

WLA ALD/ACRL-WA

# NEWSLETTER

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

It's been almost three years since ACRL-WA became a division of the Washington Library Association. In that time there have been many changes but the core of our chapter remains the same: to build opportunities for professional growth and communication in our professional community, to encourage the exchange of ideas, and to help us all enhance our library services.

In the spirit of those goals, we are excited to host the 2023 ALD/ACRL-WA and ACRL-OR Joint Fall Conference in person on Friday, October 27, at Lower Columbia College in Longview, WA. We think that our theme, the Work of Libraries, is extremely relevant to current conversations in the field, as well as to what happens day to day in our workplaces. Academic libraries function thanks to library workers and our labor, and it's important to acknowledge all the different types of work that entails. This conference is an opportunity to explore the different ways in which we engage with our work, to celebrate what we are proud of doing, and to connect with our peers and fellow workers in the region. We are excited about this conference, and hope that you will be too. Please keep an eye out for additional conference information on [ALD/ACRL-WA's website](#) as the summer progresses.

Alongside the conference, ALD/ACRL-WA is focused on building online spaces for community. You may have already come to one of our monthly(ish) "drop in" conversations about everything from AI tools in the library to partnerships. All members are welcome to suggest themes and are welcome to facilitate sessions! See page 2 for Greg Bem's write up of the discussions we've had in recent months.

If you have great ideas for future opportunities for academic library workers in the state to connect, please don't hesitate to reach out to the [Steering Committee](#). You can also run for a position on the Steering Committee for 2024! Terms for Steering Committee Members are 1 year long, and run from January 1 to December 31. Elections happen in late summer and early fall, and you can find more details about the positions on [WLA's elections page](#).

We are in an exciting period of growth and change, so it's a wonderful time to be involved in the Division. I hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter.

Lydia Bello,  
2023 ALD/ACRL-WA Division Chair

*Lydia Bello (she/her) is the Science and Engineering Librarian at Seattle University's Lemieux Library and McGoldrick Learning Commons.*

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## DROP-IN DISCUSSIONS OFFER INCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCOURSE

Greg Bem, ALD/ACRL-WA Member-at-Large

Since Fall 2021, the steering committee of WLA's Academic Library Division (ALD) / ACRL-WA has been hosting online drop-in discussions. The sessions are intended to bring together academic library voices from across the state and are designed to cover a wide range of topics. The topics have included general check-ins during the pandemic, deemed necessary for social and mental health (and professional camaraderie), as well as acute discussions of specific topics. In recent months the following have been explored: EDI and Assessment (December 2022); AI Tools, Libraries, and You (February 2023); and Partnerships in and out of the Library (April 2023).

The power behind the drop-in format is in openness and fluidity. Each session is facilitated by one or two library professionals who are passionate about the topic. The facilitators generate a list of questions and discussion points, but all of these are optional. The discussion is similar to an in-person roundtable, where the audience guides and explores the topic based on their own interests and contexts. When discussion naturally fades or reaches an end-point, the facilitators are available to pull out another question or discussion point and keep the conversation going forward.

Participation is encouraged but not required. The drop-ins are open to passive listeners as much as they are open to lovers of conversations. As such, the discussions are designed to be inclusive to the needs and constraints of each of the WLA members who participate.

The facilitators also take notes during each session to capture what's most important to the participants throughout the discourse. These notes are shared with the steering committee, which help inform the committee's work and offers exploration of potential future programs, activities, and commitments.

The session topics have been brainstormed by the steering team with input from the division community. At the end of each session, a call for new topics is announced and individuals are invited to contribute their interests and priorities. The invitation is open and ongoing, and WLA members who would like to propose a future session topic should simply send an email to the ALD listserv at [academiclibraries@wla.org](mailto:academiclibraries@wla.org) or current ALD chair Lydia Bello at [bellolydia@seattleu.edu](mailto:bellolydia@seattleu.edu).

The next session, "Confronting Privacy Issues in Libraries," will be held online on June 5th from 12:00pm to 1:00pm and will be co-facilitated by LWTech Faculty Librarian Katherine Kelley and myself. We hope to see you there!



**Did you know that you can access certain ACRL webcasts through the division?**

**ALD/ACRL-WA receives access to two webinars per year from ACRL. You can find past recordings by logging into the WLA website and checking out the [ACRL Webcasts page](#).**

# UW LIBRARIES & PRESS UNION: WHY WE ORGANIZED AND WHAT WE (FINALLY) WON

Laura Dimmit Smyth & Chelsea Nesvig

On Wednesday, January 25, 2023, members of the UW Libraries & Press Union were about an hour away from an indefinite strike. Our nine-member bargaining team had been in the (Zoom) bargaining room with our employer for approximately 22 hours and knew that without a tentative agreement, the strike would happen. But in the final hour, the strike was averted! An agreement was reached and our union had its very first contract - hooray! But it wasn't that simple. This was the 40th bargaining session and it took years of organizing to get to this exciting moment of solidarity and victory.

## Why we organized

At the University of Washington Libraries & Press, there are three categories of staff: classified, professional, and librarians. Classified staff have been unionized (in both SEIU 925 and WFSE AFSCME Council 28) for a long while, but librarians and professional staff have never had a union. A hallway chat between us in spring 2019 led to the realization that without a union, we'd never see the changes and improvements that we knew would make UW Libraries & Press a better place to work. A conversation with unionized library workers at other nearby institutions solidified our understanding of the power of a union and a contract.

## Initial Organizing

SEIU 925 already represented nearly 7,000 classified staff and faculty colleagues across the three University of Washington campuses; moreover, 925 also represented the largest group of unionized professional staff anywhere at UW (at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation). This experience with UW administration and Labor Relations was critical in our choice to work with 925, and paid off during the bargaining process. A key decision early in the unionizing process was that we would organize librarians and professional staff together, which aligned with the 925 motto: "Stronger Together." Librarians and professional staff work closely together across all three UW campuses to support library users.

## Signing cards and building solidarity

After we decided to work with 925, our organizing committee continued making contact with individuals to talk about unionization, and about specific workplace and professional concerns that could be addressed by a union. Our goal with these conversations was to have people sign union membership cards. Once we felt comfortable with the percentage of folks who had signed cards, the organizing committee was able to start planning to publicly announce the union campaign!

## Going public

Somehow the stars aligned for us to publicly announce the formation of our union on 9-25, AKA September 25, 2020, AKA our local union SEIU 925\*. This moved us into the next phase of our organizing by allowing us to reach even more colleagues, continue having conversations to build solidarity, and get even more union cards signed.

\*Did you know that the 925 comes from the 9-to-5 activism of the 70s and 80s that inspired the Dolly Parton song?!

## UW LIBRARIES & PRESS UNION (CONTINUED)

### Submitting to the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC)

The fall of 2020 saw us growing in numbers and we were eventually ready to file with PERC, the Washington State agency which has jurisdiction over public sector labor relations. While we weren't recognized as a union yet, we needed to determine who was truly eligible to be a member of our bargaining unit. After several months of interviewing many colleagues about their roles and responsibilities, we were ready for card check...

### Winning Our Union

...which was successful! On June 22, 2021, after PERC counted our signed union cards, we passed with (well) more than 50% +1 of our eligible staff being union members. It was time to move to bargaining.

### Bargaining (October 2021 - January 2023) and what we (finally) won

Broadly speaking, a contract covers the parts of your working conditions that legally cannot be taken away and allows workers to file grievances when the contract conditions are violated. As noted above, our tenacious bargaining team met with UW Labor Relations 40 times over 16 months and devoted innumerable hours to crafting our contract beyond those sessions. They approached their work by consistently centering the values that members communicated early in the bargaining process. While we always reminded ourselves that "you don't win everything," especially in a first contract, our members voted to approve this contract by more than 95%.

Our first contract is the result of years of organizing, advocacy, and hard work. At the same time, it is just a starting point. It establishes baselines in critical areas like compensation, transparency, academic freedom, and DEI training (the first UW contract with it in the contract as an article instead of an MOU!). We now benefit from both the tangible improvements of this contract, and the ability to build on our progress during the next bargaining cycle. One area where we still have work to do is increasing parity between professional staff and librarians - salaries and vacation allowance are two working conditions that are still farther apart than they should be.

### Looking ahead

It's difficult to convey the emotional component and toll of forming a union from scratch. This work spanned pre-pandemic times, the onset of COVID/quarantine, and the eventual return to in-person spaces. Our organizers and members gave their time and energy over and over again during a rollercoaster of wins and setbacks. We want to recognize the work that has been done while keeping our eyes on the tasks that will lie ahead. Now that our union is a reality, we turn our focus to the work of self-governance—electing officers, drafting by-laws, and creating a community of care where all workers can thrive.

*Laura is the Fine Arts & Cultural Studies Librarian at the UW Bothell/Cascadia College Campus Library.*

*Chelsea is the Global & Policy Studies Librarian at the UW Bothell/Cascadia College Campus Library.*

*Their hallway conversation in the spring of 2019 was an impetus for organizing the UW Libraries Union.*

## CAMPUS UPDATES

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### Highline College

**Highline College Pop-up Libraries** - Library staff are promoting library services and resources across campus and the community through an increased number of pop-up library tabling events. During pop-up library events, staff display books related to the event's theme and hand out free bookmarks, prizes, and/or tea and snacks. Students are often invited to put post-its on books they've read and ones they wanted to read. In addition, college community members are able to check out books from the display. During the 2022-23 academic year, staff collaborated to offer over 6 (and counting) pop-up libraries at campus and community events. Event examples include: the Highline Expo for local high school students, the [Black and Brown Male Summit](#) serving young men of color, the [Young Educated Ladies Leading Female Summit](#) serving young women of color, the [Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Week](#) and [Global Fest](#).

**Library Table at the Building 25 Open House** - During the Building 25 Open House on April 18, library staff interacted with 84 patrons (mostly students but some employees). During the event, staff asked patrons to answer whiteboard questions about improving library services. After answering questions, patrons spun the library prize wheel for a chance to win free snacks, prizes, and bookmarks. Representative survey feedback from patrons: "Today I discovered that the Highline College Library offers free books! and study rooms."

Two librarians, **Hara Brook** and **Deb Moore**, were awarded professional leave for the upcoming 2023-24 academic year.

**Hara Brook** (Faculty Librarian)—one quarter, to "develop a plan focusing on integrating information literacy (IL) practices to teach students in the STEM pathway courses... The goal would be to develop a plan to create resources and develop faculty training (including faculty librarians) for teaching STEM students the elements of scientific information literacy. This effort would go hand-in-hand with the work that Aleya Dhanji, Physics (lead for STEM101) and Colleen Sheridan, Biology, (Highline CURE institutional lead) are doing with the Course-based Undergraduate Research Experience (CURE) at Highline."

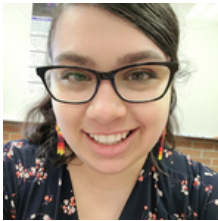
**Deb Moore** (Faculty Librarian)—one quarter "to learn more about copyright for educators and librarians, and how copyright and open licenses used for Open Educational Resources (OER) connect. As a librarian and one of the OER leaders on campus, I often get questions about copyright, and I don't currently feel competent in answering these questions. To be a successful copyright coach at Highline, I need to learn more about these topics."

## CAMPUS UPDATES (continued)

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### Central Washington University

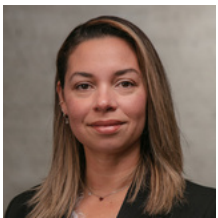
We are excited to welcome three new hires to the CWU Libraries team: Janet Calderon, Andreina Delgado, and Dr. Toria Messinger.



**Janet** (pronounced “Ya-Net”) **Calderon** started as the new Student Success Librarian at CWU Libraries in early April. She will oversee instruction and outreach efforts supporting students in their transition and success at CWU.



**Dr. Toria Messinger** started her position as the Communications & Assessment Librarian in mid-April. In this new role, Toria will collaborate on communicating services and evaluating spaces in a variety of ways.



**Andreina Delgado** is the Events & Communications Coordinator position at the libraries. In this role, Andreina will plan, arrange, and coordinate a wide variety of programming such as workshops, lecture series, student support events, and author visits.

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### The Evergreen State College



**Ren Thomas** has joined The Evergreen State College Library in the role of lead circulation specialist. Ren has a BA in English from Vassar College and an MLIS from the University of Washington. They come to Evergreen from Spokane Community College and are excited to continue helping facilitate a welcoming, supportive, and efficient circulation department! Outside of work, you’ll find Ren making multi-course tofu-based meals, reading queer horror novels, and being enthusiastic about moss.

## CAMPUS UPDATES (continued)

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### Lake Washington Institute of Technology (LWTech)

#### Easy Reader Collection

In Spring 2023, LWTech finalized a push to refresh its Easy Reader collection. The Easy Readers are intended to support English Language Learning (ELL) students. ELL is one of the largest academic programs at the college. The refresh was supported by an ELL Mini Grant offered by the Washington State Library, which covered \$500 in acquisitions; it was also supported by \$5,657 in additional funding from LWTech's Office of Instruction. A total of 570 books were acquired. Collection development efforts ensured the selections included all six levels of readers, and diverse subject matter, including international country representation.

#### Open Educational Resources (OER) Faculty Funding

The LWTech librarians will continue supporting and facilitating OER development funding for a third year. Inspired by the successful model at Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT), LWTech's funding program is designed to pay faculty for their work in learning about, adapting, and creating openly licensed materials in their courses. The LWTech office of instruction will once again provide \$20,000 in funding to support individual OER grants; \$10,000 is allotted to support ProfTech faculty and \$10,000 is allotted to support all other faculty. Over the course of 2022-2023, 13 ProfTech faculty and 27 Non-ProfTech faculty were involved in funded OER work.

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### Seattle University



Seattle University Lemieux Library is happy to announce the hire of **Jason Hall** as our Business and Economics Librarian. Mr. Hall joins us most recently from Boston College, where he served as the librarian for Economics and Political Science. Over the years, Jason has worked as a data analyst conducting global health research, macroeconomic evaluations, and more. He enjoys reading science fiction and philosophy, cooking, and enjoying his record collection.



**Do you have campus updates, news, or emerging projects to share with the ALD/ACRL-WA community?**

**Send them our way! The next newsletter will go out in Fall 2023.**