gemeinhart (Henry Holt and Co., 2025)**

Review by Carolyn Harnick

How do you decide who you are going to be? What does it look like? Oscar Aberdeen thinks he has it all figured out, until he gets an offer he can't refuse from Jimmy the Wrench and learns that life is always more complicated, more fun, and juicier than you could ever know.

Join Natasha No Nuts, Kid Ravioli, Mr. Buttercup, and Jimmy the Wrench on an adventure that has to be read to be believed. Find out how many senior citizens it takes to sneak two kids and a hairless cat out of a retirement home and learn that when you loosen up a little, life tends to surprise you.

Highly quotable and surprisingly wholesome, don't skip this one just because you have a driver's license. For fans of *The Westing Game*, *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, and *Ben Yokoyama and the Cookie of Doom*.

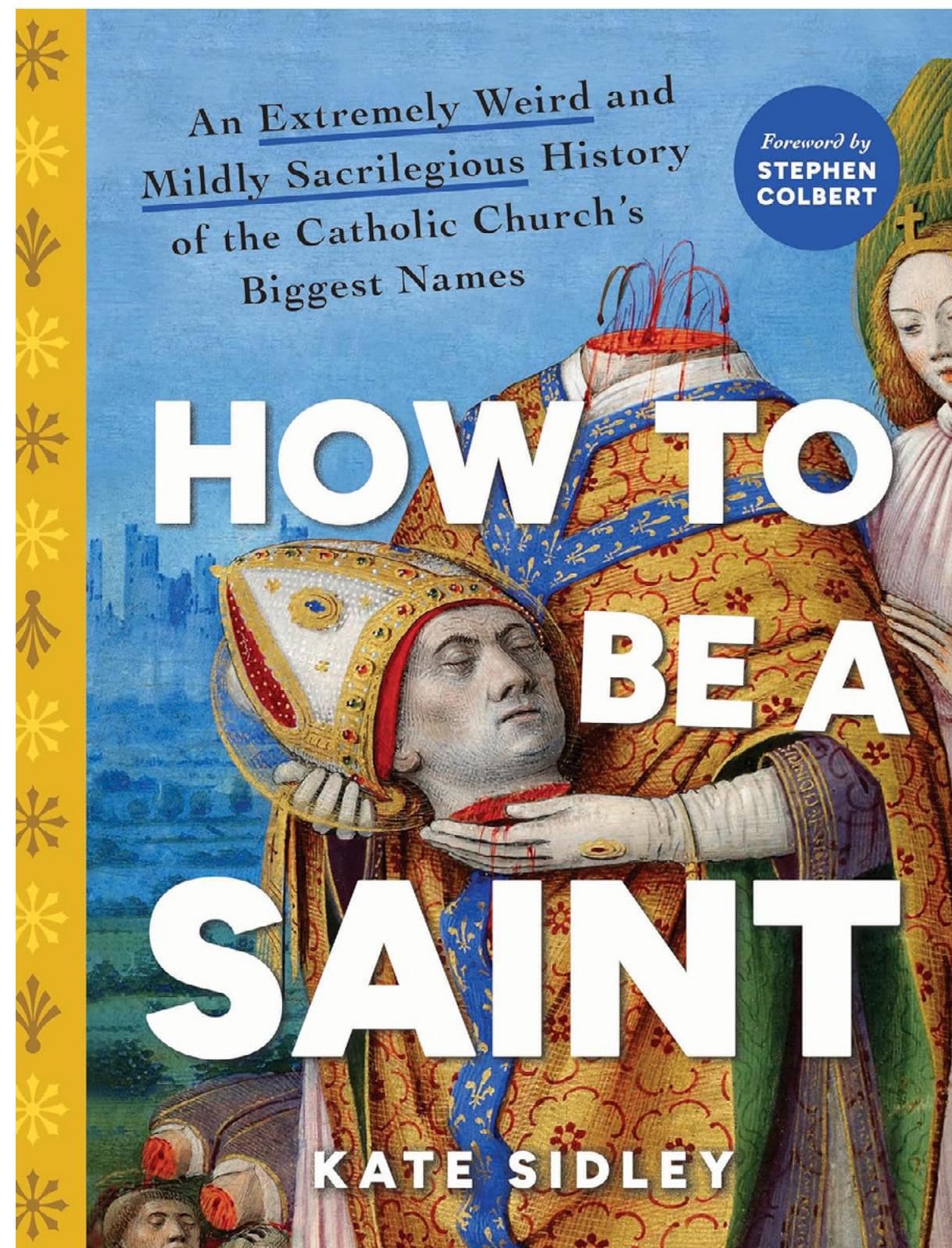


***How to Be a Saint: An Extremely Weird and Mildly Sacrilegious History of the Catholic Church's Biggest Names* by Kate Sidley (Sourcebooks, 2025)**

Review by Monica McAbee

Like her boss, Stephen Colbert, Sidley recognizes the funny aspects of Catholicism. Here, she lays out the complicated process of canonization, presenting the book as an irreverent but (mostly) factual how-to guide for folks who aspire to sainthood. In case the process doesn't deter you (remember, you're supposed to be dead before canonization can be considered), there's a certificate of sainthood at the end that you can cut out and hang on your wall! As part of your vision board, I guess!

Includes brief biographies of some of our favorite saints, along with color illustrations from religious art. A delightful book for Catholics, non-Catholics, lapsed Catholics—basically anyone who is curious about how saints get to be saints.





Maryland Library Association's Future of Libraries Interest Group

Personal Foresight

Tracy Miller, Harford County Public Library

At the Future of Library Interest Group meetings, we talk about multiple possible futures for libraries. But the reason I got interested in futuring and strategic foresight was that I found that the skills I learned helped me in my personal life. Here at the beginning of a new year, I thought I would share a tool I found for personal foresight and hope that it helps you too.

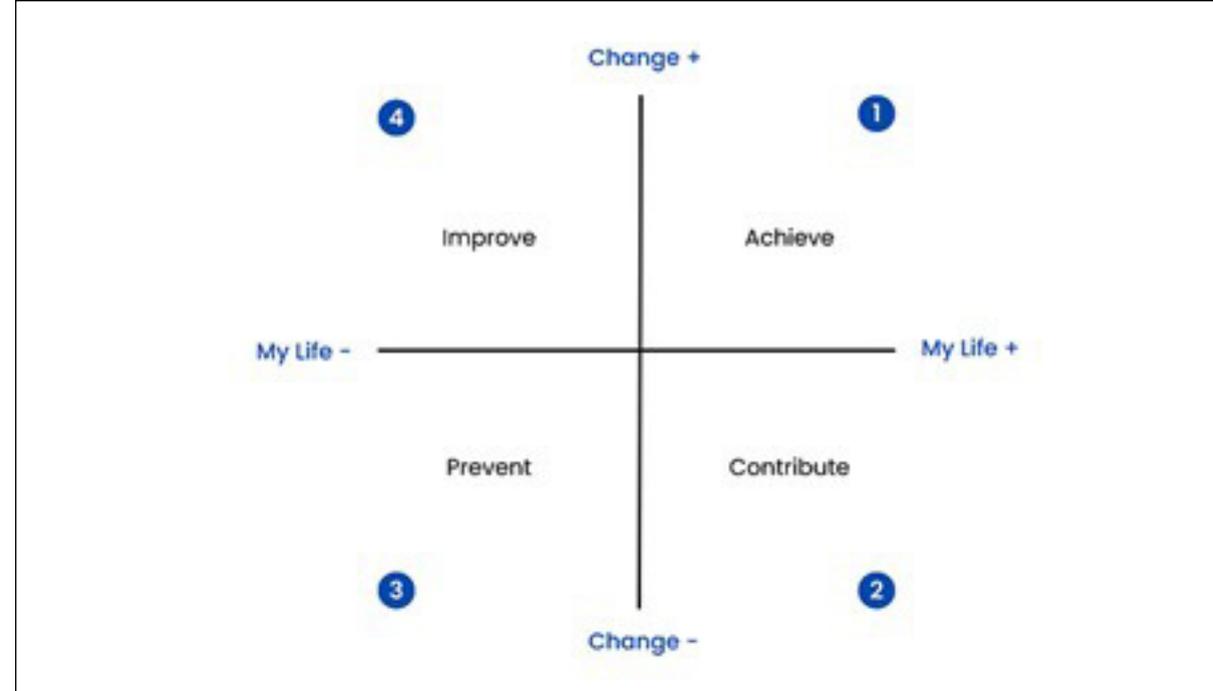
I recently discovered "The Change Matrix" as described by Leah Zaidi, a prominent futurist. On her blog, she lays out the tool and how to use it. I encourage you to check it out for more information and examples: <https://medium.com/predict/how-to-navigate-change-the-change-matrix-e6b83fc0203a>. In this article, I will describe a bit about the tool and how I used it.

This matrix allows you to create four future scenarios for yourself related to a change that you are contemplating, or an issue that you are concerned about. Creating these scenarios allows you to think about what might happen and plan accordingly. Start by creating a four-quadrant matrix. The X axis is your life. To the left along the axis, your life gets worse; to the right, it gets better. The Y axis is where you plot the two ends of the spectrum of that change. Each quadrant is labeled on the matrix with an action to take if that scenario comes to pass.

I adapted the illustration in the next column from Leah Zaidi's blog post.

I completed the matrix with an issue that I have been worried about: the economy. At the top of the Y axis, I wrote "the economy stays the same or improves." At the bottom, I wrote "the economy worsens, or we enter a Depression."

In the upper right quadrant of my matrix, the economy gets better and my life gets better. This quadrant is the scenario I would like to achieve. I described in the quadrant what that would look like for me. I considered factors such as relationships, my health, my



career, and finances. This was a rosy scenario, and I enjoyed imagining life getting better for myself and my community.

Then I continued around the quadrant. In the lower right, the economy gets worse, but my life actually gets better. I described what that might look like. If I was to find myself in this situation, how could I *contribute* to others that were less fortunate? It was a helpful reminder to me that it is possible to be ok personally when there is turmoil in the wider world.

I found the bottom left quadrant depressingly easy to fill out. I think my mind is always ready to go to the doomsday scenario! This quadrant was full of situations that I wanted to prevent. The upper left quadrant was probably the most challenging. What if the thing I'm worrying about doesn't happen and my life is made worse anyway? This scenario is one where I would want to take steps to improve.

Thinking through all these scenarios was a form of proactive coping for me and it helped to ease my anxiety. I also looked at these scenarios to inform my decision-making now. For example, in each of the scenarios, I thought about my house and how we would use it. In my happy scenario, we would be hosting family for celebration; in my worst scenario, we might be housing family members who lost income. In either case, this exercise confirmed for me that we should move forward with renovations that increased our house's capacity, rather than others that were more cosmetic.

I hope that you found this exercise useful and will try it out for yourself! Please check out Leah Zaidi's blog for more information and examples (<https://medium.com/predict/how-to-navigate-change-the-change-matrix-e6b83fc0203a>).

As always, I invite you to check out the Future of Libraries Interest Group! We meet virtually at 10 a.m. on the first Monday of each month. If you are interested in joining us, please don't hesitate to get in touch! My email address is millert@hcplonline.org. ■



Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Panel

Word on the Street: Talking About Disability with Respect

Cassandra Miller, Baltimore County Public Library

If you work in libraries long enough, chances are you've heard or used terms like *special needs*, *differently abled*, or *handicapped* when referring to disabled people. These phrases are often well-intentioned, but many in the disability community have made it clear: they'd rather you didn't.

So, what's the problem with these terms, and what language can we use instead?

What's wrong with terms like *special needs*, *differently abled*, and *handicapped*?

These euphemisms may sound kind or well-meaning, but they often avoid naming disability directly and end up reinforcing stigma. Instead of promoting inclusion, they can make disability seem like something shameful or uncomfortable to talk about.

🗉 **"Special needs"** suggests that disabled people require something fundamentally different from everyone else, but access to communication, mobility, and learning isn't special; it's a fundamental human right.

🗉 Terms like **"Differently abled"** were coined to highlight strengths, but they avoid naming disability altogether. Moreover, these terms can come across as patronizing rather than empowering. For many people, disability is not something to be sugar-coated or hidden. It's an identity, a community, and a political reality.

🗉 **"Handicapped"** is outdated and associated with a deficit-based view of disability. It also carries historical baggage and contributes to stigma, especially when used in public-facing materials.

Most importantly, these terms don't reflect the language that **disabled people themselves** are asking us to use. Research shows that within disability communities preferences vary, and many people choose identity-first language as an affirmation of disability as part of

self-identity, while others choose person-first language to emphasize personhood; either way, respectful language aligns with how individuals describe themselves.

So, what language *should* we use?

Say **"disabled people"** or **"people with disabilities."** Both are widely accepted. Some communities prefer identity-first language ("disabled person") because it affirms disability as a core part of their identity. Others prefer person-first language ("person with a disability") to emphasize humanity before diagnosis. When in doubt, follow the lead of the person or group you're referring to.

Be specific when relevant. Terms like "blind," "deaf," "autistic," "wheelchair user," or "neurodivergent" provide useful context, especially when someone self-identifies that way. Avoid phrases like "suffers from" or "wheelchair bound." Instead, use neutral, factual language like "uses a wheelchair" or "has low vision."

Think access, not limitation: Rather than framing disability as something to be fixed or pitied, focus on removing barriers. For example, instead of "accommodating special needs," try "providing access" or "ensuring inclusion."

Why does this matter for libraries?

Language shapes how we design our spaces, choose materials, plan programs, and train staff. If our signage, websites, or promotional materials use outdated or euphemistic language, we risk alienating the very people we aim to serve.

Libraries that affirm disability as a natural part of human diversity rather than as a problem to be solved will create spaces of real inclusion. That starts with the words we use.

A quick shift you can make today

If your website, signage, or outreach materials currently use the phrase *special needs*, consider updating it to say *services for disabled people* or *accessible services*. It may feel like a small change, but it sends a big message: this is a place where disability is not hidden or tiptoed around. It's welcomed, respected, and understood.

Further Reading

- 🗉 [National Center on Disability and Journalism – Disability Language Style Guide](#)
- 🗉 [Autistic Self Advocacy Network: Identity-First Language](#)
- 🗉 [Disability Visibility Project – Essays, stories, and resources from disabled people](#)
- 🗉 [CDC: Communicating with and About People with Disabilities](#)
- 🗉 [WebJunction: Prioritizing Accessibility and Disability Inclusion at Your Library](#)
- 🗉 [The MidAtlantic ADA Center](#)

Want to explore another DEI-related term in a future column? Reach out to the MLA Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Panel and let us know! ■

Intellectual Freedom Panel News

Lloyd Jansen, Charles County Public Library



Intellectual Freedom Panel

Maryland Intellectual Freedom Panel Round-Up

In early November the Maryland State Board of Education **voted to overturn** the Harford County School Board's ban of the young adult graphic novel *Flamer* by Mike Curato. If you recall, the Harford board's decision to ban the book on the grounds of graphic language and vulgarity was made behind closed doors after an internal review committee and the superintendent supported retaining the book, prompting **protests** from parents and educators.

On November 13, the Harford County board **voted 5-2** to appeal the state board's ruling to the circuit court, despite their own attorney saying they have a "less than 20%" chance of winning the appeal. Stay tuned for further updates on this appeal.

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

The IFP held an online banned book discussion through MLA Connect on October 30 where participants spoke briefly about some of their favorite banned books. The titles discussed were:

- 📖 *Sold* by Patricia McCormack (2006): The story of Lakshmi, a young girl from Nepal, who is sold into prostitution to pay off family debts.
- 📖 *Queer, There, and Everywhere* by Sarah Prager; illustrated by Zoe More O'Ferrall (2nd ed. 2017): Offers a collection of brief profiles of famous historical LGBTQIA+ figures.
- 📖 *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* by Malinda Lo (2021): Historical fiction coming of age story about being a Queer child of Chinese immigrants, set in the McCarthy era in San Francisco.
- 📖 *The Big Bath House* by Kyo Maclear; illustrated by Gracey Zhang (2021): Brings readers

to a traditional Japanese bathhouse where collective nudity is ordinary and bodies of all shapes, ages, and sizes are expected as the norm.

📖 *Body Talk: 37 Voices Explore Our Radical Anatomy* by Kelly Jensen (2020): A compilation of essays, comics, illustrations, and lists from 37 creators about human anatomy. Topics range from puberty to blindness and encompass a small part of the enormous variety of the human experience in our bodies. Jensen writes for **Book Riot** and pens the weekly Book Censorship News column.

📖 *Flamer* by Mike Curato (2020): "It's the summer between middle school and high school, and Aiden Navarro is away at camp. Everyone's going through changes—but for Aiden, the stakes feel higher. As he navigates friendships, deals with bullies, and spends time with Elias (a boy he can't stop thinking about), he finds himself on a path of self-discovery and acceptance."

📖 *The Drowning of Stephan Jones* by Bette Greene (1991): Set in Arkansas, *The Drowning of Stephan Jones* follows Carla Wayland as she comes to terms with her small town's rampant homophobia and its direct harassment of Frank Montgomery and Stephan Jones, a gay couple who recently moved into town.

📖 *Melissa* by Alex Gino (2015): Previously published as *George* in 2015, this middle grade novel follows a young Trans girl's journey as she works to convince her mother, teacher, and fellow classmates that she is indeed a girl.

A second banned book discussion event, My Valentine Wouldn't Ban Books, is planned for Friday, February 13. Look for a recap in this column in the spring issue 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 November 19 and December 17.

Colorado: Elizabeth School District is in the middle of **legal battles** after banning books, and **protests** are taking place over book banning policies in Colorado Springs District 11.

Connecticut: Representatives reported that some school districts are refusing to comply with the state's Freedom to Read law.

Florida: Hillsborough County Public Schools **bristles** at the assertion they have banned more books than any other Florida district. This is semantics, folks. Pulling books indefinitely to "review" is still a ban. Only **400 books were banned** in Florida public schools in the 2024-25 school compared to about 700 the year before. Good news, I guess?

Idaho: The Ada Community Library Board Chair removed a book without a vote. The concerns of the patron challenging *The Bare Naked Book* by Kathy Stinson were over "visible tattoos and piercings, transgender surgery scars and promoting homosexuality and transgenderism."

Maine: A challenge at a high school of *This is Really Happening* by Erin Chack is really an attempt to get the school to establish a rating and permission slip system for "sexually explicit" books in the library. They have created a document summarizing information about rating systems.

Michigan: **HB4922** would prohibit Michigan schools from requiring a library credential or degree for an individual to serve as a school librarian. The Michigan Library Association **collected over 4,300 signatures** on a petition to ask the state government to protect the right the read.

Minnesota: A **school librarian was fired** for a banned books display. Also, a report of a library director who removed a display on Palestinian life and culture due to hateful negative comments and interactions from members of the Jewish community, despite the same display being put up, and kept up, at other branches in the same system.

North Carolina: Randolph County Commissioners voted 3-2 to **dissolve the public library's board of trustees** after the board voted to keep the book *Call Me Max* on library shelves.

Pennsylvania: On October 28, the Elizabethtown Area School District board **removed** three books, a poem, and a film from the English curriculum for being inappropriate for students. On November 11, the board president **questioned students** who shared negative student reaction to the bans, dismissing the students' report as "public comments." Anti-book banners gained or flipped seats in at least six school board races across the state.

Tennessee: The state is working on a Right to Read Act, focusing on high school collections. Also, several public library systems are grappling with Secretary of State letters and compliance stemming from the President's Executive Order regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and other policies. Rutherford County Library Board closed their libraries so staff could review collections to comply with their letter. In addition to **protests** at the board's recent meeting, the RCLS's new system librarian **put on record** that she had been bullied into pulling books by the RCLS Board Chairman, Cody York.

Utah: State audit finds the state's book bans **may not go far enough**.

Virginia: The electorate soundly **defeated anti-trans messaging. SB19**, introduced for the 2026 session, clarifies that school library books deemed "sexually explicit" are not subject to parental notification unless they are specifically assigned by a teacher.

Wyoming: **Bill HB0010** allows **lawsuits** over "sexually explicit" library books, and Fremont County **scrubs all references** to ALA and AASL from its policies. ■

LGBTQ+ Interest Group

Cheers to the New Year!

Shannon Carney, Baltimore County Public Library

We want to welcome the new year with some of our favorite drinks! Here's what's keeping us warm and cozy this winter:

Teresa Miller (she/her), Prince George's County Memorial Library System

One of my favorite winter drinks is hot port. I had it for the first time on a Christmas trip to Ireland, and now I look for any excuse to make it for my friends. It will make you feel like you're wrapped in a thick robe next to a crackling fire, and pairs wonderfully with warm conversation or a cozy book. Save it for the end of your evening though, because it might put you right to sleep!

You'll need a lemon, whole cloves, port, and hot water.

Optional: pre-warm your glass by filling it with hot water for several minutes, then pouring it out.

- 🍹 Fill your glass 1/4-1/2 full with port.
- 🍹 Slice the lemon crosswise. Push cloves into each segment of one lemon slice, then add it to your glass.
- 🍹 Pour near-boiling water over the lemon to fill the rest of the glass.
- 🍹 Optional: sweeten your drink with honey or sugar. Some recipes also add a dash of cinnamon or nutmeg.
- 🍹 Stir it gently, let it cool for a few minutes, then enjoy!

Theo Scully (they/them and he/him), Baltimore County Public Library

My favorite drink is a Shirley Temple (mocktail or cocktail) — my friends always have grenadine stocked if I am going to an event they are hosting. It is also a joke among my queer community that Shirley Temples are for the gays and Roy Rogers (Coca-Cola with grenadine) is for the straights. 😊

I usually make mine with my heart:

- 🍹 Put some ice cubes into a glass

- 🍹 Pour 8-12 oz of lemon-lime soda
- 🍹 Pour enough grenadine to make you think it is Shark Week. Mix well.
- 🍹 If preparing as a cocktail, pour in a shot of vodka or gin. Mix well.
- 🍹 Put a few maraschino cherries in at the top.
Drink with glee!

Mike Kiel (he/they), University of Baltimore

I love cranberry anything. One of my favorites is a cosmopolitan cocktail. As an adult who has made a lot of different variations, I always make the Barefoot Contessa's, but I use 100% cranberry juice with no sugar added. The reason that I make the Barefoot Contessa's recipe is because it's easy. Others do not have proportions that are easy—you can make a pitcher of this for a party.

- 🍹 Pour 2 cups of good vodka, 1 cup triple sec, 1 cup cranberry juice, and ½ cup lime juice into pitcher.
- 🍹 Fill a cocktail shaker 1/2 full with ice.
- 🍹 Pour the cosmopolitan mixture into the cocktail shaker until it's 3/4 full and shake for 30 seconds.
- 🍹 Pour the mixture into the martini glasses and serve immediately.

Shannon Carney (she/her), Baltimore County Public Library

My sister introduced me to a diamondback cocktail. During the covid lockdown she got really into mixology and was looking for unique-to-Maryland drinks. This came up in the search and has long been a fixture of our Sunday dinners. For some extra Maryland flair, use Sagamore Spirit Rye which is made in Baltimore City!

- 🍹 1 oz straight rye whiskey
- 🍹 ½ oz apple brandy / straight applejack
- 🍹 ½ oz yellow chartreuse
- 🍹 ¼ oz chilled water



Materials Interest Group

Understanding MARC Records: A Beginner's Guide

Laura Bandoch, Harford County Public Library

MARC stands for MACHine-Readable Cataloging. It is a standard used by libraries to encode bibliographic information—such as titles, authors, publication details, and subjects—so that records can be exchanged between systems. It is important to distinguish MARC from cataloging rules. MARC does not tell catalogers what information to record; it defines how that information is stored. The “what” comes from standards such as RDA (Resource Description and Access). MARC is the container that holds the data.

A MARC record is divided into fields, each of which contains a specific type of information. Every field is identified by a three-digit numeric tag, such as 245 or 100. Most fields also contain indicators (one or two numbers following the tag) and subfields, marked by a delimiter and a letter (for example, \$a, \$c). The delimiter does not always look like \$, but it is the shorthand catalogers will use. The symbol in the cataloging software may differ.

Beginners do not need to memorize hundreds of MARC tags. Fields can be fixed, which means they use strings of predefined alphanumeric characters that affect format display in the PAC (Public Access Catalog). Fields can be variable, meaning the content will vary in length and content in each record. A small group of commonly used variable fields will allow you to interpret most records:

Tag	Purpose
020	ISBN
100	Main personal author
245	Title statement
250	Edition statement
260/264	Publication information
300	Physical description
490	Series statement
500	General notes
700	Added personal authors

Indicators are the one or two digits that follow the field tag, such as in: 245 10. You will hear the first number referred to as the first indicator and the second as the second indicator - they are not read as a typical two-digit number. They control specific display and indexing functions.

For example, indicators can determine whether a title should be indexed under its first word or whether initial articles such as “The” or “An” should be ignored for sorting purposes (as the indicators do in the 245 field). For beginners, it is enough to know that indicators affect how data behaves in a catalog.

Subfields divide a field into smaller, labeled pieces. Each subfield begins with a dollar sign and a lowercase letter. For example, common subfields in the title field (245) include:

\$a – Title proper

\$b – Subtitle

\$c – Statement of Responsibility (identifies who is responsible for the intellectual or artistic creation, performance, production, or distribution of the resource, as presented on the item)

Most librarians encounter MARC through a cataloging interface that displays information in a readable format. This “friendly” display is generated from the underlying MARC data. You may encounter this display in the PAC. Learning MARC often involves understanding how that familiar display maps back to the coded fields and subfields in the MARC record.

As a last note, MARC is not completely obsolete despite ongoing discussions about successors such as BIBFRAME – a topic for another time. It remains a foundational infrastructure for library catalogs worldwide. ■

Youth Services Division

Happy Winter, *Crab* readers!

Jessica Letizia, Baltimore County Public Library

Our division officers and committee co-chairs have been busy behind the scenes planning enriching professional development events with some amazing authors! Youth Services Division (YSD) is one of the most active divisions in MLA, and its success is due to the hard work of volunteers. Whether you have been a part of YSD for a long time or are new to meetings, we need you! Please consider getting more involved, especially later this year when new committees are being formed.

Spring Black-Eyed Susan Tapestry (BEST) 2026 will be held virtually on March 12 (registration closed on February 3 to allow participants to read the books). Ally Russell, author of *It Came from the Trees*, will be the keynote speaker. Attendees will receive 8.5 contact hours, and Group Discussion Leaders will earn 12 hours. If you are interested in being a Group Discussion Leader, please reach out to Joe Farmaco (joseph.farmaco@montgomerycountymd.gov) or Noel Knepper (nknepper@bcpl.net).

Black-Eyed Susan Tapestry Book List

Grades 3-5

- 📖 Gidwitz, Adam. *Max in the House of Spies* (Operation Kinderspion, Book 1)
- 📖 Miller, Chanel. *Magnolia Wu Unfolds It All*
- 📖 Millington, Allie. *Olivetti*
- 📖 Pla, Sally J., illustrated by De Regil, Tania. *Invisible Isabel*
- 📖 Warga, Jasmine. *A Strange Thing Happened in Cherry Hall*

Grades 6-8

- 📖 Choldenko, Gennifer. *The Tenth Mistake of Hank Hooperman*
- 📖 Day, Nicholas, illustrated by Helquist, Brett. *The Mona Lisa Vanishes: A Legendary Painter, A Shocking Heist, and the Birth of a Global Celebrity*
- 📖 Mendez, Jasminne. *Aniana Del Mar Jumps In*
- 📖 Pla, Sally J. *The Fire, the Water, and Maudie McGinn*
- 📖 Russell, Ally. *It Came from the Trees*

Save the Date!

“The Kids Are Customers Too Conference 2026” will be held on Tuesday, April 7 at the Miller Branch of Howard County Library System. Middle Grade and YA author Ellen Oh will be the keynote speaker! Registration is now open on the MLA website.

Attend a Meeting!

YSD meetings are held on the second Monday of each month from 12:00-2:00 p.m. and are fully online or hybrid via MLA Connect. Our next virtual meeting will take place on March 9, 2026.

Mark your calendars: Our next hybrid meeting will be held on April 13, 2026, at the Marilyn J. Praisner Library (Montgomery County Public Libraries) in Burtonsville.

Stay Informed!

Check out our website at <https://sites.google.com/view/mla-csd>
Join the YSD mailing list by emailing ysd.mdlib@gmail.com
Email the YSD officers at ysd.mdlib@gmail.com
Join the YSD group on MLA Connect.

Meet Tisha Chakraborty

About Tisha's Job and MLA Responsibilities

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

I am a library branch associate at the Wicomico Public Library Centre Branch located in our local mall, which makes for an unconventional and fun experience! I've been part of the WPL system for almost three years, two of those in Adult Services at our main location. During my final year of undergrad at The University of Central Florida, I briefly worked at the campus's John C. Hitt library in the Open Educational Resources and Textbook Affordability departments. I've created multiple adult/EA-oriented programs, including "my baby": "The Salisbury Salon Creative Circle." Inspired by Renaissance and Enlightenment era salons (open gatherings where those of all backgrounds could congregate over literature and the arts), the Salon hosts monthly themed events. I also created "For the Record" Music Club for adults and recently, "Monthly Memories" Scrapbooking. All of my programming is near and dear to me, often novel, and aims to spread joy through the arts and humanities. I have

been actively involved in marketing library programs by consistently creating slides, social media graphics, and chatting with the public (oh, how I do love to chit chat!). My strength is being able to guide others with anything from "opening the internet" to job seeking, scholarly research, and social services, in a conversational way. I cannot believe how many wonderful relationships I've built through providing general library services, talking to event attendees, and event presenters—the patrons here have been integral to providing me indirect assistance and real understanding of my role. Looking ahead, I'll be hosting EA-oriented Salon and Music Club events, highlighting April's National Poetry Month, and developing a large event to celebrate America's Semiquincentennial!

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

I have been dipping my toes within MLA shortly after beginning my library career, successfully creating a poster presentation for the Spring 2024 conference. I have since applied for and received educational grants as I recently started my graduate studies in Project Management.



I gave another poster presentation and submitted materials for the 2025 Spring conference and Excellence in Marketing award. This past year, I've branched out a bit into joining the MD Author Award committee focused on nonfiction—my favorite! In the fall, I ended up in an Emerging Adults Interest Group meeting, taking on leadership with a goal of revamping it this spring. When meetings restart, I hope for participants to actively share EA-related initiatives within their libraries and work on monthly project themes (e.g. coworking space events), tailoring them to fit our individual libraries/communities. In the fall, I would like

to host another EA Summit. I'd love for the MLA community to sign up for EAIG, come out to future programs and events, and share EA-related happenings!!

How are you involved in the wider community?

I am becoming more involved in our community by connecting with others through weekly open Art Nights I frequently attend and getting to know people across demographics and stages of life who have introduced me to broader community projects, primarily focused on the arts. I also enjoy volunteering during holidays; most recently I helped put together Thanksgiving-to-go meals for those who may not have access or community to share the holiday. This year, I'm starting yoga teacher training after finding a passion for the practice last year (funnily enough, through the library!). I look forward to sharing what I learn to help our community find mental and physical

empowerment. I'm a strong believer in "pass it on!" (with a smile, of course).

What is it about libraries that inspires or motivates you?

I've literally grown up in libraries, learning to crawl on the library steps at Nova Southeastern University (a unique mix of public and academic libraries). Upon moving to Salisbury in 2006, I immediately found a home in the library in which I now work!

I always looked up to the librarians (we do like to read, after all!) and spent my middle school years curled up in our school library, shelving, and feeling supported by the school librarian. I didn't realize the impact that our librarian and spending all those school lunch periods in the library had on me; as an adult, I visited her and all of the memories flooded out.

Similarly, I spent my afternoons at Salisbury University's former Blackwell Library: shelving, snacking, and finding all of the best "secret" nooks and crannies to turn into my little reading spots! The librarians at every library environment I've been to have had a calming and uplifting effect on me, and I always walked out of library doors feeling better than I did coming in.

Being in the library world now, I focus on making patrons feel the same way I did (and do) at the library—leaving our cozy space with more knowledge and positivity.

About Tisha

Favorite movie, TV show, or play?

I have a hard time choosing a "favorite" anything (everything I like seems to be my favorite!), but I mainly love classic Hollywood, older foreign films, and anything psychological. My favorite movies include *Roman Holiday*, *Charade*, *It Happened One Night*, *Lost Highway*, *Donnie Darko*, and *Mean Girls*. If I had to choose one movie to watch for the rest of my life, though, it would definitely

be Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*.

Favorite type of music?

I am a longtime Lana Del Rey superfan, metalhead, and gothic/post-punk fan! I'm all over the place— all eras and genres (e.g. my foray into metal began with grunge and classic rock CDs I "borrowed" from my dad). My favorite bands include Pantera and Rammstein. I'm also a HUGE Ariana Grande fan (aka Arianator)! :)

Favorite smell or sound?

I'm a fragrance enthusiast— my favorite smell is that of a campfire. I go for scents with bergamot, marshmallow, and anything fruity and vanilla-ey!

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

My dream destination is Italy...I would like to experience my own *Roman Holiday*.

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

I collect shoes, plushies, and lip products (much to the chagrin of my family's shoe racks). I especially collect anything vintage Winnie the Pooh and Hello Kitty-related! ■

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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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- Voluntary mailing list, open to MLA and non-MLA members.
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Questions about MLA membership should be directed to the MLA office at mla@mdlib.org. Please address all other *Crabby* correspondence to: julie.fitzpatrick@hclibrary.org.

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Summer issue: July 5

Crab Editors

Julie Fitzpatrick, Editor

Howard County Library System, 410-313-1950

Amy L. Miller Meyers, Copy Editor

Carroll County Public Library, 410-386-4470

Robert Miller, Copy Editor

University of Maryland Global Campus Library

Regina Rose, Copy Editor

Ruth Utz, Copy Editor, Howard County Library System

Peter Nguyen, Graphics Editor, Howard County Library System

Art Director and production staff

Bucky Edgett, Lucky Productions,

Westminster MD 21158; 410-346-6925; luckypro.biz

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1401 Hollins Street; Baltimore MD 21223

Voice: 410-947-5090

mla@mdlib.org

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