Alki

You Are Not Imagining It

Inside this Issue:

WASHINGTON LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Reenergizing and Reconnecting

by Danielle H. Miller

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A year and a half into the pandemic, doing the simplest thing at work can feel like a challenge. Keeping track of your schedule, your priorities, or trying to decide what to do next while trying to function in a COVID fog is a reality that many of us may be dealing with. This may make the day-to-day in even the best workplace feel like a struggle. It is okay to admit you are feeling fatigue or that you may not even feel like doing anything. The mental fog and exhaustion are a valid response to the trauma we have all been experiencing for such a long time now. Yes, we can all try to get more sleep, exercise, engage in activities that bring us joy, or even allow ourselves to do nothing at all. But what helps at work?

At the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library, we meet as a staff every day to connect and check in with each other. We all report on what we are doing, how things are going, and I share any notes, letters, or comments from library patrons or family members about what our service means to them. This keeps us linked with each other as a team, and keeps us connected to our patrons, knowing that we are doing work that makes a difference in people's lives. Keeping open communication and being open about the impacts of the pandemic on our work at the library and in our lives has been helpful in strengthening our team. This also keeps us motivated for when we come out the other side stronger and better equipped to be creative and energized serving our patrons and our community.

The opportunity to participate in training has also been a way to battle fatigue and the onset of burnout. One of my initiatives as WLA board president is to increase programming offerings. Exposure to new ideas, learning from colleagues and the community, and the opportunity to network can be revitalizing and bring new focus to your work. I have been so pleased at the work the Divisions and Sections have done in offering programs and collaborating to bring opportunities to our members. WLA's

CLAWS Section, Academic Library Division/ACRL-WA, Public Library Division, and Special Library Division partnered to sponsor the thee-part workshop, The Journey to Becoming an Anti-Racist Organization presented by Lewin Education and Consulting. This workshop aligned with WLA's commitment to centering anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion in our organization and offered the opportunity for challenging work, provided many valuable resources, and created a connection for participants.

The WLA Career Lab was a month full of programs with presenters from all areas of the organization participating and sessions covering a wide range of topics. There was programming representing all the Divisions and opportunities for prospective students and job seekers to ask questions and get feedback either through panel sessions or even "speed dating"—where participants practiced common library interview questions with their peers in one-on-one breakout rooms. One of my favorite sessions was the Why Work in Libraries panel. Since the panelists were so passionate about the work they do, it was reenergizing and affirming about my own work and the breadth and diversity of environments working in libraries and information professions can provide.

We have learned so much from our experiences living through this moment in history, and its impact on libraries. As we move forward to navigate the post-pandemic landscape, what will be normal in our libraries or information environments is up to us. We are at an inflection point, and we can choose what we keep from the past year of learning, what we found to be more accessible and inclusive, and what we choose to advocate for. As librarians and library workers, we can help shape our new normal. Knowing that helps me keep my COVID fog at bay and lifts some of the weight that comes with trying to always be hypervigilant. And, I try to remember this is a time for us to all be gentle with ourselves and our communities as we reconnect and move forward. 📖

Danielle Miller is the director at the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library and the current WLA President.

Consent and Libraries

by Johanna Jacobsen Kiciman

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.

For the past fifteen months or so, concurrent with the pandemic and a wholesale shift to remote research help consultations, I have added the practice of consent to my work. It has felt less like a conscious, intentional choice, but rather an act borne out of desperate compassion with the students and staff and faculty I work with and a small gesture towards the systemic racism built into the very fiber of our LIS world. I would like to use this space, if I may, to explore what I mean more deeply. It is a (small) thought piece, it is not definitive, expansive, or encompassing. I do believe it riffs off of the powerful content in this issue, which grapples with the problems in our profession and the actions we can take to make our work spaces better for ourselves and those who use those spaces.

Students at my academic institution do deeply personal academic work, intertwined with their personal intersectional identities and within the communities they inhabit. Library structures (such as leadership, policies, and information retrieval systems) can be deeply flawed spaces (as this issue points out)—though the individuals in libraries often try to work with compassion, care, and a passion to make them better spaces (as this issue also points out). When I have the honor of supporting someone in their research endeavors, I now ask consent: this database may use some harmful language in the retrieval of the information you want; are you ok proceeding? Most say yes; one or two students

have paused, and we have had meaningful conversations about why these systems are perpetuating harm, and what we are trying to do to mitigate. I believe that even if students agree to use a flawed database, letting them know what is ahead (and what we are doing to make changes) matters; it demonstrates transparency and shows an effort towards accountability.

Consent, too, plays a role in our work here at Alki; as Editor, with a truly spectacular Editorial Committee, we have thought about what our role is in accepting and editing a piece of writing submitted to the journal. In this issue, we share our approach to working with authors (much like In the Library with a Lead Pipe already does), in hopes that other LIS journals might follow suit. It is our belief that our edits are an ask of authors—do you agree with, and consent to these?—and if the answer is no, we respect and accept that (or open up a dialogue as needed). It has felt necessary and empowering to express these philosophies as we have in our article about our practices. Our philosophy is one of care: "When we ... become reviewers of manuscripts, we have an opportunity to define how we interact and share feedback. The author knows their story best and it [is our] role to strengthen it."

We are excited to share with the LIS profession, beyond our state and national borders, Kaetrena Davis Kendrick's important work on low morale in our profession, and our other authors delve into experiences salient to our theme of "You Are Not Imagining It": reducing workload structurally, being reflective in the workplace, and more. It has been an honor to read people's experiences and thoughts and research on these timely and encompassing topics. 📖

Yours, Johanna (she/her/hers)

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.

Alki's Editorial Practices Part II

by The Alki Editor and The Alki Editorial Committee

Over the past year, the Alki Editorial Committee has spent time interrogating our practices as a journal: how we solicit contributions, provide editorial support and feedback, and communicate with our authors. This reflective work was initiated in the wake of several LIS journal scandals, and we saw this as an opportunity to do better.

While we are in no way done with our work—as this report shows—we wanted to be accountable to our readers and keep you informed about where we are at in this process. Please find a transparent overview of our editorial practices and philosophy below. We welcome any and all feedback and suggestions.

About

Alki is a peer-reviewed journal that relies on the Editorial Peer Review Process. Articles that appear in Alki are reviewed by an internal board of two or more editors ("reviewers") who are members of the rotating Editorial Committee.

We commit to being an inclusive journal that continues to actively dismantle racism. We strive to reflect values of intersectionality and cultural humility in our work. We will hold ourselves accountable by regularly reminding ourselves to pay attention to the harmful or exclusionary aspects in our profession we may inherit and endeavor to disrupt and critique these legacies. We recognize our personal backgrounds, identity, and experiences create strengths as well as blind spots in our editorial perspectives, and we aim to be transparent, continuing to learn and engage in thoughtful dialogue.

Our philosophy is one of care: "When we ... become reviewers of manuscripts, we have an opportunity to define how we interact and share feedback. The author knows their story best and it [is our] role to strengthen it." (Robin Zape-tah-hol-ah Minthorn, Twitter)

We will not publish content that actively perpetuates harm.

Involved Parties and their Roles

- Author(s): The writer(s) of articles submitted for publication.
- Reviewers: Reviewers are members of the Editorial Committee; at least two reviewers will edit every article that is submitted for publication.
- Editor: The Alki Editor is responsible for providing a balanced mixture of relevant and thoughtful articles and features on the problems, responsibilities and concerns of all library personnel. The Editor also looks at the work done by each reviewer before returning edited articles to the author(s).

Submission Process

This journal is by and for members of the Washington State library community and is meant to reflect your experiences. As always, we are happy to consider articles that are not related to the theme but are of interest to the WLA community. Please send your article to alkieditor@wla.org and include:

- Your name and contact information
- A brief, third-person bio that includes your affiliation and job title, if applicable
- Any graphics (logos, photos, charts, etc.) in .jpg or .png format
- A working title
- Word count
- The article as a word document or google document. Please follow this template.

The editor of Alki is always happy to discuss ideas and expectations with you as well. For inspiration, check out some of our past issues!

Timeline

Alki is published three times a year. Calls for papers are sent out in early February, in early June, and in early October and the journal's issues are published about ten weeks later. We are happy to consider articles that are submitted at other times of the year as well.

Promise to the Author and Review Process

- We bring to our work a philosophy of care—that is, your article has value to us, and we want to work collaboratively with you to support your work.

  - Our edits consist of both revision suggestions and line edits (copyedits)

  - All proposed edits are intended as dialogue, and not as requests or directives

  - We do not finalize any edits that you have not approved

- What the reviewers do: Following *In the Library With The Lead Pipe*, the reviewers may look at:

  - Copy edits
  - Consistency of voice

- o Soundness of arguments
- o Grammar
- o Suggestions about related reading or ideas that could be considered
- o We will make edits in suggested mode in Google docs with full transparency, allowing the author to approve or cancel any suggested edits.

- What we do not change

- o We will always defer to article authors about identity-based vocabulary—language is not monolithic, and we will make sure that articles do not include language that is not inclusive or that can harm people or groups.Once all edits have been agreed upon, your article will be "locked;" we will not make any additional edits without your consent and approval.

Feedback

As part of our responsibility to our authors and readers, we have created an anonymous feedback form. Its purpose is twofold:

1. to give authors the space and opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings on the editorial process; we will use this feedback to improve our workflow and to address concerns;

2. to encourage dialogue between readers and the Editorial Committee (using the model of Letters to the Editor)

We look forward to hearing from you and responding.

Indexing

Alki is included on the following EBSCO database collections:

- Library & Information Science Source
- Library Literature & Information Science Full Text
- Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts with Full Text
- Poetry & Short Story Reference Center

It is also indexed in EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) so any institutions that use EDS as their single search platform will be able to discover Alki in their search results.

Stay Tuned For

We have more work to do. In future publications, we will discuss:

- Style
- Outreach and distribution of the Call for Papers
- Our work towards antiracist editing, and what this looks like for Alki concretely 📖

Anti-Racism, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
Call for Contributors
by the Alki Editorial Committee and Alki Editor

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 November of that year, 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

For examples, check out our November 2020 issue for work by Dr. Michelle Martin, and our March 2021 issue for an article by dindria barrow.

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

2021 Legislative Session is One for the History Books

by Carolyn Logue

The 2021 legislative session was one for the history books in many ways. The completely virtual legislative session led to more public participation in legislative hearings but less transparency when it came to negotiating big policy issues such as climate change and the budget. While legislators were originally worried about budget deficits, the final budget reality revealed over $3 billion in additional revenue for the state and an impressive $8 billion from the federal government for COVID-19 pandemic relief. This resulted in a budget that increased from $52 billion in 2019-21 to nearly $60 billion for 2021-2023.

Legislators also pursued and passed significant policy reforms in the areas of climate change, police reform, housing, and early learning. The Early Learning bill is funded by a new capital gains tax of 7% on earnings over $250,000.

The capital gains tax is expected to bring in nearly $500 million this biennium and over $1 billion in subsequent two-year budget periods. This bill—SB 5096—has generated controversy regarding whether a capital gains tax is an income tax which would be prohibited by our state's Constitution. Two lawsuits have been filed as of this writing. Democratic legislators who support an income tax are hoping that our current, progressive, state Supreme Court will overturn the previous rulings prohibiting an income tax under our state Constitution in order to free up funding sources that are less regressive than the existing sales tax.

The Legislature also focused on reducing the economic impacts of the pandemic on businesses, individuals and communities. This included passing bills which give communities more flexibility to provide tax incentives and to create improvement areas with public funding. These improvement areas could include library improvements. Connect with your city and/or if you want to see how the library can benefit.

Carolyn Logue is the owner of CA Logue Public Affairs, a legislative and political consulting firm based in Olympia, Washington. Prior to starting her own firm, Carolyn was state director for the state's largest small business association (NFIB) and also worked at the Washington Association of Realtors. Carolyn has been lobbying and advocating for libraries on behalf of Washington Library Media Association and then Washington Library Association since 2009.

WLA Has A Very Successful Session

With the COVID-19 pandemic still raging as the session started, the issues seen during the pandemic took center stage. This included several areas where libraries were involved—because the pandemic showed the importance of public, academic and school libraries in helping people stay connected with work, school, and other important community functions. WLA members stepped up to the plate by calling legislators, testifying, and participating in other important activities that pushed library-supported policies across the finish line.

- *Broadband Funding*: With $400 million from the federal government for utility work plus additional state funding, significant financial investments in broadband infrastructure and connectivity were included in both the Operating and Capital budgets for 2021-2023. While more funding will be needed to meet all identified needs, the Washington State Broadband office will be able to begin implementation of projects that increase bandwidth and coverage across the state. WLA actively worked to support funding for broadband infrastructure in the budgets this year through testimony and participation in coalitions. WLA also supported bills HB 1336/SB 5383, both of which expanded the ability for public utility districts (PUDs) to offer broadband to their customers. Both bills were passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor, despite some conflicts in policy between the two bills. In cases of policy conflict between bills, the Secretary of State determined that HB 1336 policies would supersede because that was passed by the Legislature *after* SB 5383. This bill provided PUDs with much broader retail authority, not limited to unserved or underserved areas, disappointing existing broadband providers.

- *Capital Budget Projects*: In addition to providing money for the Washington State Library in the operating budget, the Legislature also recognized the importance of libraries in the Capital budget. WLA worked hard with Rep. Steve Tharinger, Senator David Frockt, Rep. Mike Steele and Senator Jim Honeyford to fully fund the Library Capital Improvement grant requests to benefit small rural libraries across the state. Several library-encompassing community projects were also funded. This project list is the result of the work done by WLA to help create the grant process at the Department of Commerce. Below is the list:

Capital Library Improvement Grants

City of Colville:	$264,000
Sno-Isle Regional Inter-County Libraries (Langley):	$700,000
Stevens County Rural Library District (Loon Lake:	$649,000
Stevens County Rural Library District (Chewelah):	$90,000
North Olympic Library System (Sequim):	$2,000,000
Spokane County Library District (Spokane Valley):	$2,000,000
Jefferson County Rural Library District (Port Hadlock):	$285,000
Stevens County Rural Library District (Northport):	$50,000
North Central Regional Library (Wenatchee):	$798,000
City of Seattle:	$1,889,000
Pend Oreille County Library District (Metaline Falls):	$40,000
Upper Skagit Library District (Concrete):	$209,000
City of Cashmere:	$14,000
Town of Coulee City:	$760,000
Sno-Isle Regional Inter-County Libraries (Darrington):	$250,000
Fort Vancouver Regional Library: Foundation (Woodland)	$2,000,000
City of Mount Vernon	$2,000,000
Sno-Isle Regional Inter-County: Libraries (Lake Stevens)	$1,100,000
Camas Library Improvements (Camas):	$515,000
Ephrata Public Library (Ephrata):	$91,000
Lake Stevens Early Learning Library (Lake Stevens):	$2,000,000

- *Higher Ed/Low Cost Instructional Materials*: WLA scored a win for academic libraries in helping to expand the use and awareness of open educational resources (OERs) for students in four-year institutions. HB 1119, sponsored by Rep.

Cyndey Jacobsen passed overwhelmingly with WLA support. This bill requires that students be notified of courses with low-cost instructional materials and open educational resources at four-year institutions of higher education. Already in effect in the state's community colleges, this expansion will help students better afford resources for their higher learning.

- *One-to-One Devices and Media Literacy*: WLA was very active in supporting HB 1365, sponsored by Rep. Mia Gregerson, which established a grant program and training to ensure 1:1 device ratios for K-12 students. First, we advocated for a role for teacher-librarians as existing experts in devices, training and use in our school systems. In addition, we worked closely with legislators to preserve the ability for local schools and districts to request grants, rather than granting the funds to an educational service district (which would then have the responsibility of distributing the funds).

WLA was also instrumental in combining HB 1365 with SB 5242 sponsored by perennial library supporter Senator Marko Liias. SB 5242 created grants to support media literacy and digital citizenship involving teacher-librarians. When it looked like the bill was not going to pass, Senator Liias requestedWLA's help in combining with 1365 since the two bills were related. WLA agreed, and with the help of our testimonies, the bill was merged with 1365 to create a comprehensive device and training bill whichfully involves teacher-librarians and recognizes the importance of school library information technology programs in schools.

The Road Ahead

WLA now looks forward to the 2022 Legislative Session. Important in this discussion will be reviving the school library bill to once again require a school library information technology program in every school district. WLA School Library Division members are currently working with the Washington State School Directors Association to determine areas of agreement and to resolve areas of disagreement.

We will need to stay vigilant to ensure public libraries are actively engaged with community broadband needs. As the Early Learning bill gets underway, we will need to ensure that library programs are prioritized.

At this point we need to hear from you. What issues would you like WLA to bring before the legislature? Let us know, and we'll help you determine the right path for meeting your identified needs.

And as always: do not forget to ask your legislators to visit your library so they can have a better idea of what you do and how it benefits their constituents. 📖

Leaving the Low-Morale Experience: A Qualitative Study

By Kaetrena Davis Kendrick

INTRODUCTION

Recent studies have repositioned the idea of job-related low morale from negative feelings about work or common job satisfaction factors like poor compensation or rapid organizational change[1] to the trajectory of an experience caused by repeated, protracted exposure to workplace abuse or neglect.[2] Ongoing validation of low-morale experiences reveal the realities of library workplace dysfunction and library leadership training and development gaps; additionally, emerging research and commentary links experiential markers of low morale to job satisfaction and employee retention. Data from the low morale studies also disclose that victims overwhelmingly choose to end their exposure to workplace abuse and neglect by seeking new jobs. Furthermore, such decisions to leave are made 1) under emotional conflict and 2) after at least one attempt to improve relationships with people who are perpetrating the abuse or neglect or to engage with the systems that ostensibly exist to prevent workplace abuse or neglect.

> " **This study documents the role of emotional labor in librarians' experiences of deciding to leave low-morale experiences, keeping in mind that such labor is occurring during long-term exposure to instances of abuse and neglect at work.** "

The current qualitative study 1) explores the role of workplace abuse/neglect in choosing to leave a library organization and seek new employment, 2) identifies associated systems and frameworks that contextualize this role, 3) highlights decision pathways and professional networks of employment-seeking during a low-morale experience, and 4) reveals the impact of low-morale experiences as victims begin and adjust to new library workplaces after escaping workplace abuse and neglect.

Kaetrena Davis Kendrick is Dean of Ida Jane Dacus Library and Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections at Winthrop University. Her research interests include professionalism, library workplace culture, racial and ethnic diversity in the LIS field, and the role of communities of practice in practical academic librarianship. She is the author or editor of several books. In her spare time, Kendrick enjoys traveling, cooking, listening to Korean popular music, and reading books about the language, history, and culture of the Korean peninsula.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace Dysfunction

Broadly, workplace dysfunction stems from "[employee behaviors] that cause harm to others and to their organizations."[3] These negative behaviors—including incivility, toxicity, bullying, and mobbing—have all been increasingly documented in LIS literature[4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10] and have spawned works discussing the causes of, and seeking solutions to such demoralizing and harmful acts.[11, 12] Acadia's work on "trap-gaps," which he defines as a phenomenon that occurs "when libraries become stuck in their legacy habits that, in turn, lead to discontinuities in knowledge, competency, and strategy," highlights the role of engrained ideology and culture in dysfunctional libraries.[13] He further notes that leaders are in a unique position to identify and eradicate such gaps through synthesizing theories and applications of knowledge management and other key organizational development parameters, supporting ongoing learning, and applying reimagined competencies, planning, and lived experiences of practice.

Toxic Leaders

Administrators and managers are often cited in discussions about causes of low morale, particularly when it comes to poor communication or absentee leaders.[14, 15] Additionally, the impact of specific negative leadership styles has been explored across several industries, including LIS. According to Lipman-Blumen, toxic leaders "engage in numerous destructive behaviors and … exhibit certain *dysfunctional personal characteristics*." She further asserts that to be considered toxic, such behaviors and characteristics should cause sustained damage to people and organizations.[16] Bennett, Freire and Campion's presentation noted that in addition to "permanent personality reasons," administrators, managers, and supervisors were frequently cited by survey participants as causes

of toxicity in libraries. They also linked toxicity to job satisfaction, sharing that many employees in toxic library workplaces consider leaving the LIS field as a result of their workplace distress.[17] Ortega targets toxic leadership in academic libraries, deftly drawing links between common library organizational structures, formal leaders' negative workplace behaviors, and the long-term impacts on library organizations—especially library employees. The qualitative data from her dissertation reveal negative effects of toxic leadership on library employees' mental and physical health, as well as significantly reduced job and career satisfaction. A respondent asserted: "[f]or me personally, it increases my level of anxiety—to the extent of occasional panic attacks when anticipating interaction with the 'leaders.' Simply put, it makes me look elsewhere for alternative job opportunities."[18]

Librarian Turnover

The reasons why librarians leave organizations has been explored consistently, often linking concerns of faculty status, employment expectations, or infrastructure.[19, 20, 21] Increasingly, turnover has been connected to poor leadership, lowered career mobility, workplace toxicity, and negative workplace behaviors. While there is a dearth of recent literature on public librarian turnover, Luzius' 2009 study on academic librarians who leave the field noted that participants were displeased by administrators, and a decade later, the role of leadership remains a top concern related to turnover.[22] A 2019 exploration of contributing factors to academic librarian turnover emphasized the influence of formal leaders on the presence of poor morale in library workplaces.[23] A follow-up study revealed that the library morale, library administration, and library culture were high factors in academic librarian turnover. Job duties (including job creep), compensation concerns, and work-life balance were also cited as high indicators factoring in librarians' decisions to leave.[24]

Emotional Labor

Hochschild's powerful research centers emotional labor, which she situates in workplace spheres and defines as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display."[25] These facial and physical displays supplant the employee's true feelings, which are replaced by industry expectations or workplace environment norms. In librarianship—a service-oriented industry—library employees' interactions are heavily influenced by verbal, non-verbal, and behavioral cues that seek to make others comfortable. Combined with the trap-gaps of rigid library cultures, librarians may find it difficult to release themselves from the expectations of emotional labor.

Ettarh's concept of vocational awe handily emphasizes how traditional library values, including the lionization of service—along with the perceptions that librarians hold about themselves and the LIS field—create a breeding ground for workplace abuse and neglect.[26] Vocational awe works in tandem with resilience narratives, wherein library employees are made to feel responsible for organizational or system failures, and are punished or emotionally abused when their individual efforts—often couched in colloquial terms (e.g., "grit," "resilient") or phrases (e.g., "do more with less," "step up")—do not work.[27] Freedman's work on collegiality showed that librarians often conflate collegiality with congeniality, privileging co-workers who act friendly over workplace knowledge, skills, and abilities.[28] Previous studies of low morale in public and academic librarians also revealed these groups experience emotional conflict during their trajectory—they want to leave their experience, but feel guilty for leaving their users, or for considering leaving a career field they love. This study documents the role of emotional labor in librarians' experiences of deciding to leave low-morale experiences, keeping in mind that such labor is occurring during long-term exposure to instances of abuse and neglect at work.

METHOD

Phenomenological research is qualitative, revealing a person's or group's experience of an event or state of being and attempting to find meaning in such experiences or states. Researchers using this methodology gather, analyze, and organize comprehensive data from in-depth interviews or other written, oral, auditory, or visual data points. The analyzed data encapsulate the common elements of a shared experience to a "description of the universal essence."[29] This methodology is aided by *epoché* and bracketing exercises that help researchers more clearly ascertain the event or experience they are examining.[30] Bednall (2006) succinctly links these processes: "*Epoché*, accordingly, allows for empathy and connection, not elimination, replacement, or substitution of perceived researcher bias. Bracketing advances that process by facilitating a recognition of the essence of meaning of the phenomenon under scrutiny."[31] As a practicing academic librarian who was in job transition during various stages of this study, the researcher used various time management and mental health measures to reduce prejudgment and presupposition regarding participant responses as much as possible. Such measures and associated activities are crucial during information gathering, reviewing, and data analysis.

Sample

Study invitations were distributed to the COLLIB –L, LITA-L, LIBIDAHO-L, and NMRT-L, LISTSERVs.[32] Additionally, the invitation was shared on various social media platforms. People who responded to the invitation were sent informed consent documents; after informed consents were reviewed, participants were invited to participate in an interview. A purposive sample of credentialed librarians (N=24) were interviewed. These participants a) faced low morale as defined by Kendrick (repetitive, long-term exposure to workplace abuse and neglect) [33] and b) resolved or ended a low-

morale experience while working at a North American library.

Just over a third of participants (67%) indicated they are White; 21% are African American, and Asian American/Pacific Islander, Latino/a, and Native American/Alaska Native participants tied at 4%. 83% of the participant group indicated they are female; 26—35-year-old and 26—45-year-old participant groups tied at 37%. Mid-career librarians (6—10 years of experience) represented more than a third of the participant group (37%). 40% live in

the Northeast Region; a quarter live in the Midwest, 19% live in the South, and 16% live in the West Region of the United States. 83% of participants indicated they left low-morale experiences that occurred in an academic library. Quantitatively, a third of participants shared that they most frequently faced system abuse; moreover, system abuse was the top kind of abuse that solidified their decision to resolve or end their low-morale experience (41%). See Figures 1, 2, and 3 for participant demographic details; see Table 1 for a summary of study participants.

Figure 1: Racial demographics of study participants

Figure 3: Career length of study participants

Figure 2: Age demographics of study participants
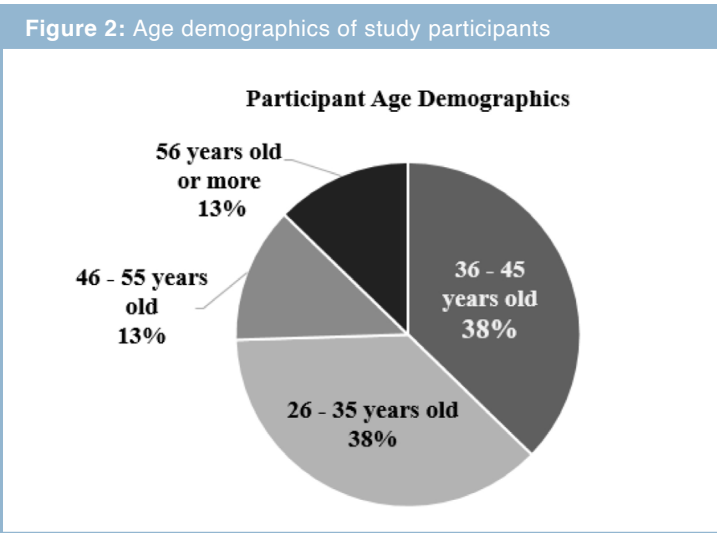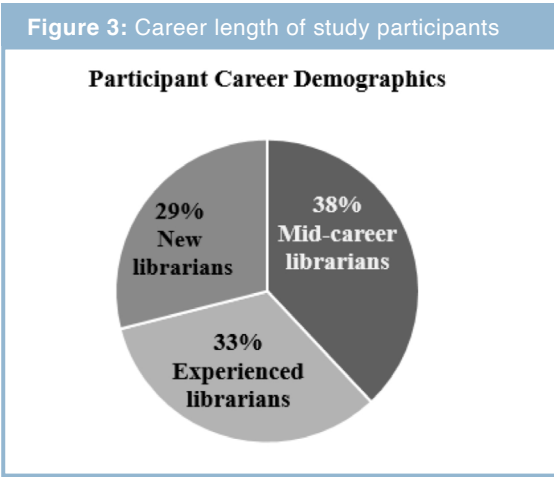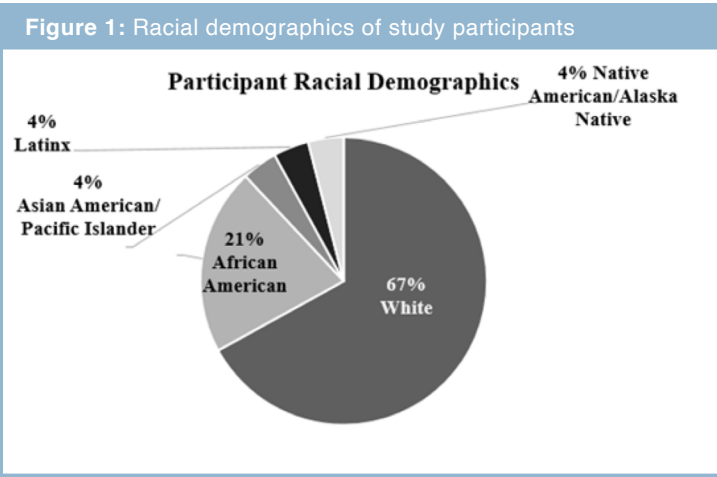
Table 1: Participant Summary

Gender	Area of Work
Female	Subject specialist
Female	Instruction
Female	Technology
Male	Reference and Instruction
Nonbinary	Outreach
Female	Administration
Female	Reference
Female	Administration
Male	Administration
Female	Reference and Instruction
Female	Subject specialist
Female	Subject specialist
Female	Subject specialist
Female	Technical services
Female	Instruction
Female	Digital Initiatives
Female	Acquisitions librarian
Female	Subject specialist
Female	Subject specialist
Female	Special collections
Female	Subject specialist
Female	Public services
Female	Administration
Male	Reference and Instruction

Procedure

After informed consent was confirmed, the researcher conducted 24 interviews with respondents. Before their interviews, respondents were also asked to complete a short survey focusing on career and demographic information. Participants were then asked questions during a semi-structured interview session (see Appendix for the interview schedule). Semi-structured interview questions are very broad and allow the researcher to ask specific questions while offering the flexibility to follow up with the participant on various points of interest or to allow the participant to offer more information or clarification. Interviews were recorded for verbatim transcription and then transcribed for analysis; clarification or verification was negotiated between the researcher and participants during analysis.

Data Analysis

Colaizzi's descriptive method of analysis (1978) was used to analyze the transcribed interviews: transcripts were reviewed several times to gather broad notes and significant statements about the decision-making trajectory for resolving or ending a low-morale experience that happened in a library.[34] Significant statements were then used to create formulated meanings and build associated clusters. As needed, participants were asked for more information in order to validate the data. This team-based protocol validated the established low-morale experience trajectory, clarified a decision-making pathway that led to library employees' resolution or ending of an active low-morale experience, and highlighted the impacts of a low-morale experience on job hunting and the transition to a new job in a new library organization.

RESULTS

Data analysis 1) validated the development, trajectory, and impacts of low morale, including abuse types and impact factors, and 2) disclosed the impact factors librarians confront when they decide to leave an abusive or neglectful library workplace. First, data showing the validated path of low-morale will be shared, followed by results that center the decision to leave a low-morale experience.

Low-Morale Experience Validation

Participant data validated the path and development of low-morale experiences. Low-morale experiences are started by trigger events that reveal a co-worker or organization as abusive or negligent;

moreover, trigger events are constant even if different abusers appear during the experience. During low-morale experiences, victims are exposed to different sorts of abuse; as a result, victims are impacted physiologically. Additionally, they develop cognitive behaviors as they respond to the abuse, and cognitive responses are a mark of a low-morale experience. These behaviors include coping strategies, mitigation methods, and attempts to recover. See Table 2 to review the themes of the low-morale experience.

Table 2: Themes of the Low-Morale Experience

Stages of Low Morale

Stage 1: Unexpected Trigger Event

Stage 2: Trigger Event Impact

Stage 3: Emotional and Physical Responses to Trigger Events

Stage 4: Protracted Exposure to Workplace Abuse/Neglect

Stage 5: Emotional, Physical, and Cognitive Responses to Protracted Workplace Abuse/Neglect

Stage 6: Negative Effects on LIS Practice and Career Outlook

Stage 7: Onset of Coping Strategies

Stage 8: Engagement in Mitigation or Resolution Efforts

Stage 9: Long-Term Effects of Low-Morale Experiences

Stage 10: Low Morale Recovery

Stage 11: Lessons of Low-Morale Experiences

Stage 12: Low-Morale Experience Impact Factors

Abuse

Participants disclosed the abuse type that catalyzed their decisions to leave a library organization, including emotional abuse, verbal/written abuse, system abuse, and negligence. In this study, physical abuse was also reported by a female respondent, who noted that her male supervisor—an administrator—would "throw pens at people—he would yell and scream and, like, bang his, his fists on the desk."

Trigger Events

Trigger events are unexpected instances of abuse or neglect that identify co-workers or organizational cultures as perpetrators. They have immediate short-term emotional and physiological effects, including feelings of betrayal and fight-or-flight responses. A female administrator recounted an experience of a trigger event that occurred less than a month into their new leadership position:

I was only there three weeks and I had been asked by my boss' boss to do something, I did it. ... And then my boss' boss called me the next day to ask me if I'd actually done it. So, [my boss] had ... been gone about four days. ...We were at another event and we were walking back from it and she began to attack me for not going through her admin to take care of it. And I said, well, 'I was asked by your boss to do this. I mean, what was I supposed to do?' But, and from there on our relationship deteriorated.

Protracted Exposure to Abuse and Neglect

Low-morale experiences occur as victims are exposed to subsequent acts of abuse or neglect during an extended time period. A female administrator recalled constantly fielding unfounded complaints and intense surveillance from direct reports, exacerbated by having no support from their supervisor:

There was like two or three investigations about [perceived policy violations]. Human resources cleared me of every bit of this stuff every time. But it was like, 'Okay, let's see what else we can get,' you know, 'Let's see what else we can do.' ... This was very much a position where it was like you were clocking in and out. And somebody was watching your every move. I walk out of my office, turn the light off to go to the restroom or something, and then there's a report about me being gone for the day and I didn't tell anybody. You know, those types of things. So, just that being constantly watched and people trying to report you in, and your higher ups can find nothing wrong with anything you're doing, but then there's nothing that they want to do to try to stop it either.

Responses to Abuse

Respondents revealed emotional, physiological, and cognitive responses to the abuse and neglect they experienced.

Affective. Respondents reported emotional reactions to abuse and neglect. Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, anxiety, and depression were linked to their physiological and cognitive responses.

Physiological. Weight loss, negative medical diagnoses, exacerbated symptoms of established diagnosed conditions, and intensified states of stress and anxiety were reported by respondents. An

> **" Data showed that low-morale experiences have a negative impact on how abused and neglected library employees approach their new duties and interact with their new coworkers; and these impacts are long-term and highlight the role of emotional labor even in healthy workplaces."**

outreach librarian recounted the deterioration of their physical health:

During that time, my [physical health diagnosis] started to get worse because of the stress to the point where [it] was so bad I could barely walk, nonetheless stand most days. The fatigue became so extreme. I would go to work, come home and immediately crawl into bed—still wearing my work clothes, without eating dinner or doing anything—and then get up and go to work the next day and repeat this over and over again. I was really, really sick.

A female subject specialist librarian remembered, "I was taking the abuse pretty harshly. Like, I gained a lot of weight. I couldn't sleep through the night. I would cry a lot."

Cognitive. The low-morale experience is marked by the development of cognitive responses, including reduced professional confidence, self-isolation, and depression. A female administrator recounted, "I become a shell of myself. I had no interest in going to church, which had always been something I enjoyed. I had no interest in music, which I enjoy. There was nothing that was interesting to me. I didn't exercise anymore, which I enjoy. I didn't do anything." One respondent considered suicide after a particularly harsh meeting with their supervisor, library administrator, and a human resources representative: "I cried the entire time, then went to the bathroom to sob—thinking about killing myself. And that was my breaking point. This job, like completely decimated my confidence and self-worth to the point where I wanted to die."

Impacts on Practice and Career Outlook

Respondents discussed that abuse and neglect influenced how they approached their daily work and changed how they viewed the trajectory of their LIS career.

Work engagement. Long-term exposure to abuse and neglect had a negative effect on respondents' work efforts. A female subject specialist asserted, "I think that the low morale definitely impacted my work ethic. I decided, like, I care less about jumping through hoops." A female technologist remembered how her exposure to emotional abuse directly caused disengagement, even at the point of decision-making endeavors:

I also had several very uncomfortable interactions with [my library administrator], where he would stare at me during meetings, and try to get me upset about things or decisions that he would make. It got to the point where I just didn't even speak at meetings anymore. Because, you know, nothing I was saying mattered anyway. And so even if I did feel like I disagreed with something, I just would not say anything. I would just go with the flow and not care.

Career outlook. Respondents shared that their exposure to abuse and neglect caused them to reconsider the viability of LIS as a career, including their compatibility with the profession. Respondents experienced emotional conflict, recognizing the importance of their LIS work and feeling guilty for wanting to leave the library workplace or the LIS field, or wanting to leave but trying to ride out the abuse in hopes that the dysfunction would improve. A male administrator noted:

I really sort of thought about, you know, 'is this really what I should be doing?' or maybe I should just get a job at Home Depot. You know, maybe I'm not cut out for this ... there was always that little nagging wonder in the back of my mind saying, 'Hmm, maybe it is me.'

A female public services librarian who was approached to apply for a new job that offered her a chance to leave an abusive workplace recalled:

I saw the job ad but thought to myself, 'I'm going to learn and grow through this role. I don't want to give up on it yet.' And then I went to a conference where [my future colleagues spent the whole time] convincing me [to apply]. Once I got back to my institution, I still was hesitant, because I just, I didn't want to give up too easily.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are behaviors a low-morale victim does in response to their long-term exposure to workplace abuse or neglect. These behaviors may be conscious or unconscious and positive or negative, and they neither impact the abuser(s) nor affect the trajectory of the low-morale experience. An administrator recounted, "So, I'm pounding Dr. Pepper ... I mean, I'm eating, I'm not exercising, I'm waking up in the middle of the night, constantly worrying ..." A male administrator shared:

[W]hen I was really sort of wondering how to ever be able to leave, I went through an employee assistance program and actually found a really good therapist, someone who was familiar with both higher education and employment issues. And I would say she was really good. The only reason why I survived and sort of was able to process this stuff and really maintain self-esteem, is because she was a great person to have

as a sounding board.

Mitigation Methods or Resolution

Mitigation methods are conscious, deliberate behaviors a low-morale victim does in response to their long-term exposure to workplace abuse or neglect. In contrast to coping strategies, these behaviors seek to end or resolve a low-morale experience and directly impact the abuser(s) and/or the organization. Seeking help from human resources or formal leaders and seeking new employment—which this study focuses on—were the most discussed mitigation methods shared by study respondents. Another common response was directly reporting abusive or neglectful behavior to supervisors or administrators. A female subject specialist who suffered job bait-and-switch tactics, micromanaging, and verbal abuse from a library director asserted:

I was pretty open with my direct supervisor, even though there were issues of similar gaslighting and things. She had been working with the director for a very long time and had kind of adapted to her tactics. But I believe in open communication. So I had been pretty open with her about issues of not being allowed to do my job.

A female subject specialist who witnessed discrimination and system abuse during a committee assignment shared:

I spoke up about this 'cause I was on the committee. I emailed the dean. I said, 'The committee wants to go with this person. I do not agree. I don't think this person is right for the job. This person is not qualified. The other person would do an excellent job in this position because they have that experience in that background.'

Long-Term Effects

The effects of low morale continue well past the end of an active experience. Respondent data produced common themes of reduced professional confidence and reduced capacity to make decisions. A female instruction librarian summarized how persistent abuse stymied her feelings of professional efficacy at her new job:

[I]n my new workplace, the predominant impact that I saw was, it took me a long time, (laughs) to believe—to find the ability to just make decisions without consulting with somebody, I think. Because that was so ingrained in us ... I even just started emailing the director before I did anything, just to confirm, get in writing from her, that she approved the steps. ... I can actually remember it was about nine months before I just felt like, "You know what? I don't need to ask anybody about this (laughs) because this is what's right, this is the kind of choice, the kind of decisions they are paying me to make, and I'm just going to do it." So, it just took me a long

time to feel comfortable about independent decisions.

Recovery

When victims of low morale leave abusive organizations, or if their abuser is removed from the workplace, they make attempts to recover; however, due to the physical and mental health impacts wielded by long-term abuse or neglect, recovery is slow and not guaranteed. A male reference and instruction librarian noted, "even now it's still—I can get into the sort of little sort of obsessing about it, you know—for a couple or three minutes before I jerk myself back out into the present and safe, you know, just forget that place."

Recovery also offers immediate positive results to victims, including a recalibration of physical and mental well-being, and a sense of reinvigoration in practice. A female technologist asserted, "I'm back into the researching service, and it feels so great to be doing this again. I was not able to do any of that. So, you have so much more of an appreciation for the new position, the new job. And you know, it almost reinvigorates your passion for what you're doing."

Lessons Learned

Low-morale victims note that they learned valuable lessons as a result of their experiences, including improvements on their own behavior, changing their leadership styles, and a heightened sense of empathy. A female subject specialist who experienced isolation at a previous abusive institution noted:

Oh, it made me so much more outgoing to meet my librarian colleagues. ... My [new] supervisor ... gave me a list of people to meet, but they were all in my department and I didn't think those would be the people I would end up working and collaborating with. So, I made my own list and went out and like met a bunch of people. And I think that really contributed to my reputation for being warm and friendly, and for being enthusiastic. ... So, I made that a priority to get to know people in the library system.

A public services librarian summarized:

I think, you know, [I learned] some of the things I mentioned previously. Like trying to be really, really good to the people I manage. I have a [large team of direct reports]. And I just try to make sure they know that I love them. You know, not even like or care, but that I love them. ... [T]hat, you know, I don't

only care about them as employees, but as whole people ....

A male reference and instruction librarian said about his new position, "It doesn't look like the co-workers here have low morale and I want to keep it that way. I don't want us to go down any harmful road, so when I see something that's causing concern, I'm very vocal about it here. Really as a preventative measure."

Impact Factors

Impact factors are events or issues that affect every stage of low-morale experiences, and they include *enabling systems*—individual behaviors or organizational cultures, structures, policies, or ethoses that inadvertently enforce or underpin low-morale experiences. See Table 3 for a list of general impact factors and enabling systems. Respondents validated impact factors and enabling systems of the general low-morale experience.

Table 3: Impact Factors of Low-Morale Experiences.

Impact Factors of Low Morale.

Insidious Experience Development

Contagion

Enabling Systems

    Leadership

    Human Resources Limitations

    Perceptions of LIS

    Faculty Status/Tenure & Promotion

    Staffing & Employment

    Uncertainty & Mistrust

Insidious Experience Development. Low-morale experiences develop slowly; as a result, victims may not immediately recognize the presence and/or intensity of abuse or neglect. This slow development also impairs victims' ability to defend themselves, to effectively make abusers accountable for their behaviors, and to seek, identify, and engage organizational policies or procedures that may address workplace dysfunction or violence. Feelings of shame and regret are often contextualized within this impact factor. A female technical services librarian lamented, "I felt that maybe I just should have known the signs earlier that ... initially I felt that it wasn't a good situation for me. I should have tried to search for a job sooner rather than later, so there were a lot of factors going into it."

Contagion. Contagion happens when low-morale victims realize they are part of a larger group of abused or neglected employees or when abused or neglected employees begin to mistreat others. A female instruction librarian recounted:

[T]he library director was just verbally abusive to pretty much all staff members at one time or another. Targeting specific staff members more ... and I was not one of the ones that was a regular target of her behavior. But just that the environment that it created was just unpleasant and stressful. ... I actually hadn't been really looking to leave, but I had an opportunity to leave, and kind of weighed my options, and decided to go. ... I probably wouldn't have even considered it prior to being in one specific meeting, which I think I was meant to be in this conversation as like a witness to what was going on, and people

were yelling, and swearing, and I was just like, 'Oh my gosh. I just, this is not a professional way to function. So, at that point [I decided to leave].'

Enabling systems. All enabling systems of the general low-morale experience were validated by respondents.

Leadership. Authoritarian, toxic, and *laissez-faire* leadership styles are most likely to create or foster workplace abuse and neglect. A male respondent specifically noted his formal leader's authoritative behavior as the deciding factor in leaving:

She wanted to continue to control me, so forcing me to, you know, apply again [for tenure] next year. And that was sort of the final straw there. It was really sort of a crazy-making place in terms of the impact of this director upon sort of the morale upon how the library functioned.

A female technologist shows how a *laissez-faire* leader enables workplace abuse via negligence:

[T]his first situation I tried to nip it in the bud by going to the associate provost and saying, you know, 'This is what's happening to me. I feel like it is not collegial and I find this to be problematic.' And rather than nip it in the bud, he actually said to me, 'I don't like to get involved in these kinds of matters. Just deal with the situation yourself.'

Human Resources Limitations. Employees dealing with workplace abuse or neglect may decide to seek relief via their organization's human resources office; however, they often find their efforts nullified by disinterested human resources representatives or convoluted policies. Additionally, victims were treated punitively rather than as employees needing support. A female respondent who faced emotional and verbal abuse from a male administrator shared:

I had to go through HR. And the process was just: they let it sit, they let it sit, they let it sit. And then a new HR director came in, and then the decision was, was, 'Oh, well, you guys both kind of were ornery to each other, and that's the finding.' And they did actually say to him that he had to go to an anger management class, but nothing really was done about it. The person who got punished was me. I had to move into a whole other department.

Library/Librarian Perceptions. Expectations and perceptions of the

library or library employees influenced the low-morale experience of respondents in implicit and explicit ways. A male respondent noted the status of the library and library workers on his campus:

I think that [the library] was more an idea of, 'Well, we need the library for accreditation so it's going to be there' ... And [administrators] were making all of these decisions beyond the library about library space. We had other people's offices in the library when we didn't really have the space to give up. They decided to put or make a space in the library without consulting with the library. They just said, 'Okay, we're going to put it in there because that's where we're going to take the space from." Though we had faculty rank and we had people in [the] faculty senate, we were not respected, I don't believe, or valued as an actual resource on campus beyond just some basic answering questions and doing some instruction.

> **" I think it's important that other people who are in a low morale situation know that if they can get out, like maybe they should take that risk if they're able to. "**

Faculty Status/Tenure & Promotion. Faculty status, including the protections or parameters of tenure and promotion, were cited in respondents' experiences of low morale. An outreach librarian recounted how their faculty status was dismissed during illness: "I missed a lot of work and because of my faculty status, my time off isn't supposed to be tracked or counted. But my supervisor was counting and tracking it and wrote me up multiple times for literally just being sick."

Staffing & Employment. Respondents cited understaffing due to labor or fiduciary attrition, overreliance on part-time employees, or high turnover. These workforce stresses degraded availability or quality of library services, which were expected to continue at the same level or standard even as administrative or financial support decreased. A female subject specialist summarized:

I wasn't provided with the resources needed to adequately staff and run the library ... I was still the only full-time employee in the library. Additional part-time employees were added and taken away several times over the course of my employment based on funding levels. And anytime someone would leave, or a position would be taken away. It became very challenging to find ways to staff the library adequately, given that we needed to serve [several thousand] students ....

Uncertainty & Mistrust. The unexpected nature of trigger events—combined with the protracted and erratic nature of subsequent episodes of abuse and neglect—creates deep feelings of emotional destabilization and breeds a profound lack of trust in the organization and co-workers. A new reference librarian recounted

the confusion engendered by learning about a colleague's sudden firing and facing acts of system abuse and negligence:

> It was very upsetting 'cause I had no idea what was going on, I'm a baby, and all of a sudden this person who was hired with me, at the same time as me, and for seemingly no reason—her contract's not being renewed. And I'm in like this situation where if that happened to me, I would be financially very vulnerable. So I'm getting a new boss; we're being reorganized; this person is being let go the same day as [a library social gathering] ... meetings are canceled, you're being ignored, all of a sudden there's a gigantic project that needs to be done, but then you do it and you never hear anything about it, and it dies in a file somewhere.

Deciding to Leave: Impact Factors

Data contextualizing respondents' decision to leave low-morale experiences follow. Analysis revealed more impact factors—including enabling systems—that accompany decisions to leave abusive or neglectful workplaces. See Table 4 to review additional impact factors.

Anger

As noted earlier, a common emotional response to instances of abuse or neglect is anger. Data showed that this emotion also elicited participants' certainty on deciding to leave an organization. Anger spurred clarification on career skills development and improving professional confidence. A female administrator explained:

> Throughout the process of the negative experience that I had there, I decided to take the negativity and use it to my benefit. So instead of just saying, "Oh, I'm stuck here in this awful place," I'm going to use the benefits that I have as an employee to get coursework paid for to get my doctorate. I'm going to teach. ... I started working at, at the most basic level teaching library skills and then moved up to teaching doctoral students. And so, what I did to persevere and to move out of the situation was to further my education and to do research and publish.

A female reference librarian said, "... in a way I'm grateful to [my abuser], because I had been trying to work up the courage, the self-esteem, to try to apply for a job, and I was just so sad and like felt like I didn't deserve anything better. But I'm glad he made me so angry, 'cause I left (laughs)."

Table 4: Impact Factors of Leaving a Low-Morale Experience

Impact Factors

Anger

Alternative Decision Triggers

    Career Expectations

    Career Mobility

    Equity, diversity, and inclusion

Organizational and LIS culture

Expectations of Silence

Leaving Limitations

Enabling Systems

    Job Hunting

    Power and Privilege

Alternative Decision Triggers

While consistent exposure to abuse or neglect was central to respondents' decision to leave a workplace, data also revealed additional triggers that informed these decisions.

Career expectations. Respondents shared that their unmet expectations of working in the LIS field further propelled their desire to leave abusive or neglectful organizations. A female subject specialist recounted:

> I wanted to be a librarian in the kind of ideal sense that I think that we hold for librarianship so that I would be doing reference instruction. I would be doing collection development. I would be building liaison relationships with faculty and students. And I really didn't get to do any of that in my position.

A female instruction librarian explained:

> I love the work that I did, and I wanted to be able to do it in an environment that was also healthy. I had expectations of professional conduct that I just didn't feel were being met in that environment. Collegiality ... just behavior expectations, in terms of how people interacted with one another, and how you treat your colleagues, even in moments of disagreements. That just wasn't happening.

Career mobility. Worries about career mobility also triggered respondents' decisions to leave. Observations of flat organizations, being in jobs with no opportunities for development, or "feeling stuck" were facets of this trigger. A female subject specialist remembered, "They just wanted me to work and do my job and that's it. You know, they weren't going to do any growth management development. They weren't going to listen, they weren't going to allow me to do anything really. (laughs). So, why stay, you know?" Preparations for career mobility prompted respondents to endure abusive or neglectful organizations. A female technologist explained, "I was so close to tenure. I also was very close to completing [another degree]. I was putting up with it (laughs) so I could continue to earn my free tuition, and kind of just hanging ... people kept saying to me, "Hang on, just earn [the degree] and get out.""

Equity, diversity, and inclusion. Recognition that abusive organizations did not uphold the American Library Association's stated value of equity, diversity, and inclusion (and related concerns) was an additional factor that catalyzed respondents'

decision to leave. A female acquisitions librarian remembered:

> When I reported [a sexist and racist] search committee event] and neither my boss nor the library dean took it seriously. ... I mean the search committee and the racism thing, those were the two main issues that finally made me like, 'Okay. I can't stay here anymore 'cause it's really toxic and it's a really unproductive work environment.' And it was just really killing me mentally. And those were probably the biggest things that made me finally say, 'Okay. You have to leave.' So instead of grieving and going through all the process, I just decided, 'I'm just going to leave for another job because even if I grieve, I don't want to stay here.'

Organizational and LIS culture. Respondents cited negative markers of organizational or LIS culture as deciding factors of leaving. Relational aggression, uncollegial behavior, and an emerging LIS cultural phenomenon of *library nice* were all cited as accompanying reasons for leaving.

Relational aggression. Crick and Grotpeter define *relational aggression* as "harming others through purposeful manipulation and damage of their peer relationships."[35] Colloquially, relational aggression is known as "mean girls," and respondents noted the behavior as a hallmark of low-morale experiences in library workplaces. A female subject specialist shared:

> There was a big culture of mean girls there .... The reason that I fell out of their good graces was because I started becoming friendly with the people in financial aid. And at one point, I was going out to lunch with the mean girls. They started trash-talking somebody in, [another department]. And I spoke up for that person ... And from that point on, I was no longer in their good graces, and that's when they really started to ramp up the abuse.

LIS culture. Behavioral expectations unique to the LIS field were cited by respondents. *Library nice*, a phenomenon originally discussed and confirmed in spheres of social media commentary,[36] was cited by several respondents, and succinctly defined by one: "a heavily gendered and racialized form of

> 66 **You NEVER tell the truth to your library about why you're leaving if it's negative. 'Personal reasons' is safe; 'salary' is safe. [...] Even if the reason you're leaving is that the place basically destroyed you and your morale. They don't want to hear that and they'll punish you if you say it, even if you're right and even if you try to be as constructive as possible about it.** 99

workplace oppression in which some people—white women and people of color—must always conform to rigid expectations of 'niceness,' and whether a librarian is 'nice' is more important than their knowledge, skill, or effectiveness." She shared the following example:

> ... throughout my time in those libraries, my entire reporting chain consisted of white men—I'm a white woman. Different people from time to time, but always all white men. And in that library environment, if you were a woman you had to be Library Nice. Always smiling, never visibly or audibly frustrated, never asking for anything, never getting above yourself (which in practice meant 'any public achievement that wasn't committee service, committee service is okay but DON'T YOU DARE PUBLISH'), always the doormat for any man working in the libraries.

Vocational awe and resilience narratives were often contextualized around the enabling system of employment and staffing. A female subject specialist who ended up running a library by herself recounted:

> You'd call out sick and then the first question is, 'What's going to happen to the library?' Like, 'Well, it's going to have to be closed.' There are times that's like: the library has to be closed because you guys don't have adequate staffing, and you give me vacation time every year and I'm going to use it. And now I have a child, so I'm using sick time to take care of either I'm sick or she was sick. And so it was always that sense of like, 'Well, what's going to happen to the library?' Not like, 'get better, come in when you're fine again or when she's fine.' It's like, 'what's going to happen at [the] library?' At that point I was kinda like, 'I don't care' ... I felt like it was just kind of like that ... I don't want to say emotional abuse, but that like, '[Participant], you should be able to answer this question or you know, you should be available at all, all times.'

Expectations of Silence

Respondents revealed that when they shared their experiences of workplace abuse or neglect with their co-workers, colleagues actively told them to keep quiet. Such admonishments augmented

the negative emotional impacts of their experience. A female technologist mentioned, "I think what really was the worst part about it is when your own colleagues, who know you and know what you're going through, basically are just kind of like, 'You should just ignore what's happening to you, and deal with it.'" Expectations of silence where workplace abuse and neglect are concerned are also implicit. A female digital initiatives librarian noted:

> You NEVER tell the truth to your library about why you're leaving if it's negative. 'Personal reasons' is safe; 'salary' is safe. It won't endanger the recommendations you need for your next job, it won't make anybody talk shit about you once you're gone. So that's what you say. Always. Even if the reason you're leaving is that the place basically destroyed you and your morale. They don't want to hear that and they'll punish you if you say it, even if you're right and even if you try to be as constructive as possible about it.

Leaving Limitations

Respondents who had to delay their exit or who determined they could not leave their dysfunctional organizations commonly cited family obligations, geographical boundaries, financial concerns, or inability to garner a livable salary for the new position (e.g., cost-of-living differentials). A female special collections librarian said:

> I'm not in a position where I can just pack up and move, which it seems to be the case with a lot of librarians—they realize that they maybe have to move out of state to another institution to get away from their sort of negative experience. But I can't do that. I have [older parents], so I am not in a position to do that. I have student debt.

A female subject specialist librarian noted:

> There were actually three or four, maybe even five (laughs) institutions that I turned down after I had applied and interviewed, kind of eliminated because I didn't think I could survive there, well, just off of cost of living and moving, and things like that, even though they seemed like they might be really good places possibly.

Enabling systems

Job hunting. Looking for new work was both empowering and exhausting for respondents. Data showed two facets of this enabling system: improved understanding of career worthiness, and the emotional toll of deflection labor. Deflection labor includes any preemptive action done—or emotional outcome related to— reducing negative impacts of job hunting while dealing with a low-morale experience, including extreme curation of references,

increased secrecy of job-seeking, feelings of paranoia, shame, or worries about how to present roles or desire for new employment to desired organizations of employment.

Career worthiness. Respondents shared how job hunting clarified their desire to avoid abusive or neglectful organizations, which garnered them better positions in terms of healthy workplace cultures, improved skill set matches, or compensation. A female instruction librarian explained:

> As I was looking for or applying for jobs, one thing that I said to myself was that I was not going to make a change that was a bad career move, just to get out. I didn't want to—I felt like we were all (laughs) suffering enough as it was. I didn't need to do more damage [to myself] by leaving. I felt like that would (laughs)—it sounds competitive, like, '[My abuser] would have won then!' (laughs) had I left for something that was a bad career move.

A female instruction librarian shared:

> When I left that job, I looked for a manager position because obviously I could do it. I was doing it for almost two and a half years. So, I said, 'Well, I'm not going to be a manager here and not be paid.' I think my salary was like 20, 28K a year there. And I was like, 'This is ridiculous.' I can get paid so much more somewhere else because I have the experience of doing all that stuff there.

Deflection labor. For respondents, job seeking while trying to escape an abusive workplace instigated worries about potential colleagues talking with former abusers and rumination about how they would frame why they were seeking new employment, as well as spurred the vetting of potential workplaces for dysfunction. A public services librarian said:

> I had ten months at the [the previous institution]. Then I was at almost two years at my last role when all these shenanigans were happening. And I guess I didn't want my resume or my CV to look like I was a flight risk—that I go places and I run away from my problems or I don't stay long for whatever reason or I don't get along with people. I was worried about that perception on my CV.

A female subject specialist librarian explained her extensive organizational vetting process:

> I had three librarians ... and I asked them separately—their opinion on the personnel: who's going to be my supervisor, their opinions on the work environment, their opinions on the university as a whole. And each of them told me the positive and the negative—their honest opinions and things like that ... I asked them about their working relationship with each

other, their relationship with their supervisor, how is that, honestly? How were things going? Because I know they were going through various structural changes, [similar to what] the institution I left was going through—how was everyone handling that? I asked about the director and the personnel that were going to supervise me. Had they ever supervised early career librarians? Cause it seems as though they have, but I just wanted to get their opinion and perspective.

Power and privilege. Social or workplace protections of race, gender, economics, and academic rank were identified by respondents as channels that allowed them to be able to leave abusive and neglectful workplaces, and they recognized these pathways as tools of power and privilege. A male reference and instruction librarian explained:

> I think one of the things that I mentioned is, and it's probably pretty obvious from talking to me that I am white male, older. ... Yeah, there were other people at the library—many of them staffers rather than actually a library faculty—'cause we had a lot of folks who are in that category—who didn't have those kinds of protections. And so, I do count myself fortunate in that I had an escape hatch, and that I had some ways to protect myself while I was there. But at the same time, I think there are a lot of people who are in these situations like where I was or similar situations elsewhere, who don't have some of these ways to get out and so I try to be aware of that, ... that there's certain things that I'm fortunate to have and that it has helped.

A female reference and instruction librarian noted:

> We have a society that often puts the onus on the individual, the false American ideal of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps ... To that same effect, the reason I could get out of the situation is because of a rigged society. My [parent] passed away and were able to leave me enough money to make the choice to sell my house at a loss and move away from the toxic environment. That money ... came from [my grandparents], who were able to buy a house outside of [a metropolitan area] that appreciated greatly. They were able to buy the house because they were white and fit into the housing market system of the 1950s. I benefited from that rigged system of the 1950s when I inherited that money.

Low Morale at the New Job

Uncertainty and Mistrust

This study further exposes the enduring nature of the Uncertainty and Mistrust enabling system, which is present throughout a low-morale experience and continues after a victim leaves an abusive workplace and moves on to a new position or organization.

Continuing impacts, which are affective and cognitive, are most revealed in anticipated fear, (e.g., "waiting for the other shoe to drop"), hypervigilance, and stunted relationship-building capacity.

A female administrator who faced threats on her life noted:

> And so, we've been [at my newer job in a new location] and paying rent, leasing space ... And so, the door is always locked. This symbol of safety for me coming here was that the door is locked. So the person who threatened to kill me can't get in the door. Or if he can, you know, he has to get permission or whatever. So I feel safe here.

A female library administrator explained:

> I communicate almost solely in emails when it's something really, really important. I'm very quick to document things now. If something makes my eyebrow raise, I come back and write it down. I'm just very cautious now about my interactions with coworkers now. Just to, you know, kind of be watchful and, and I listen a lot more now ... I'm very guarded at work.

A female online instruction librarian reveals how Uncertainty & Mistrust impacts interpersonal relationships:

> You know before, you know, you interact with someone. ... You say, "Hello." They say hello back. But they don't say it in the way they usually do. You know, before I did them like, 'Oh, maybe they just didn't sleep.' You know. But afterwards, I was like, 'Oh my God. Like, what are they thinking? What are they plotting?' And I think that type of thing, I did bring with me to the new institution.

Effects on Professional Engagement

Data showed that low-morale experiences have a negative impact on how abused and neglected library employees approach their new duties and interact with their new coworkers; and these impacts are long-term and highlight the role of emotional labor even in healthy workplaces. A female reference librarian shared: "In my new job, I try really hard not to engage fully with the institution. I give myself fully to my students, to my task at hand, but not to the institution itself." An acquisitions librarian highlighted how she performs collegiality as a career preservation measure in her new job:

> I am pretty much also sticking to boundaries, but I'm also kind of keeping up appearances and still acting friendly with my colleagues. *(Interviewer: What do you mean when you said you're "keeping up appearances"?)* I feel like when you're at work, there are certain things that are expected socially, too. And that's where I kind of struggle a little bit. Personally, I don't want to hang out with any of my co-workers anymore. (laughs)

I don't want to go to happy hour with them. I just don't want to do any of those things. ... There's a minimum requirement for me to put on the performance that I am being more than friends in order for me to do my job. ... I mean, for me, I think now a lot of it has to do with the tenure process. I'm like, 'Well, these people are going to review me, so I guess I should at least keep up appearances and be friendly.' But I'm not going to be super friends with them and, you know, like [at my previous job].

Recentering Work-life Balance

Respondents shared that after securing their new jobs, they consciously focused on clarifying their work duties and decentering their work lives. A female subject specialist said:

I've realized that it's really important to set up those boundaries in order to protect the things that I do well and make sure that I'm providing very good service on the things that I really need to do to perform my job well. And to say no to things that are more extraneous to the core services that I need to provide. I think that over time, that's something that I have just kind of developed. So, not to be seen as kind of a negative person who doesn't want to participate, but someone who is really focusing on what's most important to our core services so that I can provide those services very well.

Another subject specialist said, "I feel like I did the right thing [looking for a new job] because realistically the environment for my health was not good, beyond just work. So, I needed to get us to a place where the balance of life was better. Having more of a life. So I don't regret the decision to do that."

A Note: Advice on Leaving

Respondents offered advice for library employees who may be considering leaving and for various reasons may be reluctant or feel emotionally unable to do so. A reference and instruction librarian shares:

Sometimes it's not on you. Sometimes it's on you and you shouldn't just say, 'Oh, it's everybody else,' but sometimes it is the situation, and that situation isn't right for you, and you don't need to be afraid to leave it. I tried for a long time to, to fix what I could fix. That place that I was at, it has huge amount of, of loss, because people just leave because no one wants to fix the things that are wrong. And you know, you can try, but don't spend your whole life trying to fix things that are wrong, 'cause then you just neglect yourself. You don't need to bleed yourself into a toxic culture trying to make it better.

An outreach librarian offered:

I think it's important that other people who are in a low morale situation know that if they can get out, like maybe they should take that risk if they're able to. I know it sounds like fucking corny and cheesy, and, like there is hope. Like there are ways out and sometimes we have to be creative about creating alternative pathways. Obviously, those pathways available to us are affected by our positionality. I hope that other people who are in situations like the one I was in are able to escape and get to a better place. And that's it.

DISCUSSION

Librarians who decided to leave abusive workplaces verified the stages of the low-morale experience, including abuse types and associated emotional, physical, and cognitive responses. In addition to established low morale abuse categories (emotional, verbal/written, system, and negligence), this study also reveals that physical violence is happening between library employees.

Study data disclosed the negative impact of low morale on librarians' daily practice and offer further insight into how job satisfaction and turnover connect to this experience. Additionally, the data highlight how low morale causes victims' concern about their career path and disillusion with the LIS field in general. Other negative impacts include reduced quality of physical and mental health. As their low-morale experiences continued, respondents began engaging in coping strategies to lower these impacts, and they also began identifying ways to end their experience—mainly through seeking new employment. Respondents verified that after leaving their abusive organizations, they applied the lessons they learned, and realized that the psychological and cognitive impacts of long-term abuse and neglect had followed them to their new organizations. These impacts included feelings of suspicion, worry, and social introversion.

The impact factors and enabling systems of low-morale experiences are also validated. Respondents confirmed their experiences were insidious (slow-moving); additionally, they confirmed the presence of contagion (recognizing their own abuse or neglect, or watching others engage in abuse or be abused)—along with the enabling systems of leadership, human resources limitations, perceptions of librarians, faculty status, staffing and employment, and uncertainty and mistrust. These systems showcase persistent concerns regarding leadership development, reduced or precarious staffing, lack of support for employee well-being and labor rights, reduced financial support, and the general presence of toxicity and dysfunction at all levels in library workplaces.

Data specific to leaving low-morale experiences revealed four additional impact factors and two additional enabling systems that come into play once a victim decides to actively leave a low-morale experience. They also reveal the deep and broad emotional labor

associated with this aspect of the low-morale experience. Feelings of anger that began at exposure to abuse or neglect also spurred respondents to decide to look for new work; they also noted that other triggers fueled their decision to leave. Disappointment that their career expectations were not being met, worries about being stuck in their current jobs or not being able to develop in their roles, recognizing their organizations' inability to advance or ignorance of issues concerning equity, diversity, and inclusion, and oppressive values and toxic behaviors in LIS culture were additional observations that catalyzed decisions to leave. Respondents also dealt with expectations of silence as they navigated abuse and neglect at work and while they were seeking new employment. Implicit and explicit demands to keep quiet about the abuse and neglect they were subjected to caused feelings of deep disappointment and isolation. A technologist noted how such systems of silence have a larger detrimental impact on the very core of the LIS field:

> I think that's a really bad thing, for the profession too. Because you know, our whole goal is to, to work, to help our patrons. When you're less, less willing to speak up about, like, for instance, 'I think that this might be a better approach for our discovery service.' And you just stay quiet. Am I really fulfilling my, my code of ethics or my organization? Or for my profession, I should say.

Respondents faced limitations as they made their plans to escape low-morale workplaces and find a new job. Family obligations, geographical parameters, and cost-of-living differentials slowed down the pace of finding new employment.

The additional enabling systems of leaving low-morale experiences are job hunting and power and privilege. Job hunting simultaneously energized and caused significant increases in emotional labor in respondents. Job hunting helped respondents recognize their value in the labor market and positively clarified their career goals; however, they also contended with deep worry about keeping their job searches secret from their current organization and keeping the reason for leaving (abuse/neglect) secret from potential employers. Such worry drove cognitive and behavioral outcomes, including paranoia, isolation, intentional professional network curation, and intense vetting of potential organizations and colleagues. During their job hunt and after gaining new employment, respondents realized the role of power and privilege in being able to escape via racial, social, economic, or political systems from which they benefited. An acquisitions librarian noted the detrimental confluence of these enabling systems. She warned:

> Librarianship typically checks references like previous and or current supervisor, which I think is a good protocol, but for people like my situation where ... you know, there was this, like, institutionalized racism, and people were just condoning

certain things and, you know, like, crazy things are happening on our searches and, like, in that setting, it's a hindrance for the person applying for other positions even if they want to get out.

Leaving a low-morale experience does not immediately eradicate the impacts of long-term abuse. Respondents continued to reel from emotional fallout as they settled into their new positions. Continuing feelings of deep suspicion towards their new colleagues and organization, dealing with recalibration of their professional confidence, a reduced desire for deep engagement at work, and an increased desire to delineate work and personal life boundaries were common concerns and behaviors.

CONCLUSION

Librarians' low-morale experiences emphasize the negative impacts of workplace toxicity and dysfunction. Persistent abuse and neglect, understaffing, irresponsible or unavailable leadership, and job creep are intensified by internal and external perceptions of librarianship and weaponized values and behaviors against in-group members.

Feelings of anger propelled abused librarians to seek new work. Once they decided to look for a new job, they dealt with additional factors and systems while continuing to be subjected to abuse and neglect at work. These systems are interrelated and expose undermining of stated LIS values, subjugation of core competencies to homogenous workplace behaviors, and an increasing propensity of privileging economics and systems over people and well-being.

This study continues efforts to document and validate low-morale experiences in library workplaces; additionally, this work reveals how workplace abuse and neglect insidiously impacts organizations that have healthy cultures. This research sheds light on the emotional labor librarians take on as they seek safer workplaces and attempt to rebalance their professional careers and personal lives after long-term mistreatment. Additionally, this work adds qualitative support to studies on job satisfaction, career trajectories, and employee turnover in libraries.

The results of this study call for increased attention to dismantling cultures, policies, and procedures that place the onus on the abused to prove their experiences within spheres that offer no recourse. Such cultures, policies, and procedures encourage silence, which emboldens abusers to continue their harmful acts. Study data make plain the impact of formal leaders on the culture of their organizations and underscore that leaders must be present, aware, transparent, and empathetic to employees who raise their voices about direct or observed abuse or neglect at work. This study calls for intentional reviews of recruitment and interviewing protocols that hinder competent employees' attempts to leave abusive workplaces. Data could be used to guide revisions of requested application materials (e.g., references and recommendation

letters) or ensure psychologically safe interviewing schedules and conversations for candidates. Leaders reading this study may also consider applications of trauma-informed leadership, which helps employees navigate traumas that surface in workplaces. Continuing work on these concerns will offer a fuller understanding of the deep and broad impacts of workplace dysfunction and assist in the identification and application of ways to reduce or eliminate abuse and neglect in libraries. 📖

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Please describe a situation in which you decided to resolve or end a low-morale experience while employed at a library. Be as specific and detailed as possible.

2. If you believe there were any formal or informal policies, procedures, practices that may have impacted how you resolved or ended your experience, please share them.

3. If you believe there were any professional expectations that impacted how you resolved or ended your experience, please share them.

4. If you believe there were any institutional or cultural contexts that may have impacted how you resolved or ended your experience, please share them.

5. If you believe there were any social or political contexts that may have impacted how you resolved or ended your experience, please share them.

6. If you searched for and accepted a new job after your low-morale experience, please describe how ending the low-morale experience impacted you as you searched for new work and/or how it affected your work in your new workplace.

7. Please share any other comments about your ending or resolving your low-morale experience that you wish.

8. Do you elect to receive more information about counseling at this time?

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The Pillars Of The Library Are Crumbling

by Alex Byrne

Ever wonder what happened with all those "Black Lives Matter" statements put out by organizations in the wake of the George Floyd protests? Michael Harriot, at The Root, laid out a strong case, with data from multiple sources, that for all their talk about supporting and promising to do better in the aftermath of the very visible murders of Black people, White people and companies didn't actually do anything. On several metrics, whether it was putting their money where their mouths were, or even having a higher support for the Movement for Black Lives than they did before, all that apparent concern for the lives of Black people was just a fad. When it stopped being trendy to be woke, White people went back to being themselves, because they could.[1]

> **The ideals of the library are the ideals of the society that founded it, no purer or more noble, and not above the corruption and bigotry that existed and exists in society then and today.**

What does this have to do with libraries and library work? If you work in libraries, you can feel the pressure coming from all sides to "go back to normal" and resume services with a pre-pandemic mindset.[2] If directives require, this might also include some additional masking, spacing, and barrier requirements, but those are only there until everything is under control again. Remote work will go back to being an accommodation that has to be requested. Open building hours will ramp back up. Programming will eventually move away from the virtual to the physical. And

Photo by Jon Tyson on Unsplash

talk will turn away from how to keep the public healthy and back to the question of when the best time to go to the voters to ask for continued funding is. Your organization might have put out a "Black Lives Matter" statement, but reflect a bit on whether there have been any substantive changes that followed that declaration. What actions have followed the words to make them real? Would the Black staff agree with your assessment? Would your Black users agree with your assessment? And, perhaps most importantly, how do you know you're getting the honest truth, instead of what you want to hear?

As libraries ramp up back toward opening buildings and resuming services, an opportunity for deep, institution-wide reflection and change is ticking away—but it's not gone yet. What is the plan for the library to make sure Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) library users are not treated unfairly by White staff and White users? What is the plan for the library to make sure that queer people are welcomed and not treated suspiciously or callously? What is the plan for the unhoused? What is the plan for administration to solicit, and then take seriously, the input of their staff who have marginalized identities and to make changes that will make their working environment less hostile? What is the plan of the library to solicit, and then take seriously, the input of their communities who have marginalized identities and to make changes that will make the library environment, whether in a building or in the community, less hostile?

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These questions are important for libraries that want to back their statements about equity, inclusion, and whose lives matter. They will almost certainly require changes to policy and practice to align the library's deeds with their statements. To ensure these changes don't continue to perpetuate harms, the effects of professed core values of the library as an institution, like access, intellectual freedom, and viewpoint neutrality will need to be examined and tested against the effects of community-focused values like equity, privacy, accuracy, advocacy, and power-sharing to see which values will produce actions that bring the library in alignment with their desired results. Rushing to get back to libraries-as-usual erases the opportunity for every library to examine whether the pre-pandemic, pre-Black Lives Matter way of doing things was the right way to do things for their communities.

> " **The library is not immune from accountability, and to change the rules and build the institution of the library on more solid foundations, accountability is a necessary component.** "

What does a community-focused library look like? It will be different, of course, for each community. Some places may find themselves well-served by having buildings with access to resources inside, because their communities have the desire, ability, and mobility to get to a library building and its programs, and library buildings are well-situated and accessible in their local communities. Others will find their library works best as a conduit or a base of operations for spreading resources into their communities and collecting input and feedback from those communities to inform decisions and advocate for community needs.

Take, for example, the pandemic requirement to pivot to virtual for schooling, programming, and work. This new normal exposed gaps in physical infrastructure, where connectivity was too slow or nonexistent and there were few options for computer access. The pandemic also exposed knowledge gaps, where there may have been enough physical infrastructure, but navigating new software programs, social protocols, and online services prevented full participation in the new normal. Pre-pandemic libraries concerned themselves with both of these gaps, but the pre-pandemic way was almost always having a building with computers and connectivity inside to handle physical infrastructure needs and helpful staff on hand to assist if someone ran into a knowledge gap. When faced with the pandemic's new normal, how many libraries floundered on the question of physical infrastructure, trying to find a plan to get people connected, especially if the library lacked the resources itself to provide infrastructure on any sort of long-term, sustainable basis? How many libraries scrambled to find an effective way of providing services and programming to people who could not physically visit the building and might be trying to access those

services and programming asynchronously?

These are not new issues in libraries, but the pandemic put into stark contrast the need for new solutions and approaches to these issues, rather than going back to libraries-as-usual. What happens if you reimagine the library as the institution that provides for their communities the things, people, services, that they would not be able to access individually? Does it make sense to store all the things in a warehouse and tell people to come get them, or does it make more sense to have our communities tell us what is needed where and try to make those resources available when and where they are needed?

Regardless of how a library wants to tackle these questions, taking action and providing resources comes with baggage of its own, because library work is not separate from the systems that supply libraries with resources to use. All down the chain from publisher to selector, the biases and prejudices of the industries that supply libraries with materials and resources scope down what is available long before the person coming into the library's space browses what is on the shelf.[3] As with many of the products on the shelves of other stores, what looks like hundreds of imprints and publishers of books and audiobooks (both physical and electronic) are mostly under the control of five publishing houses.[4] That means many things that might do really well on library shelves never make it there, because they are never picked up by a publisher who can put the book into our ordering workflows that make it easy and convenient to buy. And for those that do make it, if someone does not get a good review or three in Library Journal, School Library Journal, Kirkus, or other library-focused magazines, they might not get bought, either by choice or because the selection policy of the organization only wants well-reviewed material. With the purchasing power libraries as a group gain because of the volume of materials purchased, libraries can push back about what we're seeing (or, often more importantly, not seeing) and try to make changes to what is published.

However, effective exercise of that purchasing power requires libraries to have leverage on their vendors. In May of 2021, Clarivate ate ProQuest, and one of the things ProQuest bragged about on the call for the acquisition was their 100% renewal rate for their top 2500 customers.[5] This would sound much more impressive if ProQuest wasn't the only, or almost the only, organization that provides ProQuest resources. When there is only one person in town who provides a service or a product to libraries, that is a monopoly, and monopolies do not have to care about what

their subscribers think. No competition means that you end up with "library pricing" from monopolists who have zero connection with reality or the prices they charge consumers. The results are arbitrary prices, based entirely on what these monopolists think they can extract from libraries. This is especially true in electronic materials, where indie services think that gouging libraries for electronic access is sound advice for their authors, because they see it work with the Big Five publishing houses.[6]

Furthermore, vendors of library products are often engaged in other aspects of their business that do harm to the most vulnerable library communities. LexisNexis, for instance, contracts with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to provide data that will aid in deportations.[7] They also provide a subscription service for libraries looking for legal citations and the text of case law. Money paid to LexisNexis for legal database access is money LexisNexis can use to compete for ICE contracts, collect the data they will sell to ICE, and presumably wash their hands of the implications of where that data will lead. Concretely, in 2019 several libraries in the boroughs of New York City decided to discontinue Kanopy. In retaliation, Kanopy used the library subscribers' email addresses to communicate directly about Kanopy's opinion of this decision. They worked to influence the library user base to pressure the library to continue spending money on the service, which the libraries themselves cited as unsustainable.[8]

This entire fight took place without any consideration about the privacy of users. User privacy is something that libraries promote as one of their selling points, even one of their core values. Vendors routinely collect data from library customers for their own marketing and analytics purposes that privacy-focused libraries would not want to collect or keep. Because there are no other services to switch to in cases of monopolies, if the library wants a vendor to discontinue that practice, they must either try to renegotiate and hope that the vendor they are dealing with wants to be ethical, or they can do without. A library that focuses too much on access as a core principle can do little but watch as the core principle of user privacy erodes and eventually crumbles, undermined and eventually destroyed by the vendors that provide

Photo by Jack Prommel on Unsplash

that access.[9] Given that user access and user privacy are both professed core pillars of the library as an institution, libraries should be more willing to speak up about which of those principles will come out on top when a choice is forced. Pretending that it is possible to satisfy the demands of vendors offering access and users demanding privacy is an invitation to chaos and arbitrary, inconsistent decision-making. An iconic line from War Games is in my mind's ear at this point: "A strange game. The only winning move is not to play."[10] We are playing the resource accessibility game according to pre-pandemic rules, trying to go back to as normal as possible, pretending that we have not seen the flaws and the failures and all the ways that libraries-as-usual does not work and could be improved. And this action—or rather, inaction—is going to hurt our communities. If libraries could effectively, collectively, always use their power to fight for the user on privacy, accessibility, and other issues, maybe with the help of some national organization, like an American Library Association, then it might be possible to achieve the necessary pushback against vendors and monopolists to get them to change.

Pretending the flaws and failures in libraries-as-usual are not serious is a lot easier than reinventing the whole system from the ground-up. Betting that the current system is not going to come crashing down in your lifetime or your career may feel safe: if, that is, you are one of the privileged people who can choose to do nothing, who can treat this experience with the same seriousness as you would a fad that has run its course, and who can then pretend not to know

why certain populations in your community do not use library services.

The library is not immune from accountability, and to change the rules and build the institution of the library on more solid foundations, accountability is a necessary component. I believe the pandemic pause has allowed more people to read Fobazi Ettarh's conception of "vocational awe" to describe the pedestal that the institution of libraries wants to put themselves on. Libraries-as-usual, as Ettarh notes, is deeply complicit in institutional oppression and the use of White women to promote a specific White agenda,[11] and in her piece, Ettarh references nina de jesus' work "Locating The Library In Institutional Oppression," showing that the ideals of the library are the ideals of the society that founded it, no purer or more noble, and not above the corruption and bigotry that existed and exists in society then and today.[12]

Libraries are steeped in vocational awe and institutional oppression, and these elements both produce bad results for the people the library is supposed to serve and attempt to shield the library from the valid criticisms it has earned. Meanwhile, the ongoing work and studies of Kaetrena Davis Kendrick continues to show us that libraries as an institution harm library workers and simultaneously disavow or displace that harm so the institution does not have to address it.[13]

Photo by Jack Prommel on Unsplash

Library work cannot continue to be seen as a sacred calling undertaken by White women to bring enlightenment to the masses, whose judgments can neither be questioned nor criticized.[14, 15] If the institution of the library wants to be a place where people have access to accurate information, fiction that represents the breadth and depth of their personal and cultural experiences and aspirations, and equitable resources, we are going to need to start making decisions about whether or not we want to spend our dollars to put the latest respectable-seeming White supremacist's trash[16] on our shelves, and we will need to think hard about whether the justifications for buying that trash are good ones. Having lived through the last year, the last few years, the last few decades, it is abundantly clear that there are more than enough sources available to a person if what they want to do is indulge themselves in conspiracies and other material divorced from reality, or if they want to get material that proudly reflects their biases and prejudices. The library does not have to aid or assist someone in diving further into their unreality.

Sacrilege?[17] Almost certainly, given the revered and unassailable position that intellectual freedom holds in a profession already toxically imbued with vocational awe. The words "Intellectual Freedom" are often offered as a complete defense of a library's action (or inaction). To do or not do, to buy or not buy, to discard or to keep, this program or that program, as if having a sincere belief that an action was in accordance with the ideals of the library shields the library from the consequences of that action.[18] Similarly, the appearance of neutrality has long since enjoyed a privileged position in the ideals of the library-as-usual, allowing a second escape hatch to avoid accountability and consequences when supposedly neutral acts have decidedly non-neutral effects on library communities. de jesus is one of many voices arguing that library neutrality is fundamentally impossible, because libraries have a purpose. Acting toward that purpose means making decisions that are political in nature, even if that politics is the often-unmarked default of "Western liberalism."[19]

If you take Ettarh, de jesus, and Davis Kendrick together, though, it is not a stretch to conclude that the ideals of the library as currently established by the ALA are flawed, wrong, in the service of White supremacy, oppressive, and being used deliberately to cause harm to marginalized members of the public and marginalized library workers alike. Even as the library as an institution is increasingly concerned about being less relevant to their communities with the passage of time, the institution of the library appears unwilling to put in the work to make substantive changes. The library-as-usual will cling to the ideals and beliefs we have always had, insisting those beliefs cannot be examined, do not need repair, and that it is a high offense to the institution of the library to suggest our sacred tenets should be subordinated to ideals that serve all of the library's communities better and more effectively. To suggest the library become a more active and engaged civic entity seems to draw a shush.[20] I worry that the library as an institution will not be able to recognize that holding to the principles of the past and waiting for people to come to us and get enlightened or entertained is not a viable strategy. The cracks are already visible, and it is only a matter of time before the library as an institution comes crashing down under the weight of trying to support itself on old, corrupted, rotted pillars.

You are not imagining this. 📖

NOTES

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5 Roger Schonfeld, Tweet, May 17, 2021, https://twitter.com/rschon/status/1394265188925325314

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10 1983. WarGames. The appropriate clip is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpmGXeAtWUw. (Content Warning (CW) for lots of bright flashing lights).

11 Fobazi Ettarh, "Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves," *In The Library With The Lead Pipe*, January 10, 2018, https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe/

12 nina de jesus, "Locating The Library In Institutional Oppression," *In The Library With The Lead Pipe*, September 24, 2014, https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2014/locating-the-library-in-institutional-oppression/

13 Kaetrena Davis Kendrick, "The Public Librarian Low-Morale Experience: A Qualitative Study," Partnership: *The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research* 15 no. 2 (2021), 1-32. https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v15i2.5932. Or check out the featured article in this issue to see Davis Kendrick's work.

14 Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2021. "Table 11: Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity". Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey. https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm. According to the table, in 2020, 83 percent of library workers are White, and 83 percent of them are women.

15 Or, if you like, as women who have transcended the system keeping the rest of us down and are looking for more people to free their minds while they look good in leather and vinyl.

16 Or the popular TERF's trash, or the xenophobe's, or the missing stair's, or any other person who has failed to clear the bar of "not a harmful trash fire."

17 "Censorship!" would likely be the actual cry uttered, but since it's a matter of dogma, sacrilege seems a more appropriate word to use.

18 There are, of course, limitations of law, court decisions, and Board policies on what actions or inactions are acceptable. All three of them can be changed if needed. Board policies are the easiest of the three.

19 nina de jesus, "Locating The Library In Institutional Oppression," *In The Library With The Lead Pipe*, September 24, 2014, https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2014/locating-the-library-in-institutional-oppression/

20 It's a not-unwarranted shush, since the Public Disclosure Commission's interpretations of the relevant RCWs (https://www.pdc.wa.gov/learn/guidelines-local-government) take a very dim view of any public entity having an opinion about anything that might be on a ballot, which ends up forbidding a public entity that might be strongly affected by a ballot issue from saying anything officially in their own defense. They do allow for unbiased information to be provided on those issues, so I wonder whether it's permissible to say "this party at least pays lip service to the idea of a democracy, this party has a high percentage of authoritarians running for office" if both of those statements are true (even if not, perhaps, in that particular form).

Reflective Workday Habits

by Sarah O'Hare

We strive to keep Alki an open platform for sharing opinions. The publication of this opinion piece is not an official endorsement by either Alki or the Spokane County Library District.

Hear me out: if I were an outsider to the library profession, and all I had to base an opinion on was the offerings of #LibraryTwitter, I would be uninformed but forced to assume that librarians were a large, professional group of functional alcoholics with varying degrees of misanthropy who have been gaslit into accepting ticking-time bomb levels of stress in the work environment–but who are, for the most part, extremely decent people. The recent personal ribbon offerings on the ALA Conference registration form reflects this vibe. One of the optional ribbons is labeled: "3% human, 97% stress." Without question, to celebrate this piece of insanity via humor truly is a special kind of nihilism.
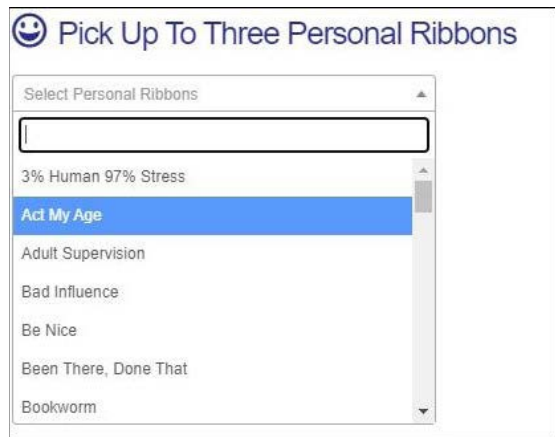
Screenshot courtesy of Sarah O'Hare.

Sarah O'Hare is a librarian with the Spokane County Library District. She earned her MLIS from the University of Arizona in May 2020, her MA in Critical Theory and Creative Research in 2016, and she co-Chairs the City of Spokane's Ethics Commission. She tries to support at-work morale with humor and storytelling, would rather be in the UK, and will be performing in the Spokane Shakespeare Society's inaugural show, A Midsummer Night's Dream this August at the Pavilion in Spokane's Riverfront Park.

Ouch, right?

This essay is the beginning of the end of celebrating over-working. It is an honest conversation about addressing our workplace satisfaction as a profession by building reflective workday habits. I encourage us to think on the following: Why are we here and why do we do the work we do, and are we getting what we expect out of the time we spend at work? What are our personal and career goals while being in your current position? And one more important question, particularly if you are stressed out of your mind: How did we get here? These are hard conversations I hope we can all have with ourselves, and then perhaps revisit again by asking a group of trusted friends or co-workers to relay thoughts, fears, ideas, and dreams for the present and the future.

I take my personal and career-goal-oriented pulse often as my reflective workday habit. This usually takes the form of adding observations to my career journal, as well as reviewing old mind map sheets from times past, adding to them, or making a fresh mind map to compare and assess what, if anything, has changed in my goals. I am usually right on target and headed toward my goals and desires. But if I do find myself off-track, establishing a solution to course correct is easy enough when I am regularly checking in. If your personal and career-goal-oriented pulse is not taken often, a change in workload pace might easily establish roots and creep into everything seemingly unnoticed.

This "3% human 97% stress" work style leaves zero time for basic maintenance tasks, let alone the slower, more critical, reflective tasks. With the absolute cascade of "wellness" and "self-care" trainings that have been showered upon us all, the aspects that I do not see highlighted enough are allowing for staff to take time to participate in these reflective moments *during their workday*. Completing wellness trainings is not the kind of reflective moment I am suggesting. Normalizing blocking out a section(s) of the workday for *personal, career-oriented* reflection needs to be part of the way forward. We need to slow down; we need to take stock. If I wait until my workday is over to consider what I want to change about my workday routine, ruminate about how I can improve my workplace culture, or change my workplace habits–from my perspective, this is stolen time from my bank of personal off-work time. Considering these questions should take place during the workday, as it is still "work" in the end; making this a habit can help establish brighter and healthier lines between work and life.

"The thing we need to remember about reflection is that it's

not like a yearly vaccination. We cannot get complacent, or our thinking and teaching can start to stagnate and develop in ways reflective of our workload rather than our pedagogical goals. Reflection has to be a habit of mind."[1]

Here, Heidi L.M. Jacobs is speaking from the perspective of an academic information literacy librarian, but I cannot see why other branches of librarianship should not practice this habit of mind too. We each have our own work goals. Any good organization should support those goals. But our thinking and workplace routines should also be allowed to reflect our goals and not become a reflection of someone who self-identifies as 97% stressed.

The first time I saw someone block out time for reflective practice on a group work calendar, it completely opened me up to the possibility of career-oriented wellness at work. Making a scheduled time for these reflective habits, meditations, or ruminations should stand to make the rest of your work time more focused. Block out a special meeting *with yourself*.

One of the easiest ways to transform a workplace culture might be allowing employees space and time to cultivate reflective habits in order to imagine and dream of better workplace options. If someone is not allowed space and time to think about alternative ways of doing work, they will inevitably be left with fewer options; Bolman and Deal discuss the importance of the role of management styles in improving or breaking staff morale and they suggest that a change in management approach and implementing a better leadership style at the right moment can have momentuously positive outcomes.[2] It is no secret that people most often leave a position due to a poor relationship with their supervisor. Jennifer Koenig, the Assistant Vice President/ Branch Manager of Robert Half International said at a recent *Elevating the Conversation* presentation with the Spokane Journal of Business, instead of "exit interviews" with staff who are already leaving [reads: already an institutional knowledge/capital loss], she conducts what she calls "stay interviews" with people who have been around the company for a long time. In this "stay interview" she asks why the employee has stayed around, what they like about their workplace, their position, their supervisor, and related topics. If we were to conduct "stay interviews" as a profession, we would sooner discover what our strengths and our weaknesses are in order to address problem areas before we lose good talent due to poor workplace morale.

To begin a change, or to support a change that has already begun

> **"The first time I saw someone block out time for reflective practice on a group work calendar, it completely opened me up to the possibility of career-oriented wellness at work."**

in your workplace, I offer the following questions for personal and team reflection that I regularly chew on:

1. How does a good team flow, and what does a good team feel like?

2. Conversely, what does a team united in their discontent feel like?

3. What does a numb team feel like? (I felt this team atmosphere for the first time during the pandemic and it made my heart hurt for my colleagues. It's been a shockingly hard time for so many of us.)

4. (Supervisor bonus question – what does it feel like to identify and manage these different teams? What causes these team dynamics?)

5. How do these feelings contribute to your workplace morale?

6. What reflective habit can I incorporate into my workday as a meeting with myself?

7. How can library-wide events like "staff days" be used as reflective tools or opportunities for the sharing of feedback to take a goal-oriented pulse of your staff and to learn more about what your organization is doing well, and what it's doing poorly (i.e., "stay interviews")?

My hope is that by building reflective workplace habits, we can better identify our own personal workplace satisfaction. After our terms of satisfaction and meaning have been better defined and our sights re-centered on our goals, then perhaps our workplace, or even profession-wide, vibe might begin to lighten again.

NOTES

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Good for One, Good for All: The Case for Simplifying Summer Reading Programs

by Caitlin Hunsaker

Let's talk about summer reading. For many of us who have worked in public libraries for years, especially in programming roles, summer is the most stressful time of the year. It is not uncommon for libraries to restrict or discourage using vacation time during the summer. A lot of this comes from the whirlwind of activities and programs we plan to keep children, teens, and adults entertained, but I want to talk about the program that started it all: the reading log. For the purposes of this discussion, that's what I mean when I say reading program: the "reading" part of summer reading.

Once upon a time (actually, in the mid 1890s, believe it or not), librarian Linda Eastman began to distribute children's reading lists to local schools during the month of June.[1] Over the next century, library staff did what we do best: we shared information and resources. Summer reading programs quickly grew into a formalized incentive for increasing library use while school was out. Almost every public library in America has their own version of the summer reading program. These have become the public library's bread and butter. CSLP, iReads, and other groups support public libraries with art, prizes, program ideas, manuals, and other resources. We dream bigger and bigger every year and expand our offerings in quantity and quality.

Or do we? It is with this in mind that I set the scene.

It is mid-June of 2019. This is my first year as the teen associate at my small rural library branch, and I do not yet know what to expect. I have been given unimaginable freedom to essentially design the teen summer reading program from the ground up,

> " **I want every single patron who uses my library to know that summer reading is a celebration of them and their reading, and I want to do it in a way that is the least hassle for everyone, including me.** "

which I do decently, from sourcing prize donations to designing the reading log to planning activities. Now it is time to start signups. A family walks in: a mother with four children, ages 2-14. She wants to sign them all up for summer reading. I have her fill out cards with their information to give to my manager, who will put them into a spreadsheet. When I turn around and look at the table spread with signup materials, I begin to panic. Why would I panic? Because when I grab a bag for the 0-5 age group, two bags for 6-12, a bag for teens, and a bag for adults, I realize that I have no idea how anyone else's programs work. Every age group has a slightly different theme, a different reading log, and different rules. On one log, each circle represents seven minutes. On another, a circle represents fifteen. I know the squares on the teen reading log are for thirty minutes. Adults simply list two books. But it gets even more complex. Teens can turn in as many logs as they want, and they get a raffle entry and a small prize for each. I have no idea about the other logs. I do not even know what half of the prizes are. When I finish trying to explain all of this to the mother, I feel like I could cry. She looks like she is about to as well. I have not even started to explain book bingo. Even if we both had clearly written instructions, this would be too much for either of us.

This is not what summer reading should be.

2020 is certainly not much better, but for different reasons. I become the branch supervisor just as we close our doors in April. We function strictly as a curbside service through the end of the year. We try Beanstack, which is a complete failure in a community where half the residents do not have internet access at home and the other half are sick of using any device with a screen. But there is one ray of sunshine: we only have one paper reading log this year. One log. Across all ages. We design a cute, colorful half-sheet log with a four by five matrix of squares and instructions to mark off one square for each half hour of reading. Same information, same instructions, same entry style for every participant age 0-110. And I wonder... could it be like this every year?

Caitlin Hunsaker (she/her) is the supervisor of the Burbank Branch of the Walla Walla County Rural Library District. She has worked in libraries since becoming a page at age fifteen and hopes to get her MLIS and go into collection development and cataloging. She enjoys hiking and trying to keep small houseplants alive. Caitlin reads mostly YA, fantasy, and romance, sometimes all at the same time. If you have questions, you can reach her at caitlin@wwcrld.org.

Some of you may be familiar with this scenario. Larger libraries with more dedicated departments may have an easier time separating participants by age. It is a lot easier to have the entire children's department be the experts in the children's reading program than to train every staff member on every program. And if that works for you, more power to you. But if my 2019 story triggered anxiety that stirred the depths of your book-loving soul, maybe it is time to ask yourself if your summer reading program would benefit from a little simplification.

The first thing to consider is why we do reading challenges in the first place. Let us go back to our goal. Whether we count pages, hours, books, activities, or something else, we have a goal. Maybe the goal is to beat the summer slide. Maybe the goal is to increase circulation, or build inherent value into reading, or incentivize an increase in library visits. Maybe we strive to provide entertainment or a challenge. Whatever it is, I am willing to bet we can meet it without giving ourselves a heart attack every single year.

A Few Words on Inclusion

I bet that goal that we set also has the potential to transcend age groups. While literacy looks very different between most 5 year olds and most 55 year olds, I want them to read for essentially the same reasons. This is ultimately why I suggest tracking time instead of pages or books. There are many reasons why some people read faster or slower than others, or why some patrons read audiobooks exclusively instead of print books, but if you set your reading logs at a reasonable amount of time relative to the length of your program, you will give all of your participants the opportunity to finish.

We ask patrons to read 10 hours in our six-week program. Lest

> **❝ If you look around this summer and find yourself overwhelmed by one of the most common programs you run, maybe it is time to ask yourself if that overwhelm is worth it. ❞**

Imagine Your Story (2020), licensed for use to Walla Walla County Rural Library District via CSLP

I am accused of handing out participation trophies like the millennial I am, let me add one caveat: we allow readers to turn in up to ten logs for one grand prize entry each. In our service population, even the busiest of working parents have been able to find time to read ten hours in six weeks. In turn, our ultra-competitive 10 year olds have something to feel proud of when they hit one hundred hours. We could certainly push all of our patrons to read thirty, fifty, or one hundred hours to finish—and many would—but the reality is that not everyone has a lot of spare time to read, and we want to actively remove barriers to participation.

We could also set a goal at a certain number of pages with the understanding that patrons would choose their reading level, but that would discourage our audiobook readers. Many choose to listen because they have difficulty with print reading. Others listen to books during other activities because of a lack of spare time. I see summer reading programs as an opportunity to incentivize library use and build inherent value into reading. Those are my goals. While I cannot include everyone in every circumstance all of the time, this is my attempt to exclude as few as possible. I want every single patron who uses my library to know that summer reading is a celebration of them and their reading, and I want to do it in a way that is the least hassle for everyone, including library staff.

Regardless of the actual quantity of hours (or minutes, pages, books, etc.) a library chooses to require to complete a summer reading program, the important part is consistency and inclusion. I remind patrons that reading is not just about books. I have had people ask me whether eBooks count as reading; of course they do! There has been a strange dichotomy created between print books and eReaders (mostly thanks to comics and

memes about children trying to click books or something equally offensive), which has led to some confusion. So I like to clarify for my readers: books count. Magazines and graphic novels count. eReaders, audiobooks, and even podcasts count. If you really want to reach for it, the subtitles on your movie or video game count. If you read to someone else, that counts for both of you. We want people reading. We want them participating, coming into the library, and using all of our resources.

"But that's the way we've always done it!"

I know many of us are resistant to change. And many of us enjoy making grand plans for summer reading every year. We thrive on catering our reading program to the age group we specialize in. If that works for you, I am not here to convince you otherwise. But if you look around this summer and find yourself overwhelmed by one of the most common programs you run, maybe it is time to ask yourself if that overwhelm is worth it. Library workers already have enough to be stressed out about, and it would be fantastic if one area of our work was simplified.

I got some pushback from staff the minute I proposed doing reading logs this way. There were several types of pushback: the "but we've always done it this way" response to changing the way we tracked adult participation from recording two books to logging ten hours. There was also the fact that each of our branches used to essentially run their own separate reading program (we are a rural district and branches are very far apart in separate communities). There was a moment of panic when staff wanted to put a coloring page on the back of the reading log. (This was apparently an issue because we could not possibly give adults something with a coloring page on it.) Ultimately, every complaint and issue was addressed or overcome.

It has been two years since that day in June of 2019. Now, as I pre-register families of seven or more people which span our four

Reading Colors your World (2021), licensed for use to Walla Walla County Rural Library District via iREAD

different age groups, I am immensely grateful for the simplicity of a single reading log. Each person gets an instruction sheet, a log, a bookmark, and an activity. I enter them into my spreadsheet. For a single moment, I am able to calmly serve my patrons as a library branch supervisor. (I save the panic attacks for the real emergencies, like running out of breakroom cake.) 📖

NOTES

1. Linda A. Eastman, "Methods of work for children: The Cleveland library league," Library Journal 22, no. 11 (1897): 686-688.

Just Show Up

by Sarah Logan

Last summer I responded to an email asking for a School Library Division committee chair. While I did not want to be the chair, I expressed interest in serving on a committee. Going straight to the chair position without having served on a committee seemed like a big leap. Surely there was someone more qualified.

Well, as it turns out, this was not the case. ScLD chair Hillary Marshall worked her magic, and before I knew it, I had agreed to serve as the new School Library Division chair. In January, I began my term.

I have a confession: I have *no* idea what I am doing.

Usually the chair serves a co-chair the year before, so they come into the position with some context for current initiatives and reasons decisions were made. They have had a year to familiarize themselves with the landscape and create a vision for their term. I had none of that. I also had no concept of the "rules" or how things worked. What was I "supposed" to do? Who was "in charge" of how things worked? I was not really sure.

Thanks to guidance from Hillary, WLA Executive Director Brianna Hoffman, and other past and present committee members, I have managed to figure a few things out. The biggest: there is no "supposed to do". Also, you are in charge. I mean you. You, the person reading this. You are in charge of WLA. You are in charge of the future of librarianship. There is no panel of experts to tell you what to do—and even if there were, they would not know your library and your readers the way that you do.

A few years ago, I attended a training with an award-winning librarian. I was eager to learn their secrets and find out all the things I did not know. And I did come away with some great ideas, but my biggest take-away that day was that the award-winning librarian really didn't do anything much different from me. They

had administrators who did not always understand the role of the Teacher Librarian or why a school library is not meant to be quiet. They had lessons that did not work out the way they intended and students who refused every book suggestion. They could not keep up with all the shelving and weeding and book processing, either. The biggest difference that I could see between that award-winning librarian and myself was their willingness to serve in a leadership role.

In a recent division roundtable, ScLD leadership asked our members: "What can the School Library Division do for you?" We hoped to gather input about the direction our division heads for the second half of the year and what initiatives to prioritize. What we learned (in fact, what I learn every time there is a round table) is that our members are smart, passionate librarians who know what they are doing—even if they don't always know they know what they are doing. So I'd like to turn the question around—what can you do for WLA?

Each of us in WLA has a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with our library colleagues around the state. There is much work to be done: we need help with advocacy resources, support for new librarians, social media posts and engagement, lesson/programming sharing, and creative solutions to the problems that challenge us on a daily basis. I know getting involved can be intimidating. Often, we are not sure where to start or what we might contribute. Trust me when I say that showing up and being willing to help is more than half the battle.

So, how do you get involved? One way is to run for an elected position. Before you doubt your qualifications or your ability to contribute time, remember that I felt exactly the same way last summer. Serving as ScLD chair has taken some time, but I have gained much more than I have given just by interacting with our members. You know that burst of energy you get after a great conference, just from hearing ideas and being around other librarians? Every committee meeting leaves me with a dose of that feeling, and it has helped sustain me through this strange and unusual school year. Getting more involved in WLA will benefit you as well as the larger organization. You can contact the WLA office for support and information about running for an elected position.

If that feels like too much, reach out to your division and section chairs and ask how you can be more involved. You can find their

Sarah Logan is the librarian at Dorothy Fox Elementary School in Camas, WA. She is the current chair of Washington Library Association's School Library Division who is passionate about Teacher Librarianship and the right of all students to be served by a qualified Teacher Librarian and strong school library program. In her free time, she drives her children to activities. She is currently practicing maintaining her outer cool while her 15-year-old learns to drive. If you drive near Vancouver this summer and see a terrified-looking woman in the passenger seat, it's probably her.

Media Literacy Wins Big this Legislative Session

by Shawn Sheller

Media literacy in Washington just got a big boost from our Legislature! The nonprofit organization Action 4 Media Education (AME) is very excited to announce that new Washington legislation (HB1365) will provide funding to:

- Continue Washington's media literacy grant program initiated in 2019 and administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI); to see resources that have been developed so far with these awards, check out the OER Commons website.

- Provide grants for groups who wish to form professional learning communities. The purpose of these grants will be to encourage collaboration among a group of school districts or a group of educators from across one district, who join together to share their challenges and successes while exploring new strategies for integrating media literacy education into their classrooms.

- Support two regional media literacy conferences. This is a long-awaited development! Washington has not had funding to support a conference focused solely on media literacy for many years! The conferences will be offered in both Eastern and Western Washington.

In addition to all this good news, we are celebrating a provision in HB1365 which specifies that this legislation will remain in effect for ten years, until July 31, 2031!

Thanks to everyone from all across the state who called, emailed and provided testimony in support of HB 1365. Your help has been so important. A special thanks to Senator Marko Liias, the primary champion of media literacy over the past number of years. While the senate bill he introduced this year did not pass, it was fully integrated and incorporated into the final version of HB1365. It was his leadership and advocacy on behalf of media literacy education that has made such a difference in ensuring the success of this bill. 📖

Shawn Sheller is Vice Chair of Action 4 Media Education. She is a national board-certified library-media specialist with over thirty years of teaching experience; she is employed in the Kent School District. Shawn has worked with educators to achieve their national board certification and professional certification. She testified before the legislature in support of media literacy legislation and led an AME/media literacy session at the 2018 Washington Library Association annual library conference. Shawn is an OSPI media literacy grant recipient two years in a row. AME's efforts to codify the goals that all children become media literate is a worthy goal she is proud to be involved with. She is married and has an adult daughter living in Hawaii. Reading, gardening and paddle boarding are ways that Shawn relaxes.

Update on the American Library Association

by Steven Bailey

As the oldest and largest library association in the world, the American Library Association continues to reimagine itself with new leadership, a proposed new governance structure, and an ongoing commitment to member engagement. I am pleased to share updates with you about ALA in my role as ALA Councilor for the Washington Library Association.

Since its founding in 1876, ALA has evolved into a large and multifaceted organization, with several divisions, sections, committees, roundtables, interest groups, and affiliates; a dedicated staff with multiple offices focusing on unique roles; and governance through the elected 187-member ALA Council, the ALA Executive Board, and the Executive Director. This rather convoluted structure has been recognized as a potential barrier for ALA members to understanding their association, and to increased member involvement in ALA.

Three years ago, ALA President Jim Neal appointed the Steering Committee on Organizational Excellence (SCOE), with the charge to "carry out a comprehensive review and study of ALA's governance, member participation and legal structures and systems, with the goal of proposing changes that will vitalize its success, strength and agility as a 21st century association."[1] SCOE conducted surveys, worked with an outside consultant (Avenue M Group), and proposed recommendations for reorganization and streamlining the association. Those recommendations were presented to ALA membership in November 2019 under the banner "Forward Together."[2] Since then, two additional workgroups have been formed to gather feedback, tweak the recommendations, and propose resolutions for Council to debate and vote on at the 2021 ALA Annual Conference. If the Forward Together resolutions are approved, new bylaws will be drafted in the Fall of 2021, voted on by Council in January 2022, and sent to all ALA members to vote on in Spring 2022. More information about the proposed ALA reorganization can be found at forwardtogether.ala.org.

One of the most exciting and impactful changes in the association has been the appointment of a new Executive Director, Tracie D. Hall, in January 2020. Tracie is a graduate of the University of Washington's iSchool and a former employee of the Seattle Public Library, and has a deep knowledge of library services, philanthropy, community engagement and diversity.[3] She is a thought leader in the profession and a dynamic speaker. (Save the date for the 2021 WLA Conference, Sept 30-Oct 2 in Bellevue, WA, where Tracie will give the keynote address!)

In another sweeping change for the association, three former divisions have been merged into a single new division, with new leadership and a streamlined charge. In June of 2020, ALA Council voted to dissolve the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS), the Library Information Technology Association (LITA) and the Library Leadership and Management Association (LLAMA). ALA Council then voted to establish a new division, called Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures.[4] Core began work in September 2020, and has already begun planning the first Core Forum, a mini-conference to be held in Baltimore October 7-9, 2021.

In order to mitigate the barriers of in-person attendance, ALA has also committed to reimagine their two annual conferences, including adding virtual attendance options for division and roundtable business meetings and for Council sessions, and adding more remote and recorded educational content. The former Midwinter Meeting is no more, and in its place ALA will host a new type of event: LibLearnX. The inaugural LibLearnX will be held January 21-24, 2022 in San Antonio.

And of course, the COVID-19 pandemic forced all of us to embrace remote meetings and learning opportunities. The ALA Annual meetings in 2020 and 2021 were all virtual events, offered at a discounted price, but with amazing speakers and sessions. Highlights of the June 2021 conference included poet Amanda Gorman, scholar Nikole Hannah-Jones, author Isabel Wilkerson (The Warmth of Other Suns; Caste), and for the closing keynote, former President Barack Obama. ALA President Julius Jefferson completed his successful term, passing the gavel to incoming ALA President Patty Wong. 📖

NOTES

1 "SCOE Project Charge", Forward Together: Recommendations for a reimagined American Library Association governance model, American Library Association, accessed July 6, 2021, https://forwardtogether.ala.org/index.php/about-scoe/charge/.

Steven Bailey is a Librarian Services Manager with the King County Library System, and has served as the ALA Chapter Councilor for WLA since 2019. He reads short stories, enjoys hiking and biking, and his sourdough starter brings all the boys to the yard. He can be reached at wlasteven@gmail.com.

2   "Forward Together Recommendations for a reimagined American Library Association governance model" (report to the ALA Executive Board, Chicago, IL, October 2019), Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE), accessed July 6, 2021, https://forwardtogether.ala.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Forward-Together-Nov-2019.pdf.

3   "ALA Appoints Tracie D. Hall as Executive Director", The Scoop (blog), January 15, 2020, https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/ala-appoints-tracie-d-hall-as-executive-director/.

4   "ALA Council approves Core; dissolves ALCTS, LITA and LLAMA", ALA Member News, American Library Association, July 1, 2020, http://www.ala.org/news/member-news/2020/07/ala-council-approves-core-dissolves-alcts-lita-and-llama.

contact information on the WLA website. If that feels like too much, submit an article for the next issue of Alki or a conference proposal for WLA 2022. If that feels like too much, just show up. Show up to a virtual event, roundtable, or to the WLA 2021 conference. Our organization does not work without the contributions of our members. You do not have to wait for someone else to deem you an expert, and you don't have to have all the answers to take on a leadership role. You just have to show up.

Want to get involved with the WLA? Visit wla.org/elections or contact the WLA office at info@wla.org. 📖

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.

Milestones

Welcome to UW Tacoma, Annie Downey

Image courtesy of Annie Downey

The University of Washington Tacoma welcomed their new Library Director and Associate Dean of University Libraries, Dr. Annie Downey, in May. She brings her vast knowledge of academic libraries and her expertise in supporting student success to the UW Tacoma community. Annie has a background in Anthropology and went on to complete both her MLIS and PhD in Higher Education from the University of North Texas. She spent the last twenty years in academic libraries; most recently, she served as Associated Provost and Director of the Armacost Library and Learning Commons at the University of Redlands, preceded by leadership roles at Reed College in Portland, Oregon and the University of North Texas Libraries.

Annie's passions in the LIS field include instruction, critical information literacy, K-20 information literacy, user experience and service design, and feminist management and libraries. Her current research is a duoethnography project which centers around power in libraries, examining how it has shown up before and during COVID. It also gives a historical perspective on the role of women in the libraries and how they can enact library values within the library community with staff, librarians, students, and others with whom they work.

Annie developed a love for the Pacific Northwest and was particularly drawn to UW Tacoma. The fact that UW Tacoma is small enough for people to get to know the faculty, staff, students, and community and large enough to offer many different opportunities to collaborate and innovate while being a part of the larger UW system excites her. UW Tacoma is an urban-serving campus with a mission to help students have future financial and personal success, which is a value that Annie identifies with and desires to pay forward stemming from her own personal experience as a student. She is excited to get to know the UW Tacoma community to understand what programs work well and to identify the resources and services that will be meaningful for the student community through 'radical access', which focuses on providing services based on student outcomes. Welcome to the UW Tacoma community, Annie!

Content courtesy of Lyneea Kmail.

Farewell, Joe Olayvar!

Joe Olayvar retired on May 28th after 38 years of service with Washington State.

Joe spent the last years of his career as an IT consultant in Library Development at the Washington State Library, and became active in the WALE group of the Washington Library Association. There he served as WALE conference chair, and his contributions were recognized with a service award.

As part of the team which took a "petting zoo" of new e-devices around Washington, Joe helped library staff become comfortable with the new e-devices and smart phones. With Evelyn Lindberg, he helped library staff familiarize themselves with basic device programming by touring a Lego Mindstorms kit around the state. Joe's last focus was Virtual Reality headsets.

Joe's ready laugh and easy manner made him a great trainer. He will be missed, but Joe is now off enjoying time with family and friends.

Content courtesy of Carolyn Petersen.

Impactful Seattle Teacher Librarian, Craig Seasholes Retires

Our beloved Craig Seasholes, Past WLA Chair and integral member of the School Library Division, may be retiring from his position as a Seattle Teacher-Librarian, but his heart for mentoring and countless hours of advocacy efforts have created a legacy that has changed the face of librarianship in Washington.

For some new librarians, Craig's guest appearances at the University of Washington's iSchool provided encouragement and a vision of what a dynamic program could be. As an instructor, Craig was willing to share not just his experience, but his connections to resources that enriched the experiences of students at all grade levels. Perhaps his most ambitious project was the Washington State School Library Impact Study. Literature is replete with evidence that school libraries make a difference, but Craig saw the

value of spearheading a study that proved the value of Washington school libraries. Craig recognized the value of replication studies in research and conducted a follow-up impact study three years after the original; this passion project has bolstered the claims of school librarians locally that we indeed make a difference.

Rarely a literary event or legislative advocacy opportunity arises that his presence is not noted. His legislative testimonies have helped in the passage of laws addressing the importance of teacher-librarians that has helped make Washington a bellwether state, nationally, when it comes to assuring librarians' importance in teaching to the whole child.

Congratulations on your retirement and your next chapter in life!

Content courtesy of TuesD Chambers, Christie Kaaland, Jodi Kruse, Hillary Marshall, and Mark Ray.

Vice Provost of Digital Initiatives and Dean of UW Libraries, Lizabeth (Betsy) Wilson Retires

Lizabeth (Betsy) Wilson, vice provost of digital initiatives and dean of UW Libraries on the steps of Suzzallo Library. Image courtesy of University of Washington Libraries

Vice provost of digital initiatives and dean of the University of Washington Libraries, Lizabeth (Betsy) Wilson, will retire at the end of the academic year, effective July 1, 2021. As dean of the UW Libraries since 2001, Betsy has led a network of sixteen academic research libraries across all three campuses, and the University of Washington Press. She is recognized internationally for her work in academic libraries, library management and technological innovation. She has been a visionary leader responsible for the development of the Libraries' world class research collections, its innovative teaching and learning programs and its digital strategies around open access, data stewardship, and digital scholarship.

"Under Betsy's leadership, the UW Libraries has built an environment of collaboration, partnership, inclusion, and innovation resulting in a user-centered library enabled by a culture of assessment and extraordinary staff," said UW provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, Mark Richards. "I'd like to thank Betsy for her leadership as vice provost and dean and I wish her well in her next chapter."

Betsy took on the additional role of vice provost for digital initiatives in 2013, a role in which she developed an overall strategy on digital issues, including open access and open science. She has led the University's efforts in digital scholarship and data stewardship, as well as the innovative use of information resources in teaching and learning.

From 1992 through 2000, Betsy was the associate director of the UW's Libraries for Research and Instructional Services. Prior to that, she was the assistant director of libraries for Undergraduate and Instructional Services at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She holds a Master of Library Science degree from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a bachelor's degree from Northwestern University.

She has held numerous industry leadership positions including ACRL President (2000-2001) where she helped establish the ACRL Institute for Information Literacy. As Board Chair of the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) from 2003-2007, she led the effort to bring OCLC and the Research Libraries Group (RLG) together to deliver compelling value and services to research universities.

While her many accomplishments speak for themselves, what many colleagues admire most about Betsy is her thoughtful approach and ability to listen, connect with others and take risks, all while building bridges towards a common goal. After twenty years, Betsy leaves a legacy of success and innovation with the UW Libraries that is sure to endure long after her retirement.

Content courtesy of the University of Washington Libraries. 📖

Stamped @Library

by Craig Seasholes

Listen Up!

Whether addressing an audience or interacting with an individual library user, we must always attend to the interests, reading abilities and diverse lives present in our rich, diverse, and pluralistic society. Here I want to recommend the history and antiracist response posed by Ibram X. Kendi's *Stamped from the Beginning* through its several adaptations and audiobook recordings that provide varied points of access for different audiences, from board books to enduring scholarship and commentary that will influence adult readers for years to come. Libraries, parents, and teachers can support and sustain constructive and critical conversations at every level with these books and audio recordings.
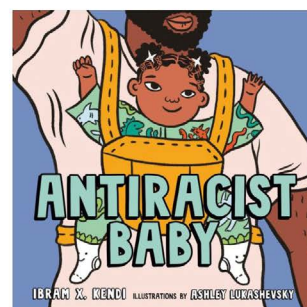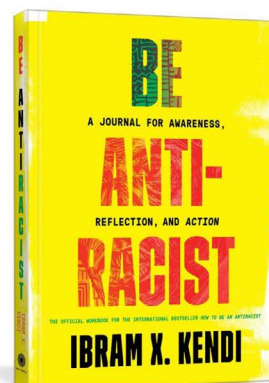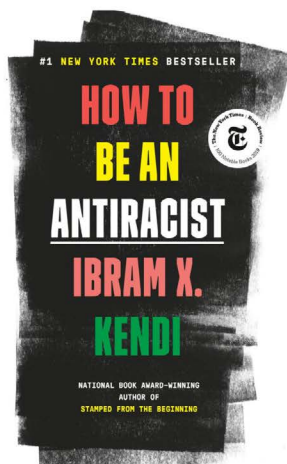
Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America.
Author: Ibram X. Kendi
New York: Nation Books, 2016. ISBN: 9781568584638

Scholarship and narrative points to actions and events from the insidious beginnings of the justification of human slavery on racial lines, to institutional racism's pernicious hold on laws and unspoken bias that continue to this day. Alert to the contradicting words and deeds embedded in the founding of American independence, the book won the 2016 National Book Award for non-fiction and stands undiminished for adult readers ready for the studious second take on this land of the free. Kendi's voice rings out in the audiobook version.
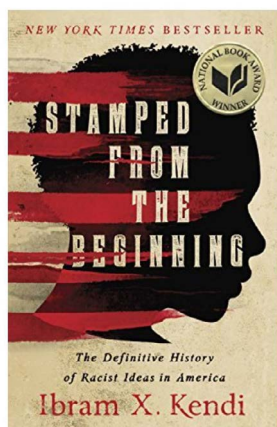
Craig Seasholes is a newly-retired elementary school librarian and past president of WLA. Now serving on the ALA task force on sustainability, there's also plenty of outdoor opportunities ahead as he enjoys his new, blue gravel bike on mountain paths and leverages social distancing opportunities to launch himself on backcountry hiking adventures. @craigseasholes on Twitter and seasholes@gmail.com

How to be an Anti-Racist
Author: Ibram X. Kendi
New York: One World, 2019 ISBN 9780525509288

Kendi followed up with a more personal narrative. Blending lived experience with exhortation that awareness of racism necessitates antiracist action, Kendi's thesis shows its human side to acknowledge the personal challenges and contradictions that everyone experiences when confronting deeply embedded bias: it is in actively working to dismantle institutional and legal barriers to a more just and equitable society. The audiobook version (read by the author; Random House Audio, 2019) lays bare the scars of Kendi's own battle with cancer, in a way reminiscent of Susan Sontag's 1978 essay "Illness as Metaphor." Racism infects our society and must be confronted with active anti-racist antidote.

Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You
Authors: Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi
Audio: Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2020 ISBN 9781549130724
Print: New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2020. ISBN 9780316453691

One of the most compelling adaptations for YA that I have ever read came out last year; the 2020-21 National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, Jason Reynolds, thoroughly remixed and gave vibrant voice to Kendi's scholarship in *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism,* and You. From "This is NOT a history book. This is a book about the here and now," to interjections like "Wait, whaaaaaaat?" Reynolds brings his unique conversational style that allows pauses to let readers consider and digest especially jarring and sometimes seemingly contradictory ideas. True to Kendi's

scholarship, yet presented in a way attuned to today's cadence and our youth's fervor, I highly recommend both the audiobook version as read by Reynolds and the print version. In fact, Jason Reynold's ALA Odyssey award-winning audiobook version is also the one I most often suggest to adult readers either unfamiliar with Kendi's scholarship, or still learning about how to examine and address racism through reading and reflective study.

Antiracist Baby
Author: Ibram X. Kendi
Illustrator: Ashley Lukashevsky
New York: Kokila, 2020. ISBN 9780593110508

Kendi reshapes his antiracist message for youngest readers in the picturebook and board book set. He leads off with "Antiracist baby is bred, not born./ Antiracist baby is raised to make society transform" and goes on to lay out nine steps for adults to take to help raise antiracist youngsters, with rhyming text and illustrated with charming toddlers and caregivers of diverse race and identities. In his afterword for parents and caregivers, Kendi speaks to the need to explicitly discuss race and racism with our children; "*Being antiracist is about what we do, not who we are. Being measured by our actions allows us to continue to grow.*"

Stamped (For Kids): Racism, Antiracism, and You
Authors: Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi
Adapted by Sonja Cherry-Paul
Illustrated by Rachelle Baker
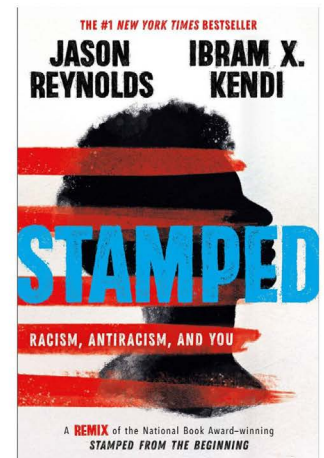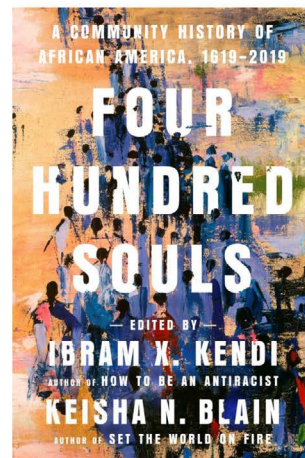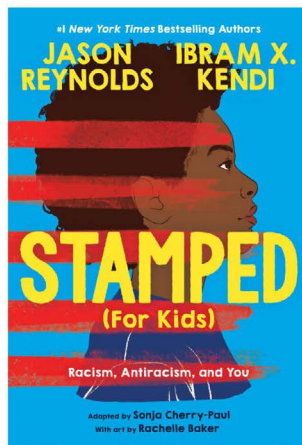Little Brown and Company, 2021. ISBN: 9780316167581

A middle-grade version adapted by author-educated Dr. Sonja Cherry-Paul further distills Jason Reynolds' adaptation. Undoing racism is hard, but necessary work. Attention and illustration of historical figures helps readers see history with a focus on the importance of personal choice while keeping highlights of Reynolds' personal and contemporary voice grounded in the historical choices, deeds, and words described by Kendi's scholarship.

Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America, 1619-2019
Edited by: Ibram X Kendi and Keisha N. Blaine
New York: One World, 2021. ISBN 9780593134047

In this book, eighty Black writers each give their take on a successive five-year period through historical essays, personal vignettes, and short stories to share an episode from African-American community history. Joined by ten poets and framed by essays from Kendi and Blaine, this compendium provides a distillation of 400 years of African American history beginning with the 1619 arrival of enslaved Africans on North American shores. Each essay may be read and considered on its own merits as well as viewed as a magnificent quilt confirming the significance that Black lives continue to play in our collective history as a nation.

While I first read 400 Souls in a page-turning cover-to-cover clean sweep, it can also be sampled and savored for any of the ninety-two remarkable offerings. The audiobook, which is read by a full cast including some but not all of the writers is something I've yet to listen to, but will this summer, thanks to my public library's holds list. (New York : Random House Audio, 2021. ISBN 9780593343210).

I hope these reviews can inform and inspire you to spread the word among readers, librarians, teachers and families in your community. In addition to the thread described here, there are so many other great books that can help build and sustain efforts toward a more just and equitable society. I'll share my #ReadWoke Destiny Collection as another springboard and invitation to read/discuss/do. I hope you'll jump in and build your own sharing platform to move this work forward, as Malcolm X famously phrased it "by any means necessary." America has waited 400 years for this stitching together of African American history. There's always work to be done...@library! 📖
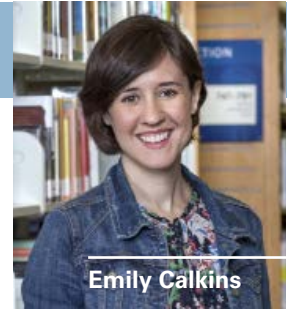
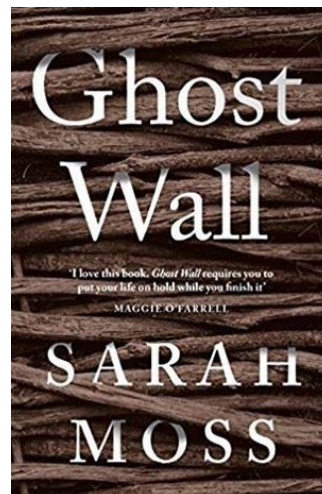# The Stillness of a Long Summer Afternoon
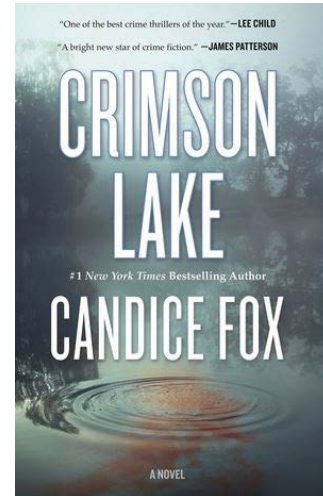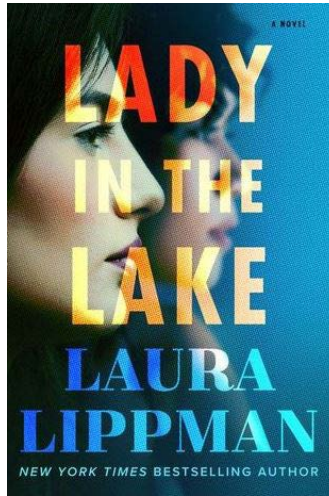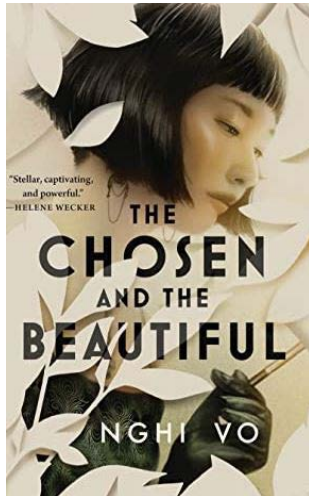
Midway through *Romeo and Juliet*, one of the characters gives a warning: "The day is hot; the Capulets, abroad; And if we meet we shall not 'scape a brawl, For now, these hot days, is the mad blood stirring." I have always loved this line; it captures the peculiar stillness of a long summer afternoon, a kind of oppressive quiet that seems to barely contain a kind of violence simmering beneath the surface. My favorite summer reads evoke that same quality; here are five of them.
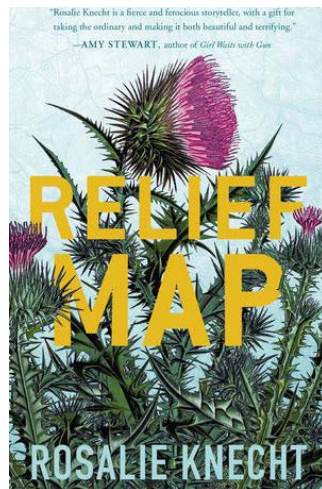
Nghi Vo's *The Chosen and the Beautiful* has a perfect hook, one that seems especially suited to our present moment: it is a queer re-telling of The Great Gatsby through the eyes of Jordan Baker, the lovely, aloof tennis pro who dates the original novel's narrator, Nick. In Vo's imagining, Jordan is bisexual and Vietnamese—and there's magic. In less confident hands, the premise could become a gimmick, but Vo recreates the summer of 1922 in lush language that echoes Fitzgerald's

without ever becoming mimicry. Atmosphere drips from every page. The characters, especially Jordan and Nick, are complex and nuanced with facets that reflect the themes of the original in unexpected ways.

For readers who are less inclined to the fantastic, mysteries often offer the same sense of foreboding. Laura Lippman's *The Lady in the Lake* is an evocative summer pick. In 1966, a Jewish housewife leaves her husband and son in the Baltimore suburbs for a new life as a reporter at one of the city's newspapers. When the body of a young Black woman named Cleo is discovered in a lake in a city park, Maddie seems to be the only person who cares who the woman is, or what happened to her. Lippman clearly loves Baltimore, and the sweltering city is as much a character as Maddie and Cleo.

Jane Harper is unquestionably Australia's crime queen, but on my personal list, Candice Fox runs a close second. *Crimson Lake* is the first of a series about Ted Concaffey, a former police detective accused of a hideous crime. He swears that he is innocent and he is not convicted, but the accusation is enough to ruin his life and send him into hiding in the swampy wetlands near Queensland.

Emily Calkins is the readers' services program coordinator for the King County Library System, where she organizes system-wide readers' advisory efforts, supports book groups, coordinates author events, and co-hosts the library's podcast, The Desk Set. *You can reach her at efcalkins@kcls.org.*

He reluctantly takes a job as a private investigator working for a woman with her own dark past. Like Harper, Fox ably combines a compelling mystery with a moody, memorable setting and characters.

Relief Map by Rosalie Knecht combines elements of a literary coming-of-age story with crime fiction. 16-year-old Livy wakes up on a summer morning to discover that her entire town is without power. Cell service is out, and when Livy and her dad try to drive to a dentist appointment one town over, they find that all the roads out of town are barricaded by police. Theres an international manhunt on, and Lomath's citizens are stuck. As the barricade wears on, Livy is caught in an act of desperation with consequences that ripple in unexpected ways. Knecht's keenly observed characters—Livy, but also her friends, family, and the others in their rural town - make the palpable sense of uncertainty and danger especially nerve-wracking.

Sarah Moss's *Ghost Wall* is a slim, unsettling read. An anthropology professor and three of his students set up camp on a Yorkshire moor, where they'll spend two weeks reenacting life in Iron Age Briton. They are joined by teenage Sylvie and her parents. Sylvie's father is a volatile, Iron Age-obsessed bus driver; her mother is so resigned and weary that she seems to disappear entirely into housework. In under 200 pages, Moss creates a complex teenage protagonist, a wrenching portrait of domestic violence, a subtle portrayal of class difference in the UK in the 1970s, a vivid depiction of the moors of northern England, and a gripping, atmospheric thriller. This is a book that begs to be devoured in a single sitting, preferably in a hammock on a long, hot afternoon.

What are you and your patrons reading this summer? I hope you'll let me know.. 📖

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. For the past year, 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. 📖

Deciphering Library
Job Postings

Image courtesy of Creative Commons.

WHAT THEY WRITE	WHAT IT MEANS
Varied schedule	Kiss your weekends and evenings goodbye
Position open until filled	We aren't certain people will even apply
Dynamic workplace	Feeding time at the zoo is calmer
Salary commensurate with experience	Our pay scale is so dismal we won't post it
Engages with partner organizations and members of the public to deliver service	You'll experience frustration trying to explain that libraries are much, much, much more than books
Responds to public inquiries and complaints	You'll answer a lot of comment cards
Hires, trains, coaches, disciplines and evaluates the performance of employees	We'd like to think you are more of a ringleader of a circus and the monkeys are escaping
Performs related duties as assigned	Teach classes, clean toilets, wrangle squirrels, and much more
Seeking candidate to own the work	You'll work with little guidance and all the responsibility
We are looking for someone energetic, creative, innovative and service-oriented	You need to be all the things for all the people

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.

Organizational Members

Asotin County Library

Bellevue College Library

Bellingham Public Library

Big Bend Community College, Bonaudi Library

Burlington Public Library

Community Colleges of Spokane - Library Services

Eastern Washington University Libraries

Ellensburg Public Library

Everett Public Library

Fort Vancouver Regional Library District

Gonzaga University, Foley Center Library

Grandview Library

Green River College

Highline College Library

Jefferson County Library

King County Library System

Kitsap Regional Library

Lake Washington Institute of Technology

Longview Public Library

Lower Columbia College

National Network of Libraries of Medicine, Pacific NW Region

NCW Libraries

North Olympic Library System

North Seattle College

Orcas Island Library District

Pierce College Library

Primary Source

Puyallup Public Library

Renton Technical College Library

Ritzville Library District #2

San Juan Island Library

Seattle Central College Library

Seattle Public Library

SHKS Architects

Sno-Isle Libraries

South Seattle College Library

Spokane County Library District

Spokane Public Library

Stevens County Rural Library District

Tacoma Public Library

The Evergreen State College

Upper Skagit Library

Walla Walla Community College Library

Washington Center for the Book

Washington State Library

Whatcom Community College

Whatcom County Library System

Whitman County Library

Yakima Valley Libraries