Conference Issue

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By Maura Walsh
The WLA Annual Conference is always a highlight of my professional development activities in any given year, and 2020 was no different. OK, so it was different, but it was still rich with connections to colleagues around the state, learning about practices that I'll bring back to my own work, and inspirational stories of the impact libraries have in their communities.

Wanda Brown delivered a heartfelt morning keynote, emphasizing how library workers’ empathy has been central to their service in their communities, particularly with users who are more vulnerable due to racial and economic inequities. I was so touched when she recounted her own experience as a hospital patient, noting that the primary difference in her own comfort was the way that hospital workers demonstrated care and concern for her as a human being. At this moment, we are rightly consumed with the details of shifting our service models and workflows, adapting our budgets, and addressing changing needs of our users. But at the end of the day, this empathy for our users—and for ourselves—is at the heart of our impact.

While I was disappointed that I could not invite you all to my fancy hotel room for the President’s reception, I was happy to host a Zoom reception from my modest kitchen. We were joined by another President, Abraham Lincoln, and First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln (also known as Kevin Wood and Laura F. Keyes of Historic Voices). We learned some interesting history about previous Presidential elections, shared some purely social time, and recounted the lighter side of daily life in a pandemic. It was also a great reminder of the healing power of a good belly laugh.

As an academic librarian, I have been enjoying the increased programming and camaraderie among academic library workers in WLA, including at the conference. The Academic Library Division (ALD) unconference and happy hour gave us an opportunity to commiserate around the deep challenges of providing access to streaming media, strategizing towards Open Educational Resources (OER), and share experiences in supporting students and faculty. These challenges are exacerbated by the context of furloughs, layoffs, and slashed collection and operations budgets. The learning was balanced by this time to be in community, restorative in the face of so many challenges.

And so many books! Booktalking the Best with CAYAS (the Children & Young Adult Services Section) revealed a fantastic selection of thoughtfully curated reading for all the diverse young people in our communities. WA Do I Read Next? surfaced books by Washington State authors, a session which always drives much of my reading every year. And the Sasquatch and Otter Awards celebration, a collaboration between CAYAS and the School Library Division, was just plain fun. The program was a profound reminder of the crucial role that library workers play in connecting authors and readers. I’m also thrilled to see this cross divisional collaboration, which was our hope in the merger of the Washington Library Media Association (WLMA), now the School Library Division, with WLA.

This is just a small sampling of my experiences at our conference. I hope that you also met new colleagues, connected with old friends, and took some new energy back to your work. If you were registered for the conference, you can still view recordings of sessions until the end of the calendar year. I want to extend my sincere gratitude to the WLA Conference Committee, the WLA office staff, the exhibitors and sponsors, and all of the presenters and participants in this year’s conference.
From the Editor

An Honest Note

by Johanna Jacobsen Kiciman

As I write this, I want to acknowledge that I am on the land of the Coastal Salish people, the traditional home of all tribes and bands within the Duwamish, Suquamish, Tulalip and Muckleshoot nations. I recognize their elders past and present for their ongoing efforts to sustain tribal sovereignty, preserve their culture, and care for this place.

I have spent a fair amount of time this fall reading the Young Adult novel SLAY by author Brittney Morris, a book which centers Black excellence and creates a fictional gaming world in which people can be who they are or who they want to be. What a tour de force, and, without spoiling it for you, I will say this: we need more books that create authentic spaces for people’s identities—often intersectional—to flourish! And we need more of the honesty that Morris allows to shine through her pages.

Here’s my honesty of the moment: a year into my Alki editorship, I desperately want to offer up something to our readers to make sense of this year, while being acutely aware of the fact that this year in particular cannot be summarized with platitudes. Words often fail me. I am disappointed in the ways that the jargon that has sprung up around us like weeds (“pivoting,” ”new normal,” ”unprecedented”) sometimes works to erase our efforts and our exhaustion. I am hopeful because of the specificity of language use I see emerging that acknowledges anti-Black racism in work spaces, as well as the attempts to be accountable with action. I am relieved to be breathing smoke-free air, and perhaps a little grumpy about the rain. I am more grateful than I can express that the national election is behind us. I am extraordinarily worried about COVID-19 and what the winter is promising to look like: please be careful. And I was so very happy to see the success of the annual meeting of the Washington Library Association this year, held not in Spokane but in a virtual environment. It was so nice to connect with folks that I knew and learn from those that I had not yet met.

Johanna Jacobsen Kiciman works at the University of Washington, Tacoma as Coordinator, Research Help and Instruction Services Librarian. She also loves reading Young Adult novels and may be found with a parrot (or two) on her shoulders.

This issue is historically the Conference Issue, where the Alki Editorial Committee covers some of the ideas that were raised at the conference. You’ll see some great thoughts about virtual conferences (Hua), a look at the keynote by Wanda K. Brown (Pressley), and a tasting menu of conference sessions (Bruno). We are excited to be including a conversation between myself and Greg Bem where we talk about Open Pedagogy, inspired by Bem’s WLA presentation. But we also have the launch of our Anti-Racism, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion column (Martin), as well as a piece on libraries and civic engagement during elections (Carlson-Prandini), an examination of Collection Development for the new Muckleshoot Ed.D. cohort at the University of Washington Tacoma (Orth), and much more! Our regular columnists shine, as they always do! And make sure to check out our Community Survey results, because so many of you graciously shared your thoughts and advice.

So please know this: Alki is here for you, and even if we cannot always make sense of the world around us, we will keep trying. And we’ll also acknowledge that sometimes, sometimes we are tired. Be well, dear colleagues, and take good care of yourselves and your loved ones. We will see you all in the New Year for our March Issue.

Yours, Johanna (she/her/hers)
Checking Your Privilege

by Michelle H. Martin

Anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion (AEDI) work is a core, guiding principle for Alki and the WLA. In an effort to highlight AEDI, Alki features a permanent column dedicated to these themes. In creating this column, we do not intend to limit the conversation to this space.

In September, I attended a virtual two-day workshop with Academic Impressions, a company that provides a plethora of different types of training for instructors and administrators in higher education. The workshop was called “Practicing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Higher Education,” and because I am always working toward making my classes more inclusive, I planned to use this workshop to begin revising my winter quarter syllabi. The workshop description noted:

“Practiced under many different names, culturally relevant pedagogy is an approach to teaching that purposefully challenges androcentric, Eurocentric, and heterocentric knowledge. This process requires an instructor to frequently examine their own knowledge base, unpack where bias may lie, revise course materials and practices, and be both vulnerable and courageous enough to have tough conversations in their classrooms.”

I found the course content rich, the facilitators both no-nonsense and inspiring, and the call to action exceedingly relevant to where we are nationally in conversations about race, equity, and difference. One of my takeaways was an “Advantage Survey” that one of the facilitators, Dr. Jamiella Brooks, Associate Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Pennsylvania, gave the participants. I have since adapted this tool for workshops that I have led with librarians, particularly for those in youth services.

I would encourage you to take this survey yourself and to use it to think about who you are and what you bring to your work in libraries. Which of these is true for you?

☐ When I was growing up, I had a place at home to do my homework.

☐ My parents/guardians could communicate with my teachers because they spoke the same language as my teachers.

☐ At least one of my parents/guardians went to college.

☐ I had friends who supported my efforts to do well in school.

☐ I could count on being able to eat breakfast and dinner at home.

☐ My parents/guardians were able to take me school shopping at the start of each school year.

☐ I had a home to go to after school.

☐ I had someone in my household who could and would read to me.

☐ I had books of my own when I was growing up.

☐ My family considered it a given that I would go to college.

☐ I never had to go without a textbook because of not being able to afford it.

☐ I have never been told I got into a particular institution or job because of my race.

☐ When I needed help in school, I felt comfortable asking my teachers for help.

☐ I grew up enjoying school most of the time.

As you work through these questions, consider how many of the questions and their answers surprise you. Perhaps you have never thought of eating breakfast at home before school as a privilege or advantage. Maybe you attended a school that provided breakfast

Dr. Michelle H. Martin is the Beverly Cleary Endowed Professor for Children and Youth Services at the University of Washington iSchool and from 2011-2016 was the inaugural Augusta Baker Endowed Chair in Childhood Literacy at the University of South Carolina. She published Brown Gold: Milestones of African-American Children's Picture Books, 1845-2002 (Routledge, 2004) and founded Read-a-Rama (www.Read-a-Rama.org), a non-profit that uses children’s books as the springboard for year-round and summer camp programming.
for children or even had a backpack program for sending children home on the weekend with enough food to feed themselves and their families during weekends; or maybe food insecurity was not a problem for those in your school. Perhaps having a parent, grandparent, or older sibling who read to you regularly doesn’t seem so special. But what if no one in your household spoke the language spoken at school, and what if your parents had a low level of literacy in the language they grew up speaking and could not read to you in their native language either? How much more difficult would it be to navigate K-12 schools under those circumstances? And even at the college level, consider what it would mean to get into a college and earn good enough grades to stay there but then struggle to be able to buy the textbooks required for performing well in classes.

Privilege matters. And examining it helps you better serve those who lack the privileges you have enjoyed.

If you are someone whose survey answers were mostly affirmative, how often do you assume that those who use library services (or in my case, those who take my classes) have the same privileges you had growing up? There are probably people whose struggles will be apparent when they come into your library, but so many of these questions above point to “invisible” privileges—advantages you may not necessarily be able to see but that nevertheless strongly impact assumptions of others and how we move through the world.

As we experience this reckoning in our country around power, privilege, race, and the historical, intentional and systematic discrimination against BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) groups, LGBTQIA+ people, those with disabilities and others, I would implore you to think more about how your assumptions about privilege impact how you serve those in your community and in your library.

Anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion (AEDI) work is a core, guiding principle for Alki and the WLA. In an effort to highlight AEDI, Alki now features a permanent column dedicated to these themes. In creating this column July 2020 and launching it this November, we do not intend to limit the conversation to this space.

Each Alki issue is a dynamic collection of submissions from library workers and students across the state; the content is dependent upon those who choose to share their voices. Due to the justice-focused nature of libraries and library work, AEDI themes may naturally show up in the pieces we receive and believe that it will be reflected across many of the feature articles that are published. However, they are not always guaranteed. We, the Alki Editorial Committee, intend for this column to ensure that justice-focused work and stories are consistently elevated and that conversations are sustained.

We are energized to call on our entire community of library workers—in any role—to submit articles for this column by emailing alkieditor@wla.org. Please include the article in your email and a brief biography. The deadline is rolling, and we will consider all articles that are submitted that address AEDI themes.

Articles can be about, but are not limited to:

- accountability
- equity and social justice
- anti-racism
- dismantling existing structures and examinations of power
- community-led engagement

Questions? Please reach out to the Alki Editor by emailing alkieditor@wla.org.
Washington Library Association: New Board Members

By Maura Walsh

The newly elected board members were announced at the WLA Awards Lunch at our annual conference. Here are some brief introductions and photos to help you get acquainted!

Vice President/President-Elect: Ahniwa Ferrari

Ferrari has been involved in WLA since 2008. He has served on the Member Services Committee, chaired Sections and Divisions, helped organize and bring content to conferences, and presented both in-person and virtually. He believes in the value of active participation in WLA for all libraries and library staff. He hopes to continue attracting new members from traditionally underrepresented libraries.

Treasurer: Muriel Wheatley

Wheatley obtained an MLIS from the University of Washington in 2016, and has been working as Centralia Timberland Library’s Operations Supervisor for over 3 years. She currently serves as Board Treasurer for the Centralia Downtown Association (CDA) and has helped them to streamline their finances and successfully secure CARES Act funding. As a longtime WLA member, she presented at our most recent conference. Wheatley plans to continue promoting an EDI focus for WLA.

Board Director, Special Library Division: Alycia Ensminger

Ensminger has implemented a range of programs and initiatives across private and public sectors while working in special libraries. She has lectured at the University of Washington iSchool. She believes in the need to better organize and increase the accessibility of information to an underserved and diverse community of users. Her goal is to recruit and connect diverse special librarians, helping highlight the work happening throughout our organization.

Student Representative to the Board: Marissa Rydzewski

Rydzewski serves as WLA’s Library & Information Student Section (LISS) chair. She brings valuable first-hand experience in structural management, transitioning work concepts and platforms, and data collection. She understands from personal experience the need to make individual members feel welcomed and connected. She would like to use this experience to bridge connections between WLA groups.

Board Director, Academic Library Division: Erica Coe

Coe has over 20 years of service in a variety of academic libraries and is the current chair of the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges Library Leadership Council (LLC). Coe would like to promote greater collaboration between LLC and WLA, bringing together a diverse community of library employees across all fields and focus areas. She hopes to foster connections to ensure equitable access to information, openness to new ideas and perspectives, and support for colleagues.

Maura Walsh is the LSTA Grants & Contracts Coordinator at Washington State Library.
Alki Community Survey Results

By The Alki Editorial Committee

In the March and July issues of 2020, the Alki Editorial Committee put out a survey that sought to understand who you are and what hopes and wishes you have for this, our state library journal.

We received 62 responses, and are very excited to share results here. Please contact the Alki Editor at alkeditor@wla.org if you have questions or would like more granular data. If we did not address a specific concern of yours here, do know that we are keeping track of suggestions and ideas and will be working on incorporating those that we can into our practices.

Most of all: thank you for your participation. It will help us craft a better journal that meets your interests and needs. And remember: we need you to contribute your articles, because Alki truly is intended to be for all members of the Washington state library community.

Library Type

It is notable that most of our readers work at (or in the case of MLIS students or job seekers hope to work at) public libraries. Academic libraries and governmental libraries are also reasonably well represented, but only 9.7% of our readers who responded work for school libraries. It was nice to see that some prison library workers read our journal, but we have a long way to go to get more tribal library workers and special librarians involved. These numbers will help us think about who we may need to do more outreach to, and how to expand our board.

What Stage Of Your Career Are You At?

As you will see from the chart, mid-career librarians are a large bulk of our readership. We are hoping to get more student readers of Alki, and publish student work: we see it as a great space for folks to develop their professional voices. We are fortunate to have a student representative on our board, Katie Brantley, and have published an article in this issue by Doc Martin and her students at the University of Washington iSchool.

![Chart showing career stages]

*Image courtesy of Alki Editorial Committee*

Where do you work or where are you interested in working?

62 responses

*Image courtesy of Alki Editorial Committee*
Why Do You Read Alki?

A few themes emerged for this short-answer question that we would like to highlight:

- Keeping up with current (especially local) trends; professional development
- Connecting with colleagues who do the same type of library work across the state
- Community building and connections
- “I read Alki to find out about Washington-centric library happenings. It’s also just fun to read, probably for the same reason that my local newspaper is fun to read. It’s a bit funky.” ~We love this, and agree. There’s something in here for everyone.
- Quality of the journal makes it worthwhile

Some folks called for more articles that focus on government libraries and special libraries; we absolutely would love to see our colleagues submit work in these areas.

Additional Desired Content

The answers to this question are illuminating. Respondents could select more than one answer.

- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (59.3%). We hope that the addition of the AEDI column, in addition to the ongoing publications that center Equity, Diversity and Inclusion help begin to address this need. As Editorial Committee member Lauren Pressley notes in her article in this issue, this is work that will last our lifetimes.
- Intellectual Freedom (37.3%)
- Public Libraries (37.3%)
- Reader’s Advisory (25.4%). Check out Elizabeth Bruno’s article in this issue that reviews some of the WLA conference sessions on reader’s advisory and collection development! As always, our columns by Emily Calkins and Sarah Threlkeld are also here for you.
- Collection Development (35.6%)
- Conferences (27.1%). We are excited to present this conference issue, but understand that our readers would also love to hear about other opportunities or read reflections about some of our national conferences. What a great idea!
- Special & Tribal Libraries (18.6%). We would love some Committee representatives who work in these areas. Please reach out if you are interested!

Additionally, there were calls for articles on trauma-informed/social work oriented librarianship, technology, community buildings, trends in libraries that are supporting groups of color, LGBTQIA+, library management, outcomes based evaluation, and non-librarian staff participation in programming.

Miscellany

- The majority of you (75%) hear about Alki’s Call for Papers through WLA Wednesdays, and 10% of you do not hear about the Call for Papers at all. The rest use Twitter, rely on friends, or check the WLA website. We will have to think about ways we can reach those of you who are not hearing about the Call for Papers, because we absolutely want your voices represented.
- There is definitely a much stronger interest in reading Alki digitally (87.1%) than reading Alki in print (12.9%),
- Folks called for a more robust promotion of the Call for Papers and the published editions of Alki. Thank you for this feedback. Readers, we will find a way, but also ask you to share each new Alki with your colleagues. Remember: we publish March, July, and November!
- We love the suggestion to have some key articles published in WLA Wednesdays, and will start some conversations along those lines.

Photo by Nicholas Bartos on Unsplash
Taking the Lead with Wanda K. Brown

by Lauren Pressley

When I learned that one of my early mentors was giving the keynote kickoff for this year’s Washington Library Association conference, I was excited to get a chance to watch.

Wanda Brown, the 2019–2020 American Library Association president and Library Director for Winston-Salem State University in North Carolina, gave the kick-off keynote “Taking the Lead” for the WLA annual conference. This presentation was both an opportunity to reflect on what our work has looked like over the past year and a call to action.

As an empathetic leader, Wanda began with appreciation for audience members’ demonstrated commitment to continuous growth, as evidenced by their attendance at the annual meeting. She also thanked members for the efforts made by libraries and library workers to make their communities better through our work. Wanda’s presentation highlighted how storytelling frames our work in libraries. The pandemic has underscored the fact that libraries are the services and people working within them, as much as they are physical items and facilities. As we continue to emphasize user needs, Wanda said our services must evolve and focus on representation, partnerships, and values.

Telling Our Stories

Wanda then began to build the case for telling our stories. She pointed out that we have stories about the actions we have taken throughout this pandemic that are driven by empathy, creative solutions, virtual expansions of services, supporting differences in our communities, and strengthening partnerships. Sharing those stories demonstrates our value to our users, the community, and funders.

This idea is one that many of us have been thinking about for a very long time. Stories help the community update their understanding of the role of their libraries. Stories provide a model for people who are unsure how to engage with their libraries. Stories provide evidence for funders who are determining budgets and resource allocations. Our stories might focus on different actions over these past many months, but they will still highlight the values we bring to the work, the ways we improve our users’ lives, and the role that libraries play in our communities.

At this junction in time, our normal library stories are different—and people are curious! I have heard directly from more library supporters who wonder how the library works in the past few months than I have in the course of my career. They want to know why we are taking the approach we chose, what factors go into our planning, what we might attempt to offer soon and how it might change their own work. People are primed to listen to stories, and we have stories to tell them!

Our Buildings Do Not Define Us

Wanda pointed out that an underlying theme of these new stories is that the building we operate in does not define our value and worth. She argued that this moment in time has made it easier to help our communities reframe the work of the library to be about information and service rather than about items and facilities.

Wanda and I worked together on a residential campus, and because of that you might think that our work would have been centered on the physical space, but that was not entirely the case, even before this heavily remote time period. Our colleagues were also focused on building out excellent virtual and online services, and we found that a strong online experience helped jump-start relationships with students, and our student body remained deeply connected to the physical space; the strong online presence and deep connection to physical space were mutually reinforcing, improving both sides of a given service.

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As I have talked with people working in all types of libraries throughout the pandemic period, I have seen that different organizations have their own reasoning for how they prioritize virtual and physical services and collections. I have also found that no matter how much an organization is oriented around one or another, all acknowledge that there ought to be a focus and energy on strengthening our virtual presence. On the other side of the pandemic, we may find that some of our users grew more connected to libraries through our virtual services and collections, and that those may also feel more connected to our physical spaces as well.

Representation Matters

Of course, this moment has not just been about our response to a pandemic and the development of online services. We have also been in the midst of an overdue racial reckoning. Wanda made the case that we must examine whether our users would see themselves in the collections we manage, the lessons we teach, and in the staff that they interact with.

This moment has seen no shortage of statements from libraries about concern for their communities, racism, and inequality. Statements are an important step in making clear that our organizations are not complicit, but they are also just a step. Many organizations are building opportunities for training and learning and looking for action-oriented methods to change work to be more equitable, inclusive, and anti-racist.

This also is happening at the individual level. We should all do the work of growing a more inclusive, equitable, and welcoming organization, whether our work is collection management, public service, programming and outreach, or administrative. This work is ongoing and will be the work of our careers.

Importance of Partnerships

Building on the importance of storytelling and representation, Wanda made a plea for the importance of community partnerships. She pointed out that through partnerships we tell and retell our story and form relationships with others. Our partners become familiar enough with our story to help share it, and we are able to expand our reach.

“"We should all do the work of growing a more inclusive, equitable, and welcoming organization, whether our work is collection management, public service, programming and outreach, or administrative. This work is ongoing and will be the work of our careers.”"

When we have relationships with other community groups, we also learn more about the community, giving us a better understanding of community needs and our potential to help meet them. In partnering with the community we both strengthen our voice and expand our ability to reach more.

I know that most library folks will speak to our work as being tied to education: through literacy, through self-directed learning, and through instructional programs to support classroom based-learning. Wanda’s nod to partnership also recognized both community organizations and private industry partners. She pointed out that public-private partnerships that libraries might participate in, which enable additional resources for their community. By engaging with other community members such as teachers in our local schools, other units in our universities or communities, or the other libraries in our communities, we can accomplish more.

Focus on the Needs of Your Users

As Wanda concluded, she hit on a theme that I first heard her speak about nearly two decades ago: libraries should strive to meet the needs of their users. The reason our libraries exist, that our stakeholders fund our work, that we do the jobs we do, is because of what we can do for our community. Focusing on how best to meet their needs allows us to support the success of our users. Wanda came back again and again to the importance of keeping the needs of our community in our mind as we approach our work.

“Taking the Lead” was a welcomed opportunity to pause and reflect on what our work has looked like over the past year: how our day-to-day experience has changed, the creativity and innovative approaches we have taken to meeting the needs of our users, and the new host of stories we can share about the role of libraries. The gift of taking time to do that was balanced with a call to action: to think deeply about the needs of your users, how we can support social mobility, ensure representation in our collections, buildings, and practices, and to form partnerships.
Catching Up on Conferencing During a Pandemic

by Joan Hua

There are a few things I especially look forward to in a conference experience: relationship building, inspiration, and dedicated time and space for learning and growth. Some of these elements get lost easily in the day-to-day, and it can be difficult to prioritize cultivating conversations and relationships when more tangible routines demand immediate attention; and yet they are vital to the library profession, which requires constant updating of a broad scope of knowledge.

The truth is that my experience attending the 2020 WLA Conference during a global pandemic was defined by the struggle to make room for these important elements of a conference experience. Without the dedicated time and space, I found my schedule and mind crowded by myriad competing priorities. I offer the following reflections on catching up on conferencing during a pandemic.

If you were like me, you may have initially picked out sessions from the conference and marked them in your calendar, only to find yourself pulled away by other commitments during the conference week, unable to attend in real time. The good news is that the conference recordings are available through December 31, 2020. You can access them via an app called Whova, a platform being used for many other events and conferences. The Whova app is the official 2020 WLA conference platform, and the information about the app is on the conference webpage.

In addition to session recordings, which can also be accessed through a web browser, the app is a place for connecting with other attendees. You can follow topics in the Community section, send direct messages in the Messages section, and see photos shared by attendees in the Home section. You can also use it to organize your own agenda with sessions that interest you. And if you are like me—feeling totally burnt out from long days at the desk and an exploding amount of screen time—you may find yourself listening to the recordings from the app while taking a walk outside.

My current role is in digital asset management and encompasses a bit of everything from archives to system support. My projects may not align with the narrow definitions of library services, but they have foundations in digital curation, preservation, archiving, and library service design principles. As such, I was interested in topics that can be applied generally to special libraries:

- Sam Wallin, Analyst / Project Coordinator at Fort Vancouver Regional Library District, gave a presentation on “A Practical Plan for Measurable Outcomes” that included resources I will refer back to as I plan projects at my work. The presentation covered precise wording to construct measurable outcome statements and, more importantly, why they are important and how to implement them, taking into account staff buy-in and abstract results that may be hard to measure or make visible in the short term.

- “What’s in a Data Story?” presented by Nancy Shin, NNLM PNR Research and Data Coordinator at University of Washington Libraries, highlighted seven different types of data stories. Nancy went over choices for making data visualization that tells a story with clear graphics and messages. The neatly organized lesson gave a useful crash course on using data to tell stories to your specific audience.

Joan Hua is the Media Asset Manager at KEXP 90.3 FM in Seattle, where she also serves as the in-house librarian and archivist. Her professional experiences include oral history, cultural heritage research, and digital scholarship. She holds a Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) from University of Washington.
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- Betha Gutsche, WebJunction Programs Manager at OCLC, gave a presentation on "Libraries Open Pathways to Civil Legal Justice" and offered rich insights on Washington state resources to help answer questions related to civil legal issues, a need that has been accentuated by the pandemic.

Together with “Narrow Scope, Broad Impact: Washington Special Libraries & You”—which included a panel of special librarians such as Laura Edmonston from Washington State Law Library and Mary Schaff, Northwest Librarian/Legislative Services Liaison at Washington State Library—these presentations showcase the breadth of library services represented by the conference sessions. It was energizing to consider the impressive variety of information needs and users we serve.

As I went through this year’s WLA conference, what I found challenging was not the lack of technology and tools to run a session or connect with somebody. Rather, it was the removal of dedicated time and space we used to have while attending a conference in person. When I could be (physically or mentally) away from my everyday work and attend a conference for several days, I could allocate a portion of my mental capacity to focus on the conference. The opportunity to come together with far-flung colleagues in real time, dedicating attention and energy to the shared ideas and inquiries, is something I missed during my virtual experience of the 2020 WLA Conference. As we go through a year of virtual learning, working, and conferencing, perhaps that is something we simply cannot regain without shifting our expectations of (our own and our colleagues’) workload, availability, and productivity during these extraordinary times.

Screenshot courtesy of Joan Hua
A Tale of Two Sessions

by Elizabeth Bruno

Selecting a session to view online on the Whova app? Here are some recommendations, focused around audience, content, and take-aways. Take a look!

DIVERSITY IN YOUR LIBRARY: BEYOND BOOK SELECTION

Who Should Attend and Why?

Librarians who are considering or who are in the process of creating an environment that allows diversity in all forms to be seen, heard, and experienced in their libraries and communities should tune in! This session was presented by three Bellevue School District teacher-librarians, but it's content is widely applicable. Anyone viewing will walk away with a treasure trove of questions and resources to ponder and use along their personal and organizational journey toward diverse representation.

Nuts and Bolts

Kimberly Johnson began by asking foundational questions including “What kind of diversity are you thinking about?” and “Whose story is being left out?” She gave points to consider in answering those questions. Kimberly spoke on behalf of the trio in stating that this is an ongoing process with no end, and that none of them have “arrived”.

Elizabeth Bruno is an elementary school librarian at Rainier Elementary School, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA.

continued on next page
Elizabeth Roberts described a five action-steps cycle for updating library collections with a focus on diversity. Her main points included that this cycle is not a checklist and we must examine our perspectives and bias throughout each step of every cycle.

Highlight

Erin Gehrke told viewers how she answered an interview question, “How is diversity going to be represented in your library?” four years ago. She then shared her personal growth journey and experiences within her school and the Bellevue School District during the past four years. She ended by sharing how she would now respond, if she was asked that interview question again. You will have goosebumps after hearing Erin’s journey.

Handouts

- Resource List: Links to articles, blogs, and books referenced throughout the presentation
- Presentation Slide Deck

Pairs With

In case you want more of this type of content, check out: “Diversity Tagging: Becoming More Aware of Your Collection!”

BOOKTALKING BOOKS YOU’VE NEVER READ (AND MAY NEVER READ)

Who Should Attend and Why?

Any librarian who has become speechless during reader’s advisory should attend this session presented by Alex Byrne, Pierce County Library System Youth Services Librarian. Viewers will smile while listening to gentle humorous commentary sprinkled throughout this session focusing on an essential librarian skill.

Nuts and Bolts

Alex shares a down-to-earth booktalking approach gleaned from their experience working with all ages in choosing the next book, not the perfect book. They assured viewers that no librarian has the time to read all the new books published annually and that library employees often have very little time to read.

Alex walks viewers through the steps of leveraging genre knowledge, especially genres you don’t read. They also introduced the use of genre tropes to construct understanding of similar characteristics and become familiar with cross genres. Alex discussed using publishers’ marketing materials, subject headings and summaries from catalog records, jacket copy, and a newer feature called content notes that is becoming more prevalent.

Highlight

Alex practiced booktalking by randomly selecting an audiobook they had never heard during “Overdrive Roulette.” They emphasized practicing booktalking with coworkers who are willing to listen and on your own as time allows.

More

Further audio and video resources were recommended that will help viewers gain new skills in booktalking. These included Nancy Pearl’s “Four Doorways” method.

Pairs With

- Booktalking the Best with CAYAS!
- WA Do I Read Next?
- Around the World in 75 Minutes

Join WLA

The Washington Library Association includes some of the best and brightest members of the Washington library community.

We are united by our care for the well-being of Washington libraries. For more information, visit our website at wla.org. Explore the site and make our business your business.

Membership information is at wla.org/membership.
School to Public: Think Farm to Table

by Maura Walsh

One WLA session, “Like PB&J: School & Public Librarians Unite,” was a fantastic primer on school libraries and public libraries working together. Kristy Gale, Darcy Brixey, and Shannon Wallace (Seattle Public Library), and TuesD Chambers (Seattle Public Schools, Ballard High School) presented a complete and thoughtful program that highlighted their collaboration and presented ways to turn events and relationships into greater resources.

Concretely, they showed how collaborations can meet the needs of expanding audiences, often without a significant increase in work. Their focus was the importance of relationships, which was a thread that ran through the presentation. Exploring and utilizing local resources, akin to the farm to table restaurant movement, enables more people to reap what is being cultivated locally. There is less waste, as library programs can be used consecutively or collaboratively. The presentation included examples for programming, promotion (mainly through social media), and helpful, hands-on resources such as book displays.

While their presentation was specifically centered on school-public library partnerships, many of their ideas could be tweaked for all sorts of interlibrary relationships and programming, or even library and community group partnerships. Their timing could not have been better, as many need extra resources due to COVID-19.

If you can identify spheres of overlap, you can benefit from the ideas these librarians have already developed. This session outlines a hefty toolkit and provides a practical blueprint for collaboration.

Luckily, this interesting, information-packed session is still available on the conference website (until December 31, 2020) if you are registered. It is worth watching twice and taking notes!

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Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

If you can identify spheres of overlap, you can benefit from the ideas these librarians have already developed.
What I Missed/Silver Linings

by Elizabeth Bruno

What I Missed

Passing through Snoqualmie Pass, the Columbia River viewpoints, by wind farms and wide-open farm fields during the road trip to and from Spokane

Meeting new people, renewing acquaintances, and being with some who have known me quite awhile

Conversations before, during, and after sessions; during meals; and in the hallways

Listening to vendors’ sales pitches and entering drawings for freebies

Absorbing the passion and energy of conference presenters and attendees

Being with my job-cohort and not being a singleton in my building

Winning an item during a conference meal

Breakfast at Frank’s Diner

Purchasing beer at No-Li Brewhouse to take home and enjoy drinking as I remember a great WLA conference

Unexpected Silver Linings

No need to make the tough choice between many sessions in the same time slot. All sessions were recorded, so I could attend as many sessions as I wanted

I didn’t have to write substitute teacher plans. I didn’t have to use my personal days or sick days to attend

This was an economical option. My school district does not pay for conferences such as WLA. I had an added bonus this year, because my registration fee was covered as a benefit for being on the Alki Editorial Committee

Sessions were held over six-days which allowed time to rest and reflect on information presented. I can still view/review sessions until December 31 and download handouts

There is no information overload. ☝️

Elizabeth Bruno is an elementary school librarian at Rainier Elementary School, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA.
Portrait of the Librarian as an Artist at WLA Annual Conference

by Maura Walsh

As we become more and more accustomed to the brave new world of virtual meeting and conferencing, we may also find ourselves missing in-person interaction. At a typical conference it is not unusual to strike up a conversation with someone you do not know while waiting for coffee, or even while you are lost together trying to find the same session. These casual contacts can turn into valuable professional connections and even friendships.

WLA Annual provided virtual solutions to help soften this deficit. At this year’s conference hosted on Whova, the Community tab (Main Navigation, on the left side menu) directed folks to a virtual space called “Meet-ups & Virtual Meets” (yellow icon). One of the most popular options in Meet-ups, “Show Us Your Art”, has 85 entries. (It seems to be second only in entries to a board about articles to share.)

You will be amazed at the wonderful projects generously shared by your colleagues. Knitting, needlework, collage, photography, jewelry, painting, mosaics, and so much more. If you missed it “live”, you can still catch it here if you are registered for the conference. You may be inspired and amazed at our collected talent and creative diversity. Some pictures are included here to get your creative juices flowing! Have photos of your own you want to share? Tweet them under the hashtag #alkiart. 📷

Maura Walsh is the LSTA Grants & Contracts Coordinator at Washington State Library.

Photo courtesy of the artist Warren Chin.

Photo courtesy of the artist Elizabeth Covington.

Photo courtesy of the artist Sara Harrington.

Photo courtesy of the artist Judy Pitchford.
Open Education, Open Pedagogy: A Conversation

by Greg Bem and Johanna Jacobsen Kiciman

Introduction

O’Shea and O’Brian asked over a decade ago, in re-examining Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed: “why is the work of dialogue as a fraught but fundamentally trusting relationship so difficult to sustain?” The value of conversation as a pedagogy of growth and learning—or, as O’Brian calls it, a pedagogy of care and well-being that focuses on dialogue and relationality—is growing more and more urgent. We have been torn out of our contexts of teaching and learning because of COVID-19, and are asked to produce and think and learn in an environment that does not allow for unscripted interactions and dialogue.

I was very interested in Greg Bem’s talk “Open Pedagogy: Individual Voice in All Libraries,” presented at the 2020 Annual Meeting of the Washington Library Association. To do justice to this Freirian-inspired pedagogy of care and well-being, we decided to have a conversation about Open Pedagogy, as a way to humanize our own learning, to dive into a Freirian “engagement in a dialectic between the deeply personal and the collective/linguistic and structural.” I believe that our conversation taps into the “ethics of care and relationality [...that is] vital to creating the very conditions for dialogue that can bring about transformation.” This is a question of fundamentally reinvigorating subjectivity, but to do so as a collective or in dialogue.

Our conversation is reproduced here, and we hope that it is as enjoyable to read as it was to think and talk. If you want to hone in on particular areas of interest, please feel free to make use of the bolded headings as a guide.

Greg Bem is a faculty librarian and the current library coordinator at Lake Washington Institute of Technology (LWTech), a technical college in Kirkland, Washington. Greg currently serves as the liaison between the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges Library Leadership Council (LLC) and the Washington Library Association (WLA). He is the 2019-2020 chair of WLA’s College Libraries Across Washington State (CLAWS), a section of the Academic Library Division. His passions include social justice and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives, Open Education, and critical information literacy. Greg is the current Vice President of the Lake Washington Federation of Teachers, Local 3533 of the American Federation of Teachers and supports the Reinvest in Our Colleges (ROC) Campaign and sits on the White Accountability Work Group. When not serving the library and the college community, Greg creates video art and writes books of poetry (see: Of Spray and Mist (Hand to Mouth Books, 2020)). You can find him in the mountains, physically or virtually.

Johanna Jacobsen Kiciman works at the University of Washington, Tacoma as Coordinator, Research Help and Instruction Services Librarian. She also loves reading Young Adult novels and may be found with a parrot (or two) on her shoulders.

A CONVERSATION: 11/11/2020

About the Open Ed 2020 Conference

Johanna (she/her): And I'm still sort of waking up this morning. So I'm actually going to start our conversation with just a: How [are] you doing, Greg? And how is the Open Ed conference treating you?

Greg Bem (he/him): Great, great start. Yeah, I am doing pretty well. It is cloudy here in Seattle, where I live, and we're in the middle of fall quarter. Which is obviously a remote quarter for teaching and learning, all instruction. It's being delivered online. So that is exciting and challenging. Open[Ed2020] has been really great. Have you been attending it?
Johanna (she/her): I have not; I am limiting my zoom and screen time best I can. But tell me about it. How is [it], how are you finding the remote conference situation?

Greg Bem (he/him): This is the third or fourth remote conference that I’ve attended this quarter so it’s both nothing new, and also overwhelming. And, you know, Open [has] historically been one of those conferences where it’s gigantic; there’s always way more to go to [than] one has time to do, and despite being remote, this one is not an exception. There’s just so many great panels, great presentations, great discussions and opportunities.

It’s fun to see people who, you know, I have met in sessions and conferences past in their virtual form. There are a lot of return presenters, which is great. A lot of [...] people who have taken the spotlight for their work done in the past and they’ve returned [and are continuing] to do the work.

About defining Open Education

Johanna (she/her): Well for those readers here who are not familiar with Open Ed, we’ve been talking about the conference. Would you go ahead and define Open Education for readers who are perhaps less familiar with the concept?

Greg Bem (he/him): For me, Open Education is all about responding to the system of copyright and ownership of intellectual property and responding to those qualities that have, by default, made those resources more restrictive or constrained in nature, within the context of Open Education. And those resources that are covered when I’m talking about copyrighted materials can be everything from the traditional textbook to the supplemental, or in class, or in-assignment materials that we’re using, and even the more abstract materials from the lectures that we give as educators and the facilitation that we give as educators to the dialogues and contributions that the students themselves bring into those educational environments.

It’s a very broad space, Open Education, with many definitions because education, as we all know, is broad as well and it takes on many different forms and can be explored in many different ways depending on the needs of the folks who are seeking that education.

Barriers to Open Pedagogy in Higher Education

Johanna (she/her): For me it is that flexibility piece that is exhilarating. Right. It is really this [...] space of potential. And I’m wondering if you could actually hone in a little bit on that concept of need, though: Why does Higher Ed need Open Educational Resources and Open Pedagogy? And are there barriers in Higher Ed to [...] accepting [...] Open Education?

Greg Bem (he/him): Those are fantastic questions [...] and to respond is going to take several [...] responses. Actually it’s a multi pronged kind of situation here.

Johanna (she/her): To me, it is a, it’s a pedagogy. It’s a tool. It is a framework with which to reinterpret what Higher Ed [does] and its potential and, as such, also critically calls to task many of the problems that we see in Higher Education, including access to resources, the financial burdens put on students and faculty (because it starts tapping into adjunct [...] and issues of job insecurity). For me it is [...] contained within the ideas, this potential of reimagining a space that we all inhabit and whose edges we come up against time and time again in the work that we do.

Greg Bem (he/him): Absolutely. The barriers are many. And I think that historically and well documented in the research on Open Education. One of those primary barriers or initial barriers is the financial barrier that students and faculty, students, and the educators face.

[...W]e tend to center student experience when it comes to the Open work that we’re doing. Because really they’re the reason why we’re doing what we’re doing and to give a couple of the stereotypical examples of these barriers, you know, some students will not be able to afford tuition in a textbook with the same paycheck. And so if they have to choose, they obviously are going to enroll. They’re going to pay their tuition bill. Any of those college fees and then that textbook will have to come later. They rely on the professor to scan a couple chapters in to get them by for the first couple weeks; using a digital PDF or they lean into their peers and ask for to borrow the book of their peers or they pirate. The book acquired illegally or acquired [...] through some means that might not even be illegal or might be in a gray area when it comes to legality. So there’s a lot of different ways that students have adapted
to the costs of copyrighted materials.

And we're seeing that the Open solution has directly impacted those [...] students' experiences, they're able to positively engage with their education by having a book that costs, no money or cost a little money for a printed edition from the very beginning of the class, and they can go on to be involved in the class. From day one.

There are plenty of other barriers, including for the format of the work if the students are being asked to buy the digital copy to get access to specific test banks or quizzes or what have you, those additional materials that come with the textbook. That ends up becoming potentially an accessibility issue or a usability issue a design issue.

Open Education, Social Justice and Including Minoritized Voices

Johanna (she/her): [...] It also strikes me that so much of the work that we as librarians do is student centered facing and that it also requires training and buy-in from faculty and learning, [...] and that within a system that grants very little time for people to be able to absorb new ideas. You've begun to drive us towards the relationship between Open Education and social justice. Can you sketch out your thoughts on the relationship between the two and or perhaps, as a more concrete question: how does open pedagogy work to include minoritized voices?

Greg Bem (he/him): Yeah, so that's [...] something that I came into quite quickly: the key idea of Open Pedagogy supporting minoritized voices and also reinforcing representation of students within the works.

Again, historically, there are fixed materials materials that have been previously published that offer a little flexibility when it comes to modifying them to reflect the learning community and the learning community's specific needs and specific contexts. And as a result, the students in the learning environment, and in some cases the educators ( [...] educators can come from minoritized backgrounds as well)....

Those fixed materials would not reflect the lived experiences and identities and backgrounds of anyone in the learning community. So Open Pedagogy really responds to that problem by shifting the focus of the materials into those experiences, in those identities, in those backgrounds, starting with all of that and then saying, Okay, what materials can support the folks' experiences, identities, backgrounds.

[That can reinforce how they are interacting in the environment while keeping all of the folks in the environment in the center rather than the other way around. I feel like the other way around essentially centers the copyrighted material on this kind of pedestal. You know that ends up being that idol almost that we all gather around and worship. And there's no real flexibility or accommodation [as with] Open Pedagogy.

Examples of Open Projects

A couple of examples that I've seen as really successful within the college that I teach at [Lake Washington Institute of Technology] include an open glossary in a sociology course where students are essentially responding to the assignment that requires them to contribute entries into this glossary based on sociological vocabulary. And they're doing this, using their own definitions, using their own language, their own vocabulary or their own you know vernacular [...].

Another example is actually it's a little bit more common, I think, [...] and that is just the idea of student research in general.

Student Research

Johanna (she/her): [That was where ...] my brain was going. It is not only [creating] representation and finding yourselves in the materials that you are using for learning, [as it is also] being a creator of those materials and beginning to see yourself as somebody who is contributing to a body of knowledge.

What it does, in my mind, is that any of the work that students can do for classes, whether it be contributing to set glossary or writing a paper, it raises the value, it raises the idea that what you're doing is not just an assignment. And to me, it means [...] you begin
to see yourself as a contributor. And that is a fundamental shift in my mind. Maybe that's not where you were going. But I'm like crazy excited about that.

*Greg Bem (he/him):* Yeah, it’s super, super exciting. I think, to realize, alongside the students that we are [...] reducing hierarchy by [doing this ...] in this very information literacy sense. Yeah, well able to contribute to the world around us and we are all responsible for doing that as well, on our own as well as with our peers supporting one another.

There ends up becoming this universal sense [...] that we can all [...] respond to those historic systems that have otherwise been oppressive, have been minoritizing or marginalizing, have been offsetting liberty, have been offsetting autonomy and stifling creativity in one form or another across the board.

And now Open isn’t going to be the be all end all, there’s still powers that are always going to be there. There’s still a power differential: You say, Oh, the librarian that might know more, the educator who might know more than the student: but allowing students to come in and have a voice really makes so much more room within the experience in the environment.

**Privacy and Emotions**

*Johanna (she/her):* So as you’re talking, I so appreciate the dialogue: it does make me understand more [about] why this also might be threatening [...] to the hierarchies and to structures of oppression.

*Greg Bem (he/him):* And one thing on the threatening piece, which I’m really glad you brought that up because this is something that I haven’t seen a lot of Open practitioners talk about, is that the other part, the other side of the coin is students can also feel threatened. Students can also feel uncomfortable. Unsafe.

There was actually a really great session [at OpenEd2020], but they did bring [...] up this idea that is commonly referred to when we’re talking about Open Pedagogy and that’s privacy. So when we start opening things up, students have the ability to contribute more, which is great. But [...] if it’s not done so where there’s a container that reinforces privacy, reinforces safety, and there isn’t an option for anonymity: when students are bringing their voices, some students might feel like totally awesome. This is such an amazing invitation!

Other students might wonder, well, I’m coming from a world where people abuse other people. People steal ideas or take advantage of people. I don’t want to be that person, especially because, well, maybe I’m in a marginalized position myself or whatever the situation is. Some students may not feel safe in opening up.

**Sustainability and Scalability and Storytelling**

*Johanna (she/her):* [I have been thinking a lot about sustainability and scalability.] And so, you know, we look at [...] the potential of Open Pedagogy and how can one scale it up given limited resources. And how do we do [that with] limited resources. That in my mind is linked to the green movement and what does Climate Justice look like in libraries and we’ve just exploded [this conversation] out into space. But they are all interlinked.

*Greg Bem (he/him):* I think that’s a really fascinating rabbit hole to go down into and burrow into and stay for a while, really: the word that came up when you were talking storytelling.

Much of my experience with Open Pedagogy has been based around story. Now we all have our own stories. We all have many stories within each and every one of us. That’s one of the beauties of being human and as such, we can all understand these stories as we continue to live through them and then find new ways to share them and through education. Ideally, there will be room for telling these stories in a variety of situations.

I think that when it comes to scale and also when it comes to sustainability, which I think is another key ingredient or key piece of Open work. Especially when we talk about labor and work and compensation, etc. I think we can look at story in a variety of ways that will help push things forward.

One of the great things about stories is that they are emotional and compelling and attractive, whether they’re negative, neutral, [or] positive: there’s a level of excitement behind this.
And that yeah that it ends up becoming that cohesive quality that allows relationships and connections to be made and be formed and to be sustained. The stories end up being from my experience, end up really allowing Open Pedagogy to emerge and take shape in the classroom or the learning environment. But then they also stick around a while, they end up forming history, they end up forming relationships between peers, between educators over time, class over class, course over course, students from one course have the ability to see what was done the previous time, etc. [...] And so [...] meaning I think develops over time as we continue to create and and [h]onor these stories this collective body of knowledge.

Jargon, Copyright, Knowledge, Job Markets

Johanna (she/her): [...] This is making me go down entirely different rabbit hole. [...] Are you at all concerned that Open will become jargon?

Greg Bem (he/him): Yeah, you know, that’s a great question and I have to ask a [rhetorical question]. How, how much jargon and how much unknown or forgettable language is centered around our legal system and the idea of, of what we know, collectively, about intellectual property—and not only the basics, but really how it all works and the structures and systems behind it. Unfortunately, a lot of us don’t know much about [copyright]. The average person probably is not going to be an expert on copyright and copyright law. I certainly am not an expert on copywriting copyright law, though I might know more than the average person. And librarians in general might know more, a little bit more than the average person.

But that being said, I think that we need to. And this ties back to that question on scale and formalization I think that we do need to lean into some manner of an identity behind this work because the identity for what we’re responding to already exists, those barriers. And systems they already exist. And they already have names on them, whether we know whether folks know it or not.

One of the things I have seen. And you’ve probably seen it, too, is this tremendous uptick in our librarians. The job market is just ripe with this type of position and also there’s been an uptick in funding for OCR initiatives grants both hosted by institutions in the case of four years and universities. And then, you know, more publicly available funding through the federal government and state governments.

Thinking that a lot of other institutions, especially the Community and Technical colleges, have been relying on and that’s paying entire positions specifically for the development of these resources. I think enough research has been done to indicate their success in responding to financial costs and all the other costs, we’ve talked about today. That folks are now paying attention. Yeah.

Johanna (she/her): I think we’ve given our readers a lot to chew through as we’ve gone through a set of rabbit holes that, to me, have demonstrated the intersection of so many things that we do in libraries. [They] sort of crisscross the idea of Open in a way that I really feel that folks will find pieces of their own work reflected in this conversation, regardless if they have spent that much time actively thinking about it.

I’ve thoroughly enjoyed this conversation, Greg. So thank you.

Greg Bem (he/him): [...] I have really enjoyed this conversation too. I think you put it really simply and elegantly when you discuss the overlaps with a lot of what we do. In a way, going back to the philosophy of it all, this is a great opportunity, whether we’re practicing or development or looking at Open through another perspective, or from another position. This is a great way to question librarianship. In general, and we have so many opportunities to do that, of course.

But this is yet another one. And I think this one is open (as the name implies) to the library work that library workers from all different types of libraries and all different types of places can go into so I hope that the conversations continue.

For me, this has been very valuable. I hope that these types of conversations can continue to happen.

NOTES


Election Year: Libraries have a familiar role to play, and yet COVID-19 continually reshapes all our lives, impacting how libraries meet voter needs. In addition to the challenges created by the pandemic, engaging the public around voting seems even more daunting during a particularly charged presidential election.

Feeling intimidated is understandable, but you do have colleagues. Of note is the recent Washington Library Association Conference session titled “Staying Non-Partisan Doesn’t Mean Staying Quiet.” It walks library staff through various sticky scenarios, some related to politics, providing library workers with practical approaches for getting beyond partisanship and into information sharing.

The American Library Association offers resources that help libraries provide voter engagement tools. There are options that scale events or staff training opportunities up or down as well as links to articles featuring libraries supporting citizen involvement. Perhaps your library has a ballot box located nearby, or perhaps your website offers information on voting, registering, and election outcomes. Moving forward, could your programming include plans for hosting mock elections, forums, and candidate debates?

The one missing element is tips on how to adapt these ideas as virtual offerings. Don’t worry, ALA features a blog post discussing how to transition programs online.1 While written for a children’s programming audience, the process applies to any program.

By the time this article is published, the current election will have concluded. Energy will shift from creating engagement to reflection on how libraries contributed towards access and supported information sharing and civic engagement. How did libraries help voters understand their rights and responsibilities as well as connect them to credible sources on the issues? What went well despite current closures? What could be more robust moving forward? Were staff able to respond and adapt to community feedback or requests? If not, what prevented them from doing so?

It is impossible to explore how libraries met voters’ needs without first unpacking the challenges faced. One of those challenges, of course, is the loss of social interaction. “People’s Faces” by spoken word poet Kae Tempest captures the intensity of the times and the power of seeing other people. Created in the context of Brexit, it explores the value of in-person interactions and the loss of structure. To be clear, some structures need to be changed, but the complexity of multi-systemic disintegration being lived right now is overwhelming. Not just because it is hard to know what to expect of multiple facets of daily life, but also because of the burnout experienced as we are all asked to thoughtfully engage on, well, everything. All aspects of public and private life—work, school, home, social—have been remade.

Kae Tempest’s piece speaks to those feelings of overwhelm and grief while bolstering the sense that despite the struggle, or perhaps because of it, individuals can be lifted when they see each other. This underscores a key asset that libraries offer the communities they serve. Libraries create both figurative space and physical space for citizens to view humanity through access to materials, meeting rooms, and events. This increases the likelihood that all types of patrons can cross paths, seeing and being seen, hopefully interacting and learning from each other. While the physical space is severely restricted at this time, libraries continue to demonstrate the value of a paradox mindset by creating connection during a time of extreme
New Program, New Books: Selecting Materials for the Muckleshoot Ed.D. Cohort at the University of Washington, Tacoma

by Kristen Orth

The University of Washington Tacoma occupies the ancestral land of the Coast Salish people, specifically the traditional homelands of the Puyallup Tribe of Indians. This acknowledgement has been part of the university’s work—and the formal practice of the Department of Education since 2017—in an effort to create an environment that is more inclusive of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives. While the overall university system has taken important steps towards this goal—such as the opening of the UW Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies in 2018 and wǝɫǝbʔaltxʷ-Intellectual House in 2015—more work needs to be done to address systemic issues on the Tacoma campus. Settler colonialism continues to uphold barriers to Indigenous students, as reflected in demographics: out of over 5,000 students enrolled at UW Tacoma, only 118 are Indigenous.

To help dismantle those barriers, the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership (Ed.D.) has partnered with the Muckleshoot Tribal College to offer a program centering Indigenous knowledge and approaches. The program was created and launched by UW Tacoma’s Ed.D. Director Robin Starr Zape-tah-hol-ah Minthorn and Muckleshoot Tribal College’s Academic Affairs Instructor Amy Maharaj, alongside Denise Bill (Adult and Higher Education Executive Director, Muckleshoot Tribal College), Michelle Montgomery (professor, UW Tacoma), and Ashley Walker (Ed.D. Graduate Advisor, UW Tacoma). Consisting of students who are either tribal citizens or have prior experience with tribal education, the Muckleshoot cohort offers an exciting opportunity to increase Indigenous enrollment and support Indigenous research and methodologies.

“...It also opens up the opportunity for library staff members to reexamine their relationship with Indigenous patrons, and how they can better support their information needs...”

The 15 members of the inaugural Muckleshoot cohort began their studies this summer; four are connected to the Muckleshoot tribe and 11 are from tribes such as the Lummi Nation, the Makah Tribe and the Cochiti Tribe. Students meet for class one weekend out of every month at the Muckleshoot Tribal College (classes are currently being held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic). Faculty for the program is made up of Indigenous professors or those with extensive experience in tribal education.

As a new program not only at UW Tacoma but also within the Pacific Northwest, there are unique information needs that need to be addressed, and libraries are uniquely situated to at least begin that work. Students need a breadth of quality resources that implement Indigenous methodologies at a level suitable for doctorate-level research. Further considerations also need to be given for the circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic. To answer these needs, the UW Tacoma Library launched a collection development project this summer to increase the quantity and quality of monographs available for students.

Before beginning the search for specific titles, purchase criteria needed to be established. In addition to the aforementioned needs and suitability within the field of Education, priority was given to Indigenous authors. To ensure accurate and up-to-date information, titles were limited to publication dates within the last ten years. As the cohort is based within the Pacific Northwest region of the United States, particular focus was given to books with this setting; however, as perspectives outside of this geographic limit are still valuable, key exceptions were made for texts about First Nations and Aboriginal peoples.
COVID-19 presented new challenges throughout the duration of the selection process. The collection development project began almost simultaneously with the pandemic, which impacted the amount of feedback that could be collected from key stakeholders. As the program grows and develops, library workers at the UW Tacoma Library will need to make an active effort to include more voices and insights from cohort members and faculty whenever possible.

UW Tacoma’s COVID-19 response included the closing of all in-person services, including circulation. Access to physical books from the UW Libraries was impossible when the program began, and, while curbside services have now been implemented, accessing print books for students who may not be close to the campus still remains a barrier. Because books were not able to be returned or processed for the first six months of the pandemic, the Access Services at the UW Tacoma Library faced a backlog, which in turn meant that newly purchased books would be delayed in being put on the shelves and reaching the students. For the purposes of the collection development work, titles were therefore limited exclusively to eBooks.

The final step in assessment was examining titles already in the collection and determining what topics were well-represented and what still needed development. Focus was put onto UW Tacoma’s specific collection, although secondary consideration was given to UW Libraries’ overall repository, as well as the collections from fellow members of the Orbis Cascade Alliance Consortium. As the ILS only allowed searching by call numbers, this method was imprecise but helpful in understanding how current needs were or were not being met. It was determined that while UW Libraries were fairly comprehensive in owning materials that fulfilled the criteria, UW Tacoma’s collection lacked newer works as well as eBook copies.

With a clearer understanding of the selection criteria, titles could be identified. WorldCat’s advanced search was used to filter for the designated years and genre of books with the keywords. The process gradually transitioned into subject searching, using the subjects “Indigenous Knowledge,” “Indigenous peoples – Research – Methodology,” and “Indigenous peoples – Education” as the main focus. From these searches, a list of 65 titles was generated for the final step of consideration.

Final decisions were made based on whether the title had an eBook version, whether a copy of the book already existed in the system or consortium—and if so, the extent of the eBook license—and whether the content was considered “highly relevant” to the needs of the cohort. The general high cost of eBook licenses further constrained what was available for purchasing within a special, one-time additional $3,000 budget to support the Muckleshoot cohort. In some cases, the decision was made to expand already existing licensing to increase accessibility, especially during remote learning. 16 new eBooks were added to the University of Washington collection as a result of this project, and several licenses were expanded.

Higher Education has a long way to go to creating a more equitable environment for Indigenous community members. The Muckleshoot cohort is an exciting addition to the University of Washington Tacoma’s program offerings, bringing institutional power and resources directly to Indigenous educators and leaders. It also opens up the opportunity for library workers to reexamine their relationship with Indigenous patrons, and how they can better support their information needs. The library was able to add more Indigenous perspectives and knowledge to the collection through this project, but it is just one way to increase representation and offer support. As the Ed.D. program continues to grow, so should the library’s services and methods.

Notes


4. Ibid.


INTRODUCTION

Doc Martin

Since the publication of the first *Harry Potter* novel in 1997, the series has garnered attention not only in the realm of pop culture, but also in academia. While teaching Children’s Literature in the English Department at Clemson University from 1999 to 2011, I taught a Harry Potter class twice: first to honors students at the request of the Honors College and later taught a Senior English Seminar for majors. I always integrate outreach into my classes, regardless of focus, and the popularity of this series made outreach fun to plan. My honors students hosted a Harry Potter Trivia Contest, which maxed out at 50 teams of 3 contestants each, who answered questions that would challenge even the most dedicated Harry Potter fan. The English Senior Seminar hosted a Quidditch competition (before college Quidditch teams were widespread) and sold T-shirts. Both classes donated their fundraising proceeds to local youth charities.

As I contemplated teaching a summer 2020 Harry Potter course for the University of Washington’s iSchool Master of Library and Information Program, I had to consider the expansion of the Potterverse that has occurred since I last taught the series: the release of the *Deathly Hallows* films, *Part 1* and *Part 2* and the *Fantastic Beasts* films; the production of *The Cursed Child*; the explosion of fanfiction about the series; the creation of *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter* theme park; the establishment of organizations like The Harry Potter Alliance; the occurrence of Harry Potter-themed academic conferences; and the publication of critical articles, books, and more. I also knew that many students who “grew up” with Harry are now struggling to manage their fandom and their dedication to Rowling’s work when they feel betrayed by the author and the very public transphobic stance she has recently taken. Hence, the 2020 class required both a new approach and new types of outreach.
I decided to name the class “Harry Potter in the 21st Century: Equity, Race and Privilege in the Fantastic” and to teach it as a social justice class.

Ebony Elizabeth Thomas’ critical book, *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to The Hunger Games*, framed our discussions for this 4½-week summer online course. In *The Dark Fantastic*, Thomas argues that those who write fantasy have had a failure of the imagination in building worlds that too often exclude BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) characters, and when they do, they portray Black and Brown characters only as the “dark other” or villains who need to be eradicated or subdued. The racism inherent in fantasy excludes and alienates non-white readers and forces them to imaginatively create spaces for themselves in the fantasy worlds in which they never appear or are rarely portrayed positively. And even when they do appear—consider the casting of Amandla Stenberg as Rue in *The Hunger Games* film—there is sometimes a public outcry against the inclusion of minoritized characters.

Using these ideas as a foundation for our discussions, I created modules that addressed the following topics:

- Gender & the HP Franchise
- The Fantastic, Race & Ethnicity
- The HP Community: Social Justice & Fanfiction
- The Economics of HP & Exploring Other Fantasy Worlds

Throughout the course, the students engaged actively in discussion boards, watched lectures recorded by Milly Romeijn-Stout (doctoral TA for the course) and me, and interviewed librarians who are offering Harry Potter/fantasy-themed programming in libraries in Washington, South Carolina, Colorado, and California as well as four scholars who have published on Rowling’s work, including Ebony Thomas herself. The class read and discussed *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, but since part of the goal for the course was to help these LIS students diversify their recommendations in reader’s advisory, and since most of the students have read the seven Potter books multiple times, the other texts we read as a class were #OwnVoices works by BIPOC writers: Gene Luen Yang’s *Secret Coders*, any work of speculative fiction by Zetta Elliott, Nnedi Okorafor’s *Akata Witch* (based on Nigerian mythology) and Rebecca Roanhorse’s *Race to the Sun* (one of the Rick Riordan Presents books based on Navajo mythology). These authors and texts were new to most of the students and pushed them to think more inclusively about the books they read and recommend to those who love fantasy.

And since I still believe in the value of outreach to bring the “Ivory Tower” into the community to make a positive difference—even during a short summer course and even during a worldwide pandemic—I contacted Sno-Isle Public Library, a library system that has offered a full week of Harry Potter programming for several years. When we discovered that they were pivoting to offer this programming online, we asked if they would be interested in having my students take part. Three of the students joined existing Sno-Isle Library Committees, and the other 27 students formed three committees that planned the following virtual programs, advertised for teens and adults:

- **Reel Talk**: Harry Potter Film Adaptations, Monday, August 17, 4-5 pm
- **Slash, Shipping and Head Canon**: Harry Potter Fanfiction, Tuesday, August 18, 5-6 pm
- **Diversity Matters**: Reading Diversely with Harry Potter, Wednesday, August 19, 7-8 pm

The students were encouraged to use their prior knowledge and experience of the Harry Potter series and other works of fantasy as well as their readings, interviews and discussions from class, and any relevant research, to create the programs. Each group met with Milly and me twice to plan, to share their discussion questions, and to “test drive” their presentations. We communicated regularly with the Sno-Isle librarians, who answered questions and also arranged a tech check 30 minutes before the start of each program. Some students who had other engagements that prevented them from participating in the actual program helped with planning, research, creating PowerPoints, and other details beforehand, and all of the students were asked to complete a survey about their outreach experience. They also each wrote a reflective essay for their final class assignment, in which many discussed what it was like to plan a library outreach program—a first for most of them. I asked for volunteers from each of the outreach groups to take part in writing this article to share what they did and what they gained from the experience.

**STUDENT-LED PROGRAMS**

In this next section, students from the class describe the library programs they led in their own voices, explaining their process step by step and concluding with reflections about their program and the course overall. In addition to the student-led public library programs, two students describe alternate ways they fulfilled the requirements of this assignment while contributing positively to Sno-Isle Public Library summer programming.

*continued on next page*
Reel Talk:

Emily Beran, Jennifer Stetson, Jamie Poirier

The goal of this program was for participants to gain a greater understanding of how the expansion of the Harry Potter universe has also allowed an expansion of representation in the real world. Based on student interest, we formed three subcommittees: Original Film Adaptations; *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* play, and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.

**Film Adaptations**

Our questions in this section asked participants to consider the differences between the books and the movies and how those differences impact not only inclusion but how the participants see themselves within the wizarding world. Our discussion included the following questions: Based on the books, which casting choice was your favorite in the movies and why? Which casting choice did not match your expectations? Do you think the characters are more diverse or less diverse in the movies than in the books?

**The Cursed Child**

We opened this section by mentioning the lack of diversity in the wizarding world in terms of BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, differently-abled people, and so on. We then posed the following discussion questions, among others: if you could write an epilogue story set in the Harry Potter universe, which characters might you like to reimagine to be different from the movie portrayals (as the play does with Hermione)? Which characters and subplots would you want to follow in an epilogue?

Wanting to leave participants with some action items, we ended with book recommendations and encouraged them to think about how their favorite stories would look if they were more diverse. We also hope that such a line of thinking will encourage them to seek out new kinds of stories (such as those by #OwnVoices writers) and potentially even be inspired to write their own.

**Fantastic Beasts Movies**

For this section of the program, we had participants sketch their own made-up beasts, then name them. Our discussion questions asked participants to think critically about the film franchise, keeping diversity, equity and inclusion in mind. In the two *Fantastic Beasts* films, there appears to be an attempt to incorporate diversity/representation. To what extent do you think the films met the goal of diversity and representation? If future films take place in the US, how could Indigenous communities be represented?

The *Fantastic Beasts* series is the adaptation and world expansion most distant from the content of the original books, which makes it particularly interesting to discuss from a diversity standpoint. There is not a seven-volume series full of character descriptions that dictate some of the casting choices for these films. Because of this, the *Fantastic Beasts* series has a level of freedom that the original films and *The Cursed Child* do not. And yet, the diversity and representation still leave much to be desired in these films. We asked participants to consider why this might be.

**Reflections**

Our feedback survey gave us valuable suggestions that included providing discussion questions beforehand (“to allow for more participation from those who may not have an immediate answer”) and a request for more slides with visual components to spark more conversation.

Our primary challenges were figuring out how best to foster audience participation and to maintain a steady flow through the three subcommittee presentations. While we did have a few technical difficulties, they were not significant enough to detract from the substance of the program. We feel confident we can avoid them in future programs. We also learned that we needed to pay attention to both verbal discussion and the chat, since the chat can be both rich and quite different from what is happening verbally. The pandemic has been a source of frustration for everyone, but having an alternative platform for discussion like Zoom was positive overall as it gave participants another way to engage that made them more comfortable and active.

**Slash, Shipping and Head Canon:**

Justine Rea

The goals of our program were to:

- Provide a brief introduction to fanfiction, advice about how teens should conduct themselves as participants in the fanfiction world, and what sites are available to them for...
posting and interacting with fanfiction and its enthusiasts

- Provide a safe and fun space to discuss and explore what fanfiction means to them

- Explore topics concerning diversity and inclusion within the fanfiction realm, with special attention given to areas of fanfiction where creators deviated from the HP canon (because doing so can make space for more diversity and inclusion)

- Engage in some fanfiction free-writing

Program Outline

Following introductions, we covered fanfiction basics, including fanfiction history, vocabulary and what inclusivity and diversity look like through different fanfiction mediums, with special attention given to Slash and Headcanon fanfiction prose. We then had participants contribute to a Word Cloud and a scavenger hunt related to fanfiction. Overall, the teen participants were highly engaged, and we were surprised at how much engagement they brought: they wanted to talk rather than just typing in the chat. This supports the claims in Hinck in which she describes how publics are formed through these shared grounds². This program supported the thinking that fanfiction can motivate people to public engagement.

Diversity Matters:

Rea Harris, Nicole Breiner, Austin Foglesong, Jennifer Ching

Working with 12 fellow graduate students online, who you do not know personally, who are around the world in different time zones, might have been a daunting task. However, we were united in our belief in the importance of diversity, whether it be race, culture, sexual orientation/identity, or abilities, and thus determined to get the project to work.

After our initial meetings, we decided on a general structure and goals for the program, then created subcommittees by program tasks: introduction; discussion guides; book talk/resources, and Call to Action.

Most importantly, we wanted to make sure that program participants felt included and recognized. We wanted to give them a chance to discuss their own defining characteristics and to think about multiple diverse perspectives. In addition, we wanted to share Harry Potter read-alikes that represented traditionally underrepresented perspectives and to provide resources for fandoms that promote diversity in the fantasy genre.

With this in mind, our goals for the project were to:

- Provide participants an opportunity to identify and discuss characteristics that speak to who they are (race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability, etc.) for a re-imagined sorting hat;

- Encourage participants to think critically about the diverse perspectives present in or missing from the works of fantasy they choose to read;

- Share Harry Potter read-alikes and alternatives in the fantasy genre, highlighting and adding to those in the Sno-Ise reading list, that feature characters offering diverse perspectives;

- Issue a Call to Action by offering suggestions for involvement in online fan communities and organizations that promote a diversity of voices in the fantasy world.

Our program included a check-in in which participants shared their name, pronouns, location and Patronus, a PowerPoint
about diversity and identity in *Harry Potter* that framed our conversation, and breakout groups facilitated by members of our committee. We then gave a book talk and shared a resource list that described additional diverse books, podcasts, films, etc., that our participants might enjoy. We ended with the Call to Action, Q&A, and thank yous.

Participants overwhelmingly enjoyed the program, though some provided constructive feedback such as wanting more details about *Harry Potter* and wanting us to connect the organizations to which we referred in our Call to Action to specific *Harry Potter* examples. We also used breakout rooms to discuss our sorting hat activity, and several participants specifically commented that they enjoyed the breakout room conversations.

Our group created a resource list of books and resources that our participants were excited to explore and add to. We focused on *Harry Potter* read-alikes that included more diverse characters. These books included titles that we read for our own course, Zetta Elliott’s *Dragons in a Bag* and Nnedi Okorafor’s *Akata Witch*. We created a script to make our presentation go more smoothly. We also provided handouts to the participants with links to the books and resources that are in the Sno-Isle Library catalog. These consisted of PDF versions of specific slides from our presentation. We even received a request for the references slide from an attendee who wanted to look deeper into what we had discussed.

**Reflections**

It was a really great opportunity to have this outreach experience. Many of the tools and resources we used in the creation of the Diversity Matters program were from what we learned and read in class through required readings or from interviews with staff at other libraries. It was an impactful way for us to demonstrate what we had learned and put our skills and knowledge into practice. We also appreciated the help and support of Doc Martin, Milly Romeijn-Stout, and the Sno-Isle Librarians and staff. It took all of us to help make these programs go smoothly and successfully.

**EMBEDDED AND INDEPENDENT OUTREACH PROJECTS**

**Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone Book Club:**

*Chelsea Riddle*

I was one of the few students who experienced programming embedded within a Sno-Isle Public Library committee for their week of online programming, which took place the first full week of our course. I helped with the *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (HPSS) Book Club for youth, which attracted roughly 26 participants. The meeting began with a Zoom poll, and discussion commenced after the initial poll discussion. We polled the participants four times throughout the meeting, with good participation and follow-up discussions.

While most participants were under age twelve, the discussions that took place were thorough, respectful, and insightful. Organizers developed discussion questions before the meeting with the intention of really getting everyone talking, but we quickly found that the participants were so excited to talk about the book that our predetermined questions only gently guided the Book Club, rather than firmly focusing it. We began by asking participants about themselves and how they relate to HPSS events and characters, and slowly moved from an individual-focus to a more community-based one. There were several questions that asked participants to relate to one another, and to the characters in the book. The “why” questions really got kids thinking, and they frequently came up with similar “why” questions on their own during discussion. Poll activities were incorporated throughout the discussion to break things up and to spark further thinking about the book, and those were particularly popular.

Overall, the participants seemed to really enjoy the discussion and poll activities and left the Zoom meeting excited for upcoming event sessions. They were also excited to continue reading the *Harry Potter* series and beyond.

**Dragons in a Bag Activity Book:**

*Chelsea Davies*

While I do not have youth librarianship experience, I have other creative and technical skills that I wanted to meaningfully contribute to Sno-Isle Libraries programming. So I relied on my skills as a designer to create an activity and coloring book. I was inspired by the simplicity of diner activity books and placemats and the idea of kids engaging with activities that might get them even more excited about Zetta Elliot’s *Dragons in a Bag*. After I created the activity book, Doc Martin shared it with Zetta Elliott, who liked it very much, and with several communities of librarians who planned to share it with patrons. Alki readers can access the activity booklet [here](#). Please share it with the young people in your life and in your library.

**CONCLUSION:**

**What is Harry Potter’s Place in the Library?**

*Doc Martin*

As many Harry Potter fans struggle with how to manage their fandom in the face of J.K. Rowling’s transphobic stance, this class highlighted how to create new and better library programming that capitalizes on this fandom but that is more inclusive of all readers. Readings, assignments, activities and especially this
outreach project in partnership with Sno-Isle Library contributed in a concrete way to the anti-racist learning and practices of future librarians. The class also introduced students to some #OwnVoices writers of fantasy with BIPOC main characters that most of the students had not read prior to the class.

What did the students learn? One summed it up in this way:

“Organizing large groups to one task is never easy, and doing so completely asynchronously adds extra stress to the process. I think my task- and group-management skills were stretched and broadened. I also think I learned valuable information about what types of programs can be held in a public library, and learned that sometimes book or general discussion is just as helpful and engaging as a formal, fully-planned lecture or event!”

Another student said:

“I feel that the process of helping to plan a program such as this for a public library really made me think about Harry Potter and fanfiction in general in a different way. Fanfiction is a great form of entertainment for me, but putting a social justice lens on things also helped look at fanfiction as a way for readers to create mirrors of themselves in a universe, such as the HP universe, where they may not be represented.”

While few faculty would attempt three outreach projects with 30 students in a 4½-week summer class, it was well worth the effort, and everyone involved gained a great deal from this experience.

Notes


social isolation via virtual offerings.² ³

Connections have value, and we can explore this idea in terms of access to the internet. There are moments when patrons must go online in order to connect with businesses and organizations. A recent interaction with a patron reminded me how hard it is to connect offline. The patron wished to communicate with a political campaign and a local radio station, but the only means of doing so was through the organizations’ online question forms. This patron did not use computers. While the political campaign was able to supply a P.O. Box, the radio station was not. People without digital access, especially during these times, find themselves cut off from many of the information flows in our society. This results in increased isolation and a further loss of civic participation. Some libraries have responded by creating or increasing loans of hotspots and devices, and maintaining or expanding their WiFi outside their buildings.⁴ ⁵ In addition, all libraries are working towards a manageable, safe system for giving patrons time on computers in buildings.

Elections ensure that the opportunity for citizens to reimagine society occurs at regular intervals. This opportunity can only be fully realized if knowledgeable citizens remain engaged. While COVID-19 has remade our world in unanticipated ways, it has not changed the election cycle. Now is the time to reflect on how libraries aid citizens to successfully participate in democracy and plan for the next round of the cycle.

Notes


New Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at KCLS

Dominica Myers joined King County Library System as the new Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). The following update is from the KCLS newsroom:

Myers joined KCLS in October to head the DEI department in a newly created leadership role, and will report to KCLS Executive Director Lisa Rosenblum. Born and raised in Washington state, Myers comes to KCLS from Seattle Opera where she served as the associate director of administration with responsibility for company-wide Racial Equity and Social Impact initiatives.

Myers earned a master’s degree in nonprofit leadership from Seattle University in Seattle, Washington, and holds a bachelor’s degree in theatre arts with a minor in Spanish from Central Washington University in Ellensburg, Washington. She also serves on the Inspire Washington board of trustees and the Tacoma Creates advisory board.

“KCLS is deeply committed to diversity, equity and inclusion as part of our service to the public,” stated KCLS Executive Director Lisa Rosenblum. “We began recruitment for this new role in July to expand leadership on our DEI initiatives, and we welcome Dominica to KCLS.”

“The people and geography of King County are a diverse tapestry of lived experiences, and the Library System is a reflection of that,” stated Myers. “KCLS holds a tremendous responsibility for stewarding the public’s resources and trust toward creating an equitable and inclusive experience for patrons of all backgrounds. As the new DEI director, I certainly feel the weight of this charge, but am excited for the journey with you.”

Cornish College of the Arts: Promotion to Director

As of June 1, 2020, Bridget Nowlin has been promoted to the Director of Library Services position at Cornish. At Cornish College of the Arts since 2002,

Nowlin began as the part-time Curator of Visual Resources, returned to the University of Washington to get her MLIS and became the Visual Arts Librarian. Nowlin is also a practicing artist with a focus on photography, teaches the history of photography by invitation, and is the Curator for the Monsen Collection, a private collection of photography, ceramics, and Asian art.

~Content courtesy of Bridget Nowlin.

WLA Member and La Conner Library Favorite Retires

Joy Neal retired from the La Conner Library December 2019 after years of library service. She spent 23 years at North Central Regional Library, and then became director of La Conner Regional Library. Joy was and is still an active member of WLA. She is currently the outgoing WLA Treasurer and a member of the Washington State Library Council.

In 1982 she joined the WLA Board as Conference Chair. Along with a committee she gathered, Joy helped put on the first Conference held in Wenatchee. She also worked on numerous WLA conferences in various capacities—Chair, Programs, Pre-Conference, Local Arrangements, Treasurer, and finally three years as Exhibits Chair.

~Continued on next page

Image courtesy of Bridget Nowlin

Image courtesy of Joy Neal

Milestones

Milestones focuses on significant moments for libraries statewide – recognizing notable new hires, transitions, expansions and retirements, as well as remembrances of those who have passed. We’re looking for submissions, of approximately 250 words, that highlight notable accomplishments in the careers of those profiled. Photographs are encouraged. Please send information to alkieditor@wla.org.
Joy retired from La Conner after being invited to present about public computer use at a Gates Foundation Peer Conference to a worldwide audience, and after successfully raising over 3 million dollars for a new La Conner Library building scheduled to be built in 2021 next year.

~Content courtesy of Joy Neal.

New Directory for Whitman County Library

Whitman County Library is pleased to announce that Kylie Fullmer has been hired as Director, beginning work on September 8 of this year. Fullmer was born and raised in the Tri-Cities, graduating from the University of Washington with her MLIS in 2010. After a short stint working at Amazon, Fullmer served for 10 years as library director of the East Adams Library District in Ritzville.

During her time in Ritzville, Fullmer became passionate about the role of libraries in bridging the digital divide, working actively to support local and statewide broadband initiatives helping ensure everyone in rural areas has access to high speed internet.

About her new position, Kylie says: “I have long viewed Whitman County Library as a leader for rural libraries and often looked to Whitman Country Library for inspiration during my time in Ritzville. I look forward to working with the amazing staff and continuing the successful programs and services community members know and love, while also innovating to meet arising needs as we navigate these uncertain times.”

In her first few weeks at the library, Fullmer will tour all 14 branch locations and communities, meet library staff and familiarize herself with the intricacies of the system.

~Content courtesy of Kristie Kirkpatrick.

A Call for Cover Art

A Call for Contributors
by the Alki Editorial Committee and Alki Editor

We so greatly enjoyed the art contributed by library workers from across the state shared at the Washington Library Association annual meeting (see Walsh, Portrait of a Librarian in this issue)! The past two issues, we have been fortunate enough to have Alki covers featuring art submitted, well, by you!

We are energized to call on our entire community of library workers—in any role—to submit cover art as a jpeg for upcoming issues of Alki by emailing alkieditor@wla.org. Please include a brief biography with your submission. The deadline is rolling, and we will consider all images that are submitted that are in line with our editorial principles.

Questions? Please reach out to the Alki Editor by emailing alkieditor@wla.org.
Best Book

By the time this article is published in early December, I’ll be wrapping up one of my favorite projects of the year: our annual Best Books lists. It is a significant undertaking that starts almost two months before the lists are published—and that doesn’t include the time I spend all year reading new books that might be Best Books contenders. I think it’s worth the effort. In fact, I think every library system should release some kind of year-end best books content.

You may be wondering why your library should go through the process of assembling a best books list when so many other outlets and organizations, from the New York Times to Goodreads, are doing the same. Libraries are their own wonderful thing, and our lists can reflect that.

Libraries are rooted in their communities. That means our lists feature community members, including Washington State and other Pacific Northwest writers. I hope that Jess Walter’s wonderful new historical novel, The Cold Millions, shows up on best book lists across the country, but think it deserves a place on Washington library lists. It is a deeply researched look at the labor movement and free speech protests in the Northwest at the turn of the century. Washington readers have an extra connection to The Cold Millions that makes the novel a particularly good choice for our best books lists.

Keeping up with local authors can take a little extra leg-work, so I’m grateful for the WLA annual conference panel “WA Do I Read Next?” that highlights the work of local writers. It is fun and informative and one of my favorite sessions of WLA every year.

In addition to local connections, our lists reflect the eclectic flavor of how our communities read. Will our list include Brit Bennett’s gorgeous and compelling family story The Vanishing Half? I hope so—it was certainly one of my favorites of the year. In fact, I expect that it will show up at the top of many of this year’s lists, library-created or otherwise. Our lists always include some of those incredibly popular and well-reviewed titles, but our lists also include more variety than many other lists. Although our staff are still voting on their favorites as I write this, I can guarantee that the King County Library System’s 2020 Best Book list will include the kind of literary fiction appears on New York Times lists. It will also include plenty of genre fiction, from romance to sci-fi, because that’s how our staff and patrons read.

Further, book lists are invaluable readers’ advisory tools for years to come. I know that despite my efforts to stay on top of book news and to read widely and broadly all year long, staff will nominate and vote for a book that I have not yet heard of. Staff can confidently recommend titles from past lists whether they’ve read them or not because the content is so wide-ranging in scope.

How do we determine the titles that go on our list? At the King County Library System, we do a traditional list: 4 categories (adult fiction, adult nonfiction, teen, and children’s) with 25 titles each. We write short annotations for each title to help readers get a sense of the selections. Our list is compiled through a nomination and voting process that gives input to staff at all levels and in all positions. You can browse our picks online.

Other models also exist. In past years, Whatcom County Library System has published a gift guide! Take a look at the 2017 edition here. While it does not feature exclusively new books, it does highlight some new titles, tie into pop culture trends, and showcase the staff’s readers’ advisory expertise. For a more interactive experience, check out Multnomah County Library’s Best Books. It’s built on the same open-source software as the NPR Book Concierge.

There is no wrong way to share the books your staff loved this year, and your patrons will be happy to dive in no matter how you package your picks. I invite you to send me your library’s picks! I can’t wait to see what library staff all over Washington read and loved this year.
It’s no secret that 2020 has been rough. Thankfully, there are books, always books, to ground us, to make us laugh, to make us cry, to help us see the wonder in the world, and to make us appreciate humanity. Here are a few highly recommended titles that will do just that. Happy reading!

**Black is a Rainbow Color.**
Author: Angela Joy.
Illustrator: Ekua Holmes
Recommended for all ages
Review by Teresa Wittmann

A young girl reflects on what it means to be Black and celebrates the diverse and complex aspects of her culture. The verses are lyrical and flow with the illustrations, but they also highlight continuing struggles and historic Black figures. For example:

“Black is the color of ink staining page./Black is the mask that shelters his rage./Black are the birds in cages that sing-/Black is a color./Black is a culture.”

The vibrant full-page illustrations complement the verses and have a feeling of stained glass and collage. This relevant picture book is full of depth and vitality. Children will relate to it, but older students and adults will also be able to use it as a starting point for discussions on race, culture, creativity, and their own perspective of themselves.

**Ordinary Day.**
Author: Elana K. Arnold.
Illustrator: Elizabet Vukovic
Recommended for K-6th grade
Review by Sarah Threlkeld

On a seemingly ordinary day in a suburban neighborhood extraordinary events are taking place. Two cars pull up to the curb. A person gets out of each car, medical bag in hand. There are soft knocks on two different house doors, and then the reader is invited inside to discover why the day is so important to each family. There is birth and there is death and the world keeps spinning while neighborhood kids play in the street and Mrs. LaFleur waters her roses. This is an exceptional picture book about life, love, family, and the small moments that define us. The mixed media illustrations in muted tones complement the text perfectly and bring a sense of comfort to the reader. Tissues should be on hand for the first reading...and maybe even the fifth.

Sarah Threlkeld is the current Chair of Puget Sound Council, the head librarian at Briarwood Elementary in the Issaquah School District, a member of the Sasquatch Committee, and recovering podcaster. When she doesn’t have her nose buried in a book, she is probably baking, running, singing, or building Lego with her family.
This is My World: Meet 84 Kids From Around the Globe from Lonely Planet Publications
Recommended for 2nd-4th grade
Review by Paula Burton

Kids are showcased from all over the world. They all have a two page spread with pictures of their surroundings, their family and themselves. Sometimes portrayed traveling, with their friends or practicing their hobbies. It always has a flag of their country and an x on the globe where they live. Most of them have three words describing themselves. At the top of the page it has the child’s name and their age. Many individual photographs are mixed with stock photos of food, clothing, and musical instruments. The description with each heading is short including interesting facts for kids to get a more global perspective on their peers in the world. The order of the kids is alphabetically by their first name. Their ages range between seven and twelve. The layout is dynamic and colorful that will attract kids in elementary school.

This Was Our Pact.
Author: Ryan Andrews
Recommended for 5th-8th grade
Review by Merrilyn Tucker

This was a magical pact, indeed! On the autumnal equinox, a group of schoolboys on bikes try to follow the lanterns that the townspeople put out to float on the river. Every year up to this point, they had simply watched the lanterns go around the bend and then had headed home. Their pact this year was not to look back and not to return home. Only two boys ended up loyal to that pact, one boy being the outcast of the group.

On their journey, Ben and Nathaniel met a talking bear, a magical woman, festive autumnal celebrators, and flying fish. What they also learned was what happens to the lanterns after they turn the bend in the river. Not least, the two boys become friends through having to trust each other in daring circumstances and make a new promise to take more adventures together. This graphic novel is a long one at around 300 pages, but it’s captivating and compelling. Each time the scene changes or a character is introduced, the color scheme of the pictures changes. Some pictures are a full two pages and others take up a quarter or less of one page. The narrative is easy to follow and the print varies in size and font. I really enjoyed this fantasy and recommend it for students in grades five and up.

We Are Power: How Nonviolent Activism Changed the World
Author: Todd Hasak-Lowy
Recommended for 6th-12th grade
Review by Erin O’Connor

This is a timely book for youth in 2020. With all that is going on in the world to try to change systems of oppression, this high interest title engages young readers with an eye toward activism and social justice. We Are Power is divided into 6 sections that bind nonviolent activists together. It starts with the story of Gandhi and the struggle for basic human rights for Indians in South Africa, and later in the fight against British colonialism in India. Gandhi led the way in showing that if people have strength in numbers and in “soul force” they can make change for the better. Following Gandhi, was a harrowing account of what the suffragettes (led by Alice Paul) went through in order to secure the basic right to vote for women. In subsequent chapters we see how leaders in nonviolent activism continued to carry the flag to secure labor rights for farm workers (Cesar Chavez), dismantle segregation and brutal racism in the deep south (Martin Luther King, Jr.), and fight against communist rule (Vaclav Havel). Finally, Greta Thunberg’s fight to bring awareness to the global climate crisis is highlighted, along with a call from Thunberg to young people everywhere, “Activism works. So act.”
Dispatches from Swellville

by Darcy McMurtery

Darcy McMurtery is a program manager for school libraries in a large district on the west side. She’d tell you she loves to read, but it’s an expectation of the job.

Horoscopes

**Aries** (March 21-April 19)
Focus on survival this month. You will gain no ground if you are stubborn like the ram. Only some stubbornness is a positive as you will be stationed at the door to make sure your patrons wear masks. You may be asked to lead a virtual book group for the third consecutive month because your co-worker has “internet problems.” Dig in and get the job done. All will be well by month’s end.
Lucky call numbers: 917.23, 808.23

**Taurus** (April 20-May 20)
The month is fraught with challenges. Believe in yourself and chant positive mantras even as you clean syrup from the book drop. Treat every sticky situation with good humor. Your positive approach will be rewarded.
Lucky call numbers: 133.33, 746.56

**Gemini** (May 21-June 20)
This is a rainy month for curbside check out. Encourage your principals and managers to join you, huddled under a pop-up tent. Your steadfastness pays off, however, as your students and patrons will check out more in a single month than they have all year. Reading for interest is not dead: it’s just beginning.
Lucky call numbers: 515.67, 333.33

**Cancer** (June 21-July 22)
An unexpected donation lands on your desk. Look to the horizon for inspiration on its use. All donations come with expectations though. Make sure to set firm guidelines with patrons and PTA moms.
Lucky call numbers: 612.47, 364.1523

**Leo** (July 23-August 22)
Faulty equipment is the theme of this month. Makerspace technology is fried and printers are jammed. You may roar, Leo, but calmer days are coming. You’ll find an unlikely ally in your tech department. Do not overly rely on this ally as their patience runs thin.
Lucky call numbers: 398.2, 972.56

**Virgo** (August 23-September 22)
As you quarantine your collection, ponder the distance this creates in connection. Take this month, Virgo, to rekindle professional relationships that have soured. Rare praise comes from an opponent. Accept the praise but do not let your guard down.
Lucky call numbers: 098.02, 822.33

**Libra** (September 23-October 22)
While the outlook appears bleak, you’ll impress others with your positivity and snappy comebacks. Save it for the staff and faculty, Libra, as the patrons won’t appreciate it. A rare opportunity comes your way. Make sure your ears and eyes remain open.
Lucky call numbers: 422.33, 700

**Scorpio** (October 23-November 21)
Storytime gets explosive this month. Stay calm and be sure to remain stocked up on tissues and Clorox wipes. Your good humor gets you through a rough month. Put on a happy face, as they say, crank the Raffi, and shake those sillies out.
Lucky call numbers: 746.43, 579.6

**Sagittarius** (November 22-December 21)
A disagreement with a staff member from community relations heats up. Stand your ground but remain open to compromise. Sometimes pineapple does belong on a pizza and Oxford commas need to stay in your flyers.
Lucky call numbers: 573.49, 641.5946

**Capricorn** (December 22-January 19)
Turn on the charm this month, Capricorn. A board member visits your book group. Do not let this get under your skin as they will come bearing a message of positivity and a fully-funded grant.
Lucky call numbers: 306.0973, 133.1

**Aquarius** (January 20-February 18)
Too many webinars will have your head spinning by month’s end. Additional professional development will not keep you from the difficult tasks at hand. Make lists, prioritize, make your voice heard. The plant on your windowsill needs to be watered.
Lucky call numbers: 369.43, 635.95

**Pisces** (February 19-March 20)
Make friends with the staff knitters. It’s going to be a chilly month for curbside services. Your work pays off as a mysterious donor leaves money for new books and hand warmers. Do not fall for the ruse of sale paperbacks. This is a time to splurge on library editions.
Lucky call numbers: 270.1, 910.911

Photo by Josh Rangel on Unsplash.
WLA Thanks Our Organizational Members

Sustaining Members

Asotin County Library  Neill Public Library
Bellingham Public Library  North Central Regional Library
Big Bend CC Bonaudi Library  North Seattle College
Burlington Public Library  Orcas Island Library District
Central Skagit Rural Partial County Library District  Pierce College Library
Centralia College Library  Pierce County Library System
City of Richland - Library  Port Townsend Public Library
Clark College Library  Puyallup Public Library
Clover Park Technical College Library  Renton Technical College Library
Columbia County Rural Library District  Ritzville Library District #2
Community Colleges of Spokane - Library Services  San Juan Island Library
Eastern Washington University Libraries  Seattle Central College Library
Ellensburg Public Library  Seattle Public Library
Everett Public Library  Sedro-Woolley City Library
Foley Center Library Gonzaga University  Shoreline Community College
Fort Vancouver Regional Library District  Skagit Valley College/Norwood
Grandview Library  Sno-Isle Libraries
Green River College  Spokane County Library District
Highland Terrace Elementary  Spokane Public Library
Highline College Library  Stevens County Rural Library District
James Brooks Library, Central Washington University  Tacoma Public Library
Jefferson County Library  The Evergreen State College
King County Library System  Timberland Regional Library
Kitsap Regional Library  University of Washington Libraries
La Conner Regional Library District  Upper Skagit Library
Lake Washington Institute of Technology  Walla Walla Community College Library
Liberty Lake Municipal Library  Walla Walla County Rural Library District
Longview Public Library  Washington State Library
Lopez Island Library  Whatcom Community College
Lower Columbia College  Whatcom County Library System
Lower Columbia College Library  Whitman County Library
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