Hello everyone and welcome to the April 2020 issue of The SRRT Newsletter. This month we are focusing on voting and voter suppression because we believe this is a social justice issue where libraries can and do play a role. In keeping with our theme, we have included a piece by Mac Heller, the executive producer of the new documentary about voter suppression, called *Rigged: The Voter Suppression Playbook*, as well as a review of the film. You can watch the film on Amazon Prime or iTunes. The producers of *Rigged* are also offering free copies of the DVD to libraries.

I recently moderated a panel that took place after a screening of the film and I was reminded again of how voting and voter suppression is so closely linked to race, age, socioeconomic status, geographical location, health, income and other factors. I strongly believe we, as library staff, can ameliorate some of these barriers by taking actions that reduce obstacles to voter registration and voting itself. There are many national, statewide, and local organizations that would make great library partners. A short list is included in this newsletter, along with some examples of what libraries are doing. If you are taking action to make it easier for your community to register and vote, we’d love to hear from you. **Julie Winkelstein**

February and March 2020 had been shaping up to be special months because, among other things, of the run-up to the ALA elections. Then, more and more local and state governments were calling for the temporary halting of non-essential operations to encourage the members of the public to stay home and stem the tide of the COVID-19 pandemic that is sweeping the globe. Library organizations and workers are greatly affected, as we see in the *News Around Libraryland*. For the health and safety of both library patrons and workers, many libraries have closed for the next few weeks at least, some indefinitely. Though the US Census and the US presidential elections are significant national events that call upon each of us to participate, the current pandemic also requires our attention and response. For many of us, the decision to work from home may have been made by others. But our conscious choices to wash our hands more frequently, to not gather in groups, and to maintain at least 6-feet distance from other individuals are decisions that help our collective well-being. Thank you all for making socially responsible choices! **Melissa Cardenas-Dow**
SRRT Coordinator Report

Hello everyone!

1. The Amelia Bloomer Project will now be known as Rise: A Feminist Book Project for Ages 0-18. The project has been promoting quality feminist literature for young readers since 2002 as a part of the Feminist Task Force and the Social Responsibilities Round Table. This year, the committee was made aware that, though Amelia Bloomer had a platform as a publisher, she refused to speak against the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 (Simmons). SRRT and FTF believe librarians and libraries must work to correct social problems and inequities with particular attention to intersectionality, feminism, and deliberate anti-racism.

As a result, the committee unanimously voted in favor of a name change. Rise: A Feminist Book Project for Ages 0-18 reflects the diversity and inclusion for which feminism as a whole — and this committee specifically — strives.

The bibliography is intended as a recommended reading list for children and teens. It may also be used by interested librarians, teachers, parents, and others who work with youth. The complete 2020 list can be accessed online.

2. SRRT is pleased to announce that it has awarded its second annual conference travel grants to Jay Dela Cruz, Library Manager of Queens Public Library and to Joseph Winberry, a first year Ph.D. student at the University of Tennessee’s College of Communication & Information. The Herb Biblo Conference Travel Grants sponsored by SRRT help finance attendance at the ALA Annual Conference. The $1000 award covers limited fees related to airfare, lodging, and conference registration. SRRT funds up to two applicants per year.

Update: Although the 2020 ALA Annual Conference has been cancelled, the 2020 Herb Biblo Conference grant winners will receive the opportunity to attend the 2021 ALA Annual Conference instead.

Jay Dela Cruz is the Library Manager of Queens Public Library at Seaside and has been providing public service and community outreach for 20 years. He has also worked in special and academic libraries and was nominated for the I Love My Librarian award in 2017. He currently serves on the ALA Council as an At-Large Councilor and is also the current Vice President/President Elect of the New York Library Association Ethnic Services Round Table. Aside from being a member of Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT), Jay is also a member of Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA), Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table (GNCRT), Office of Information Technology Policy (OITP) Advisory Committee, Public Library Association (PLA) Membership Advisory Group, PLA Upstart Innovation Award Jury and was recently appointed to be a member of the Building Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity Framework Joint Task Force of the ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services (ODLOS), Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), Association of Research Libraries (ARL), and Public Library Association (PLA). Jay is committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice and in advancing the vision and mission of libraries.

Joseph Winberry is a first year Ph.D. student at the University of Tennessee’s College of Communication & Information. He previously obtained a masters of information sciences at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Winberry has been recognized for his contributions to the profession, winning the University of Tennessee’s Gary R. Purcell Award for promise as a...
SRRT Councilor Report

Continued from p. 2

leader in the field. His research on creating information resources for diverse older adults earned him best student paper from University of Tennessee Information Sciences faculty as well as funding from the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE).

Prior to joining the information profession, Winberry spent numerous years working for non-profit organizations in the Knoxville area including the Community Action Committee (CAC) Office on Aging where he originated the organization’s elder abuse community outreach program. He credits this work with inspiring a belief in using information resources to help people make a difference in their lives and looks forward to working with other members of the Social Responsibility Roundtable to continue efforts to do just that.

3. Congratulations to Kayla Kuni who is SRRT’s 2020 Emerging Leader. The sponsorship consists of a $1000 award towards attendance at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia and ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. As SRRT’s Emerging Leader, Kayla will attend ALA Midwinter to participate in a day-long leadership session with additional online training that will continue for six months. At the ALA 2020 Annual Conference in Chicago, Kayla and her team will present a poster session showcasing the results of their project.

I had written more about Kayla in the my report published in the last issue of The SRRT Newsletter.

4. SRRT is very excited to announce a new award — The Herb Biblo Outstanding Leadership Award for Justice and Equality. The purpose of this award is to recognize an individual for outstanding leadership in promoting social justice and/or equality within the library profession. Leadership can be demonstrated by accomplishments through the Social Responsibilities Round Table or other ALA bodies, socially responsible groups within state, provincial, regional, or city library organizations, and/or international library organizations. Preference will be given to persons who have had the widest impact, including influence on the greater society outside the library environment. To be eligible for this award, individuals must be members of SRRT or other library organizations or groups with similar goals and objectives. One award of $2000 per year. The deadline for nominations is December 1st of each year. More information will be forthcoming next Fall 2020.

5. As of December 2019, SRRT has increased membership by 0.43% compared to last year. Included are other roundtables which saw an increase in December.

Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) 1876, +0.43%
Rainbow Round Table (RRT) 1445, +0.14%
Sustainability Round Table (SUSTRT) 1204, +15.66%
Ethnic & Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT) 985, +4.12%
ALA has 57,177, -1.35%

6. If you would like to become more involved in SRRT or its task forces, please let us know so we can direct you to a task force representative. The SRRT Task Forces are Feminist Task Force (FTF); Hunger, Homelessness, & Poverty Task Force (HHPFT); International Responsibilities Task Force (IRTG); and Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Task Force (MLKTF). You can also use the volunteer form to serve on ALA, Divisions and Round Tables committees/task forces. This form includes volunteer opportunities in SRRT.

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Charles E. Kratz, Jr. SRRT Action Council Coordinator
SRRT Councilor Report

The most notable piece of business coming out of SRRT at Midwinter was the Resolution Ensuring Intellectual Freedom and the Right to Peacefully Assemble at ALA Conferences and Meetings. The resolution was written largely by SRRT member Al Kagan with considerable input by the SRRT action council and others in response to the announcement of “The Square,” a planned feature of the upcoming Midwinter conference which amounted to a free speech zone. The resolved clause of the version of the resolution that was ultimately introduced and read “requires that the ALA Council approve all internal restrictions to First Amendment rights at ALA Midwinter Meetings and ALA Annual Conferences proposed by all ALA offices, ALA committees, or other ALA bodies.”

A suggestion came up at the preceding evening’s Council Forum that it should be amended to apply to ALA events more broadly. I was concerned that this might be considered an overreach but agreed to second the amendment and see if there was objection on the Council floor. The amendment and the resolution itself passed easily!

However, immediately after the meeting there were concerns raised that this was an overreach. Ultimately a second resolution was brought at Council II proposing that the implementation of the resolution be delayed until Annual, to allow for a new one to be written and presented. Ultimately that resolution failed. Had it succeeded, I was already preparing a third resolution to cover the gap between Midwinter and Annual. Lesson learned: when introducing a potentially controversial amendment, stall for time so everyone has time to think through their possible objections and make them before the amendment has passed!

At the third Council meeting the task force that was convened after Annual 2019 reported back on the process of revising the Resolution in Defense of Free Speech of Supporters of the Movement for Palestinian Rights. Despite considerable work by all task force members on a consensus revision to the resolution, the committees that made up the task force did not vote to endorse the new resolution and so the original from the 2019 membership meeting was returned to the Council floor. The resolution was not immediately set aside, however, and instead a robust discussion ensued on its merits. SRRT member Tom Twiss, the original drafter, spoke to it on the Council floor (thanks, Tom!) and although the resolution failed, I was glad that it at last got the discussion it deserved on the floor. As you may remember, it was immediately referred to committee with no real discussion when it came up at the Annual meeting.

Also adopted at Midwinter was the Resolution in Opposition to Charging Prisoners to Read, which opposed programs that are being adopted at many prisons which replace traditional prison libraries with pay-by-the-page e-readers and other for-profit solutions, which infringe on the intellectual freedom of a population already severely mistreated in that regard.

At the start of the Midwinter conference, it was revealed that there had been some serious financial issues at ALA in recent months. First, all divisions and round tables learned that the funds they’d saved from previous years’ budgets had been taken and spent by ALA to cover a significant budget shortfall. Council was informed over several meetings that ALA’s finances had been less sustainable than we’d been informed over the past several years. The full implications of this announcement are yet to be seen, but during a discussion at Council III council members were adamant that they should be kept better informed in the future.

Additionally, over the course of the conference, there were many conversations surrounding the SCOE plan. The major concerns remain the same: first, the plan is particularly restrictive to round tables and could lead to the quick elimination to several crucial ones, including the Library Support Staff Interests Round Table and the Government Documents Round Table. Secondly, the elimination of Council will consolidate decision making authority in a very small number of hands in a select group (the Executive Board), which tends to be even more dominated by upper management than Council itself is. Instead, ALA should be seeking ways to make Council more accessible to front-line library workers.

I want to invite all SRRT members - and anyone reading, really - to contact me if you have questions, concerns, or issues you’d like ALA to take up. I’m proud to represent the largest, liveliest, most outspoken round table at ALA and I want to hear from you!

Tara Brady
SRRT Councilor
SRRT and FTF believe librarians and libraries must work to correct social problems and inequities with particular attention to intersectionality, feminism, and deliberate anti-racism.

More about Rise, Formerly the Amelia Bloomer Project

Most everyone will have heard that the Amelia Bloomer Project will now be known as Rise: A Feminist Book Project for Ages 0-18.

This year, the committee was made aware that, although Amelia Bloomer had a platform as a publisher, she refused to speak against the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 (Simmons). SRRT and FTF believe librarians and libraries must work to correct social problems and inequities with particular attention to intersectionality, feminism, and deliberate anti-racism. As a result, the committee unanimously voted in favor of a name change. Rise: A Feminist Book Project for Ages 0-18, reflects the diversity and inclusion for which feminism as a whole — and this committee specifically — strives.

The bibliography is intended as a recommended reading list for children and teens. It may also be used by interested librarians, teachers, parents, and others who work with youth. The complete 2020 list can be accessed online.

History of the Project

At ALA Midwinter 2001 the SRRT Feminist Task Force decided to start the Feminist Books for Youth Project: The Amelia Bloomer List, with the purpose of communicating to the public young people’s literature that is “Feminist Friendly” or encourages gender equality. A group of interested FTF members prepared suggested policies and procedures, and on March 5, 2001 submitted it to the FTF listserv for feedback.

"SRRT and FTF believe librarians and libraries must work to correct social problems and inequities with particular attention to intersectionality, feminism, and deliberate anti-racism."

Those interested in joining the nine-member selection committee were asked to contact Jenny Baltes, at Forest Hill Elementary School in Maryland:

"Nel Ward, Debbie Carton, Peter Butts and I at down at ALA Midwinter and discussed the need for a list of recommended feminist literature for young people. We know they are out there, the books I mean, and we want to help librarians, teachers, parents, and children find them. We decided to develop Nel's idea into a set of policies and procedures that might answer the questions Who, What, When, Where, How, and Why (as if anyone needs to ask Why!). We have loosely named this list Bloomers, in honor of Amelia Bloomer and with the idea that these books might help young girls bloom into strong, smart, confident womn."

The first Amelia Bloomer List was announced in Women in Libraries in Spring 2002: "Two years ago, Shana Carey introduced nineteenth-century feminist activist Amelia Bloomer to your readers in You Forgot Your Skirt, Amelia Bloomer! This picture book uses humor and history to bring the life and work of this pioneering newspaper editor, feminist thinker, public speaker, and suffragist to a new generation. In the spirit of Amelia Bloomer, the Feminist Task Force proudly announces the first annual Amelia Bloomer List, a bibliography of appealing feminist books for young readers from birth to 18 ... Set from prehistoric times to the present, these books, both fiction and nonfiction, provide role models of strong, capable, creative women ... these books show girls and women exploring exciting ways to solve practical dilemmas through the courage of their convictions. All spur the imagination and expand the limits of dreams while confronting traditional female stereotypes." On April 27, 2002, Baltes wrote to the FTF listserv: "Project members Nel Ward, Jane Cothron, Peter Butts, Debbie Carton, Ilene Cooper, Ellen Greenblatt, Frances Bradburn, Donna Barkman and I enjoyed the challenge of selecting the best feminist literature published in 2001." Selections aren’t ranked, but the 2002 list includes books as diverse as Jacqueline Woodson’s picture book The Other Side and the young adult anthology Yentl’s Revenge: the Next Wave of Jewish Feminism.

The project has been going strong ever since, with the promise of continued work under a new name to foreground recommended feminist literature for young people.

Continues on p. 6
Feminist Task Force (FTF) News

Continued from p. 5

More about Amelia Bloomer and abolition:


“Mrs. Bloomer had never been classed among the ‘abolitionists,’ but she was nevertheless an intense hater of slavery and the slave power...”


“Although Bloomer deplored slavery she did not favor the abolitionists’ radical solution and she saw intemperance as a greater evil than slavery ... However cruel and revolting the condition of the slave, Bloomer asserted, a slave’s burdens were light compared with those of a drunkard.”


“In a letter to Susan B. Anthony, [Elizabeth Cady] Stanton wrote that Anthony must ‘take Mrs. Bloomer’s suggestions with great caution, for she has not the spirit of the reformer.’ Anthony remembered Bloomer from the Seneca Falls convention where ‘she stood aloof and laughed at us. It was only with great effort and patience that she has been brought up to her present position. In her paper, she will not speak against the fugitive slave law...’”

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Submitted by Sherre Harrington, Feminist Task Force Coordinator

Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Task Force (HHPTF) News

In keeping with the theme of this issue of The SRRT Newsletter, I’m going to talk about homelessness and voting.

Nonprofit Vote answers some basic questions about voting and homelessness. Their Q & A includes:

Q. Can someone who is homeless register and vote?
A. Yes. Persons experiencing homelessness can register and vote in all 50 states.

Q. What should this person list as their home address?
A. It is recommended homeless registrants list a shelter address as their voting address where they could receive mail. Alternatively, homeless registrants may denote a street corner or a park as their residence, in lieu of a traditional home address. The federal voter registration form and many state forms provide a space for this purpose.

Q. Does the registrant have to have lived at this location for any particular length of time?
A. Most states have some duration of residency requirements for voter registration – for example, having resided for 30 days or more before the Election Day in the state or county. Contact your local elections officials to find out what the rules are in your state.

The National Coalition for the Homeless (NAEH) has a web page called “You Don’t Need a Home to Vote.” On that page, they list multiple barriers to voting, including:

- Affording the required identification for registration and/or voting
- Having access to the required documents for registration

Vote! Image from Mary Engelbreit.

Continues on p. 11
Transportation – to get the identification, to register, to vote
• Gathering relevant information about the candidates, measures, issues
• Knowing the laws in their state about any voting requirements

NAEH has created a toolkit that provides guidance on helping people who are experiencing homelessness to vote. It’s available as a downloadable pdf on the same website. One point they make is about the misconceptions housed people may have that people who are unhoused aren’t interested in voting. As they say: “Low income people are no more or less interested in politics than anyone else. Please don’t let your attitude be a barrier. Our clients are often disconnected from community life. Voting helps them reconnect with their community in a positive way.”

Another possible connection if you’re in the Atlanta, Georgia area is MiniCity, a tech startup that helps people experiencing homelessness get IDs. Although currently limited geographically, maybe there’s an organization in your area that is offering similar services.

As libraries we can reach out to our community members who are experiencing homelessness and ask them about voting. Are they interested in voting? Do they know how to register? Do they need documents or IDs or transportation? As many of you are probably aware, there are many cities that have what are called “quality of life” laws, that prohibit actions like asking for money, sitting/lying down in public spaces, even giving out free food to those who are hungry. Laws like these are created by elected officials or through elections, so local as well as national voting is critical. We can all make a difference by voting, no matter our housing status!

We will be devoting the June issue of this newsletter to COVID-19 and the impact it is having, and will continue to have, on our communities and our country. As the co-coordinator of HHPTF, I want to encourage libraries to reach out to your community members who are experiencing homelessness now, so you can help them navigate this pandemic as well as possible. Another way to help is to attend webinars hosted by organizations like the National Alliance to End Homelessness and Point Source Youth. Both of these and others are providing resources, answering questions and offering guidance to the on-the-ground workers who are doing their best to meet the needs of our unhoused community members. By attending or listening to their webinars and by letting these organizations or local agencies know libraries are interested in making a difference, we can help lower or remove barriers for people who are experiencing homelessness by listening, partnering, and taking action.

Some libraries are providing handwashing stations, others are lending laptops to shelters, others are using their Bookmobile as a mobile hotspot in rural areas. I’m sure there are many more examples of what libraries are doing and I’d love to hear about them.

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Submitted by Julie Winkelstein, HHPTF Co-Coordinator

Digital image from Shutterstock
For the International Responsibilities Round Table, the 2019 Midwinter Meeting combined successes with disappointment.

We want to highlight our successful resolution on freedom of speech and assembly at ALA meetings (2019-2020 ALA CD#40). The need for this action resulted from the way an ad hoc demonstration against CIA recruitment was treated at the 2019 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC. ALA staff had summarily stopped a peaceful non-obstructive demonstration in front of the CIA booth in the exhibit hall. SRRT’s resolution was actually broadened on the Council floor and passed by unanimous vote. It requires that ALA Council approve all internal restrictions to First Amendment rights proposed by all ALA offices, ALA committees, or other ALA bodies.

On Jan. 25, Mosab Abu Toha, the founder and director of the Edward Said Public Library in Gaza, spoke movingly on the topic “Libraries in Gaza: Between Despair and Hope.” Approximately 30 people attended—a respectable turnout for a Midwinter discussion group—and many signed up to receive more information. Mosab recounted the heartbreaking destruction of his English Department library at the Islamic University in Gaza by Israeli bombs, and how that moved him to create the Edward Said Public Library. He also described the variety of other difficulties faced by librarians in Gaza and all Gazans. A recording is available of a similar presentation by Mosab, introduced by Noam Chomsky, at the University of Arizona on Feb. 10. Donations supporting the Edward Said Public Library can be made through the Middle East Children’s Alliance.

In contrast, the outcome of our resolution was disappointing. At the 2019 ALA Annual conference SRRT Action Council, motivated by ALA’s strong historical commitment to the defense of free speech and intellectual freedom in general, passed a resolution opposing the massive wave of legislation restricting the free speech of supporters of Palestinian rights. Subsequently, it was approved by the ALA membership meeting by a vote of 63 to 62. Then ALA Council referred it to a task force ultimately composed of representatives of the Committee on Legislation (COL), the International Relations Committee (IRC), the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), SRRT Action Council, and one other Councilor. A sense of the ensuing discussion can be gathered from the task force’s “Report/forwarding letter” and SRRT Action Council’s “Response to the Report,” reproduced on the SRRT webpages. [the Report/Forwarding Letter is Appendix A in the SRRT Action Council Response to the Report. “the Editors”]

Consideration of the resolution in Council was anti-climactic. Since none of the three committees on the task force supported the task force’s revised resolution, discussion reverted to the original resolution. While SRRT members preferred the revised version, we were persuaded by ALA parliamentarian Eli Mina that substituting it would be extremely complicated, time consuming, and frustrating. Considering the opposition we faced, we concluded it would not be productive. Ultimately, the original resolution was defeated overwhelmingly.

For more details, please read more on the SRRT website.

Submitted by Tom Twiss and Al Kagan, IRTF Co-Coordinators

“Consideration of the resolution in Council was anti-climactic. Since none of the three committees on the task force supported the task force’s revised resolution, discussion reverted to the original resolution.”
Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Task Force (MLKTF) News

“It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one destiny, affects all indirectly.” Martin Luther King Jr. “A Christmas Sermon on Peace, 1967.

It’s been over two months since many of us last saw each other at the 2020 ALA Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia. Who could have possibly predicted that two months later, the entire world would be almost shuttered due to the deadly COVID-19 virus pandemic? When all is said and done, millions of Americans alone will have been infected. Where do we go from here?

I couldn’t possibly answer the last question alone. But it has been fascinating to watch communities from across the world coalesce to deal with COVID-19. Whether you are in Italy or Brooklyn sharing a song together, or frontline health care workers laying their lives on the line to serve afflicted patients, we’re experiencing interconnectedness and mutuality in real time.

Library communities across the world are mutually finding ways to serve their communities, whether it be through ask-a-librarian chat services, virtual storytimes, or offering library facilities as temporary care centers. As we reconcile our obligations to the communities we serve, libraries and their administrators need to ensure the safety of library staff. It’s my hope that libraries and their respective staff, boards, and administrators are:

- Heeding ALA’s call to close all libraries for the safety and well-being of all library staff.
- Paying library staff during closures and allow them to use their benefits.
- Addressing the social justice issues around and COVID-19. We’re seeing signs of African-Americans being disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Other at-risk groups are folks experiencing homelessness, people with underlying medical conditions, older citizens, and people who live in group settings (nursing homes, prisons, etc.). In addition to health care workers, there are so many other workers putting themselves in harm’s way like folks in service industries who need to remain open to be able to provide necessities.

As the outbreak continues to spike and more people across the world battle the virus, it’s going to remain ever so important for SRRT to fight for universal rights like health care, living wages, and against the structural racism that make us all so much more susceptible to pandemics. As our lives and destinies intertwine through this crisis, we must continue the fight for social justice.

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Laluan S. Pringle,
MLKHTF Coordinator
Voting: What Can Libraries Do?

Libraries can play an active role in ensuring all of our community members who want to vote are able to do just that. Turnouts for elections are relatively small and unlike what we may think, this isn’t voter apathy but is usually related to bad experiences trying to vote, problems with getting registered, state laws that make it difficult to vote, long lines and short hours at polling places, and other barriers.

So what can your library do? Since every state has their own rules governing registration and voting, some of these may apply, others may not. Consequently, the first thing a library can do is to find out what is true for voters in your state, so you can pass that information on to your community members.

Voter registration: Offer paper voter registration forms and bookmark the online voter registration. Offer information about how to register in your state and how to check if a person has been purged from the voting rolls. Many of the organizations listed below have a link so voters can check to see if they are registered.

Voting: Provide information about state requirements for voting.

Connect with an organization: There are many national, state and local organizations that are committed to helping everyone who can vote do just that. Here are a few national organizations:

⇒ TurboVote: Lets people know when elections are happening, helps with registration and applying for absentee ballot.

“Libraries can play an active role in ensuring all of our community members who want to vote are able to do just that.”

⇒ VoteRiders: Helps people get the IDs they need to vote, including paying for documents and providing rides to and from ID-issuing offices. VoteRiders is part of Democracy Works, which has created this page in response to the effect of COVID-19 on state elections.

⇒ Nonprofit VOTE: Works with non-profits to help the people they serve participate and vote.

The ALA Government Documents Round Table (GODORT) has created Voting & Election Toolkits that are useful for all your community members, including those who are experiencing homelessness and poverty.

There may also be a local organization that is addressing voter suppression, including barriers to voting. A good example of an organization like this is Equity Alliance, “a Tennessee-based non-profit that equips black and brown citizens with tools and strategies to strengthen their communities and make government work better.” Across the country, there are organizations like Equity Alliance, that are passionate about making sure people can vote, as well as encouraging them to vote and become involved.

Reach out to your local ACLU and/or League of Women Voters: For more information on voting in your community, potential barriers, and how your library can help.

Local schools: Are they offering civics classes on voting? Could you contribute resources, materials, links, spaces?

A few examples of what libraries are doing:

◆ Linebaugh Public Library, Murfreesboro, TN
  ◆ Provides a box for community members to drop off voter registration forms, which are picked up the election commission weekly

Continues on p. 11
Voting: What Can Libraries Do?

- League of Women Voters sets up a table during registration period
- Sacramento Public Library, CA
  - Started serving as ballot drop-off sites in 2014 and that service is now at all 28 locations
  - Starting in 2020, added 11 voter service centers, where voters can register, change address, replace bits of their ballot if they made mistakes or even simply have an experience reminiscent of going to the polls.

Key to Community Voting Participation Toolkit: Provides voter and community education that is co-designed and delivered by adult literacy learners involved with California Library Literacy Services, a program of the California State Library, and Common Knowledge, a nonpartisan organization committed to accessible civic information and grassroots community leadership

EveryLibrary: Has helped connect hundreds of libraries and local disability rights groups with each other; On the steering committee for National Voter Registration Day (9/22/20) and the library partner for National Disability Voter Registration Week (mid-July) which focuses on voter registration, voter participation, and ballot accessibility for Americans with disabilities.

These are just a few examples and ideas—we’d love to hear about more!

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Julie Winkelstein
The SRRT Newsletter Co-Editor

“2020 will mark the first time in 75 years that ALA has not held an Annual Conference. The last cancellation took place in 1945 as World War II neared its end.”

News Around Libraryland

Continued from p. 6

having on people’s lives as well as the economy.”

BCALA will be refunding conference registrations and will be coordinating with ALA site services to move the date of the conference. The Executive Board has elected to hold the passing of the gavel ceremony for the incoming President at a special meeting of the New York State Black Librarian’s Caucus after the pandemic is over.

BCALA would like to thank all members and supporters for their continued dedication during this difficult time.

Reprinted from the 11th National Conference of African American Librarians website

American Library Association Cancels 2020 Annual Conference Due to COVID-19

CHICAGO — The American Library Association’s Executive Board announced today that the 2020 ALA Annual Conference & Exhibition scheduled for June 25-30 in Chicago has been canceled.

“ALA’s priority is the health and safety of the library community, including our members, staff, supporters, vendors and volunteers,” said Wanda K. Brown, ALA president. “As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds, it’s become clear that in the face of an unprecedented situation, we need to make tough choices.”

2020 will mark the first time in 75 years that ALA has not held an Annual Conference. The last cancellation took place in 1945 as World War II neared its end.

“We recognize the magnitude of this decision for the association and our membership,” said Tracie D. Hall, ALA executive director. “The Annual Conference brings together tens of thousands of passionate professionals and hundreds of authors and exhibitors every year to celebrate the transformative work of libraries across the country and around the world. Our coming together not only galvanizes the library and information profession and its stakeholders, but also provides opportunities for attendees to explore and connect with our host cities. This year, we were especially looking forward to the conference taking place in ALA’s hometown of Chicago; however, the well-being of our library community, staff and fellow Chicago residents has to be...
News Around Libraryland

Continued from p. 11

the number one concern, and that drove our decision-making.”

Julius C. Jefferson, Jr., ALA president-elect, agreed: “At this unprecedented and historic time the health and safety of our members and their families are our primary concern. I want us all to focus on our collective health so we may live to advocate for libraries and library workers another day.”

Brown continued, “I am so sorry that this difficult decision had to be made, but I am certain that it is the right one. One of our greatest strengths is our ability to adapt and reinvent ourselves when needed the most. May these challenging and uncertain times find us working even closer together so that our libraries, our communities, our association and our families will all thrive.”


The association will be working with conference registrants directly over the coming weeks. As well, ALA staff, in partnership with ALA member leaders, are developing plans to carry out the important business of the association, such as council and board meetings.

“Although this is a great disappointment, ALA is far from the only organization taking a hard look at its events,” Hall said. “We are using this to fuel our planning for Midwinter conference in Indianapolis in January 2021 and look forward to Annual Conference 2021 scheduled to be held in Chicago. We want to make both of those meetings incredible experiences. We want them to serve as opportunities for the profession to regroup and recharge.”

Reprinted from ALA News Press Release, dated March 24, 2020

Mark your calendar, ALA Virtual - Community Through Connection, June 24-26, 2020

Please refer to the full ALA Press Release on ALA Virtual 2020 for additional information.

Registration for ALA Virtual open on May 11, 2020. For more information, please visit the ALA Virtual Event Webpage.

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News Around Libraryland

“May these challenging and uncertain times find us working even closer together so that our libraries, our communities, our association and our families will all thrive.”

Media Review: Rigged: The Voter Suppression Playbook

Rigged: The Voter Suppression Playbook

The documentary film Rigged: The Voter Suppression Playbook is narrated by actor Jeffrey Wright (@ifreewright), who begins by citing his grandfather, a Chesapeake Bay oysterman born in 1904, and his belief in the importance of the vote. Framed around a nine-point “playbook”, the film is divided into segments that explore different voter suppression tactics such as gerrymandering, voter ID laws, voter roll purges, voter intimidation, and the myth of voter fraud. The film traces the resurgence of these efforts to the 2008 election of Barack Obama as president and the implication (and sometimes the direct statement) that certain Republicans were uncomfortable with the “demographic tide and destiny that had kind of taken over for Democrats” that would lead to a generation of Democratic victories (Mark MacKinnon, Republican strategist for Pres. George W. Bush).

The film was shot during the 2016 U.S. election and chronicles legislative and private efforts in states including North Carolina, Wisconsin, Texas, and my home state of Missouri to make voting more difficult for certain slices of the electorate, or alternatively, in the opinion of those attempting to make the change, to protect voter integrity. The film’s companion website,

Continues on p. 13
“As the 2020 election proceeds apace, the issues raised by Rigged are relevant and in the news.”

As a public librarian, Missouri election judge, and self-declared (though increasingly cynical) democracy nerd, I eagerly embraced the opportunity to watch a film about voter suppression and share my thoughts with The SRRT Newsletter. In my dozen plus years working at the polls in St. Louis I have never encountered an instance of voter fraud, and I looked forward to finding some additional facts to back up my “There is no such thing as voter fraud” refrain.

As the 2020 election proceeds apace, the issues raised by Rigged are relevant and in the news. The photo on the right shows me wearing my (invisible) City of St. Louis election judge hat in 2017 in one of the first elections after the State of Missouri implemented a photo ID requirement to vote, as seen in the film (Play 8: “Voter ID Déjà Vu”).

The photo was republished last week because photo ID is back in the news. After being ruled unconstitutional, the Republican-dominated Missouri legislature is taking steps to put the requirement back in place; HB 1600 has been passed out of the Missouri House and is being considered by the Senate.

(Librarian’s note: the book behind the roll of “I Voted” stickers is So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed by Jon Ronson, which I was reading for a SLPL book club and had on hand for any downtime reading opportunities during the day).

One of the many news stories that came out of the recent Super Tuesday contests focused on the long lines at the polls in many areas in Texas, with some voters waiting as long as 6 hours to cast their ballot. Texas is one of the states that, under the Voting Rights Act, was required to seek approval from the federal election authorities prior to taking certain actions because of their history of voting discrimination. These requirements were lifted when the U.S. Supreme Court decided Shelby County v. Holder in 2013 (Play 4: “Gut the Voting Rights Act”); Texas counties closed 750 polling places between 2012 and 2018, and the closures disproportionately impacted Democratic and minority voters.

As Ari Berman reported in Mother Jones, based on a recent analysis in The Guardian:

Lisa Thorp, a Democratic election judge, consults with others as Mike Kien fills out his provisional ballot envelope to vote at New City School on Tuesday, July 14, 2017. Kien did not bring any identification with him to vote for the 29th Ward Alderman position. “They were prepared, they knew the envelope,” said Kien to the poll workers. “Some people are leaving with a (farting) sticker. I’m leaving with a receipt.” Photo by Robert Cohen.

Continues on p. 14
“The 50 counties that gained the most Black and Latinx residents between 2012 and 2018 closed 542 polling sites, compared to just 34 closures in the 50 counties that have gained the fewest black and Latinx residents.” (You can read more by Berman on voter suppression in his 2015 book, *Give Us the Ballot*.)

The tone of Rigged: The Voter Suppression Playbook is very earnest and just a little melodramatic, but I realize that my tone when talking about attempts to keep people from voting can also be pretty earnest and at times might be perceived as a tad melodramatic as well. Given the importance of the vote and the efforts so many have made to reclaim or maintain access to the ballot, I think a little earnestness and melodrama is in order. It’s well worth spending a little over an hour to watch the film (available at many public libraries through Hoopla and streaming on Amazon Prime) and hear from people like Stacey Abrams, Reverend William Barber II, and Representative Elijah Cummings, and meet people like Rosanell Eaton, who marched with Dr. King and said at a North Carolina rally: “I didn’t ever think I’d have to go through this again before I was in the grave.” The film was dedicated to Rep. Cummings (1951-2019) and Ms. Eaton (1921-2018). I suspect it will leave you, in the words of Ms. Eaton at a North Carolina rally (prior to being arrested), “Fed up and fired up.”

Enjoy the film, check your voter registration, and please make sure you, your friends, and your family all make it to the polls. #vote

**VOTER ENGAGEMENT @ ALA**

Some resources from the American Library Association to support the work of all types of libraries to increase voter engagement in all communities:

- [ALA Voter Engagement Guide](#)
- [ALA GODORT Voting & Elections Toolkit](#)
Essay: Why I Made a Film on Voter Suppression

After a career in which I’ve been neither a voting rights activist nor a filmmaker, I’ve made a full-length feature documentary on voting rights called Rigged: The Voter Suppression Playbook. I’d like to tell you why.

I went to law school many years ago, but I never practiced law. I went pretty much right into a career in finance, but after you go to law school, there’s a part of you that remains a lawyer, that remembers constitutional law, remembers all we have in America because of the law and our respect for it.

One of my favorite topics in law school was the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It brought tens of millions of American citizens into their rightful place in our democracy. It was passed by bipartisan majorities in both houses of Congress, and signed by a Southern President, all because it was the right thing to do.

So I was surprised in 2013 when the Supreme Court issued a decision, Shelby County vs. Holder, that gutted the central provision of the Voting Rights Act. I hadn’t read a Supreme Court opinion in maybe thirty years, but I read Shelby. Chief Justice Roberts said the era of racial discrimination in voting in the American South was over, and that this new reality voided the justifications for the law. Was that right?

After Shelby, I watched state after state pass new laws regulating limiting the right to vote. I always felt our problem in America was that too few people voted—it has always frustrated me—but the new laws went the other way. First in the Southern states that had been freed from the Voting Rights Act by Shelby, but then in a lot of battleground states—Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, my home state of Ohio. The politicians passing these laws said there was widespread voter impersonation fraud—someone going to the polls and claiming to be someone else and voting in their name, and maybe doing this multiple times—and these laws were necessary to tighten the system. I hate fraud, especially in our elections. So these laws are okay, right?

It seemed to be worth thinking about that issue in a structured way. I’m a former finance person, so that voter fraud point struck me as a numbers question. How much fraud is there? We should know. And of course I’m a former law student, so it struck me also as a legislative drafting question — are the new laws narrowly tailored to prevent fraudulent votes, and only fraudulent votes, and to protect the right of eligible voters to participate? Or were they doing something else? We should know that too.

I thought I might take a year or two and write a book analyzing exactly those questions, but in the first few weeks of my research I learned four things, and those four things changed everything.

The first was that no one had found widespread voter impersonation fraud. They found one case here and one there, and they found fraud by politicians, usually absentee ballot schemes like the 2018 case in North Carolina, but no one found thousands, or hundreds, or even tens of instances of fraud by individual voters. Tens of millions of votes over many elections, and where’s the fraud?

The second thing I found—it turned out the laws changed a million things about voting, many of them having not even a pretense of fraud prevention—but all of them reducing the number of eligible citizens that could vote, with a special incidence on people of color.

Courts noted how many citizens would be disenfranchised by the new restrictions—300,000 in Wisconsin, 400,000 in North Carolina, 600,000 in Texas, and so on, huge numbers, frequently 8 to 10% of eligible voters—and the people disenfranchised tended to be poorer and browner than the electorate at large.

So I began to fear that this discussion of fraud, so prominent but without factual support, might be only a pretense for wide-ranging laws restricting the electorate. Would people really make this up?

So that was the third lesson I learned—politicians and operatives were fabricating charges of widespread fraud to create a reason to pass voter suppression laws, all of it to reduce their accountability to the very citizens they were elected to serve.

The fourth of the four things that changed my path—I came to realize that several good books had just been written on exactly this topic, but that a documentary film, telling the human stories of the suppressed voters, listening to the fraud-hunters, the legislators, and the voting rights crusaders—might bring the issues to life and reach a broader audience.

And so that’s what we did. We call it Rigged: The Voter Suppression Playbook, because it takes those new voting laws, and organizes them to reveal a history and a plan. We show the story of purged voters in North Carolina; a sheriff in Texas who puts a Latino citizen in leg irons, raising questions of voter intimidation in the community; a vigilante group of fraud-hunters; and many more. It’s all there.

Why did I make Rigged? Because I believe that we Americans are proud of our democracy, and if we all came to see, as I have seen, that some craven politicians are contorting that national treasure to protect and advance their own careers, we would rise up and stop it.

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