



# SRRT Newsletter

March 2022 ■ Issue 218

Social Responsibilities  
Round Table

EST. 1969

## Thoughts on Student Loan Debt

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Voices from the Past p. 13

Updates p. 8



# ADVOCACY & TASK FORCES

All SRRT members are encouraged to volunteer for groups in which they have an interest. Personal members may choose to join groups or form their own for specific purposes, in line with the goals of the Social Responsibilities Round Table. These groups may be Task Forces (usually long-term) or project groups (usually of a very short duration).

If you're interested in being involved in an active task force, please feel free to contact the Task Force's chair.

- Feminist Task Force (FTF)  
**Coordinator:** Katelyn Browne

Provides feminist perspectives and initiates action on issues related to libraries, librarianship, information services, and ALA.

Subscribe to the Feminist discussion list.

- Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Task Force (HHPTF)  
**Co-Coordiators:** Lisa Gieskes and Julie Ann Winkelstein

Fosters greater awareness of the dimensions, causes, and ways to end hunger, homelessness, and poverty.

- International Responsibilities Task Force (IRTF)  
**Coordinators:** Al Kagan and Tom Twiss

Advocates socially responsible positions on issues of international library concern.

- Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Task Force (MLKTF)  
**Chair:** LaJuan Pringle

Supports and advances the observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday as an American celebration.

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On the Cover: photo by [Lightfield Studios](#)



## SRRT Newsletter Co-Editor

**Julie Ann Winkelstein**

**H**ello everyone! I want to begin by acknowledging our newest Editorial Board member, Jenny Rogers. We are excited to have Jenny as part of the EB and are particularly grateful in this issue for her excellent and careful editing skills.

We also want to thank Madeline Veitch for her wonderful work as the reviews editor for the SRRT newsletter. Madeline has recently left this position and EB member Laura Koltutsky is our new reviews editor. Thank you, Laura! Please let us know if there's a book or film you'd like to review for the newsletter – we're always looking for reviewers.

The past few newsletters have been themed – for example, looking at the role of libraries in addressing social justice issues or in serving those who have been incarcerated. However, this issue covers a range of issues, from the well-researched new SRRT resolution on cancelling student debt loans, to reports from SRRT round tables, to a list of the ALA affiliations of those running for ALA offices, to the statement on Ukraine from the IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) LGBTQ Special Interest Group, to a book review, an interview and more. As always, we aim to provide information that focuses on the intersection of libraries and social responsibility.

Please feel free to reach out with comments, suggestions, questions – we'd love to hear from you.



## SRRT Newsletter Co-Editor

**Doreen Dixon**

**I** can't believe that it's almost one year since I joined the SRRT Newsletter Team! It's been great contributing to a platform that highlights the work that various groups and individuals are doing to affect positive change in the world.

As a child, I would always hear the phrase “no man is an island, no man stands alone”. The phrase speaks to the fact that in this life, no person is truly self-sufficient. With that said, it's important for us to provide support, and to be supported. We need each other. The SRRT newsletter strives to create a space for sharing, learning and demonstrating the significance for social justice within our communities. Our voices are important to combat and speak against the injustices that we see in our society. After all, we, unlike so many others in the world today, have the privilege to speak out. As I follow the news on what's happening in Ukraine and Russia, I am reminded of that privilege.

I encourage those that have never contributed to the newsletter to do so and those who have, to continue. By sharing, we shed light on various issues as well as solutions.

I'll end by joining Julie in welcoming our new Editorial Board member, Jenny Rogers. Jenny, I look forward to working with you in the months to come. I'm glad you're on board!

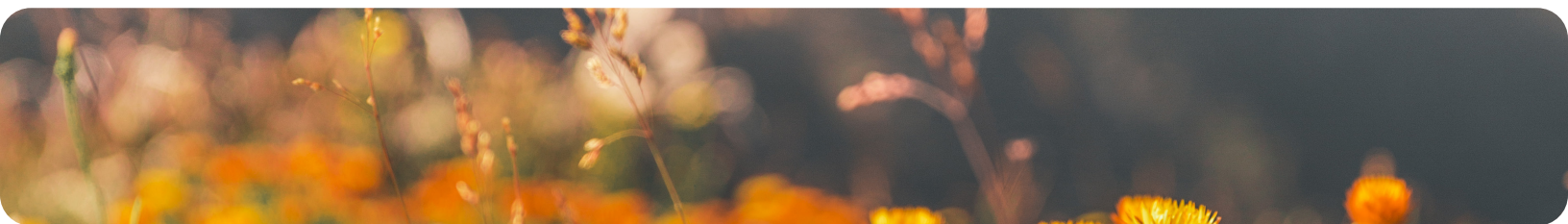


photo by [judah](#)





## SRRT Action Council Coordinator

**Sherre Harrington**

I'm happy to report that the Resolution to Cancel Student Loan Debt was enthusiastically approved at the March 17, 2022 ALA Virtual Membership Meeting – 81% of members voting said yes.

Why is SRRT asking ALA to support student loan cancellation? Student loan debt adversely impacts library workers, especially librarians of color. We need for our association to clearly demonstrate an active, ongoing commitment to improving working conditions, salaries, and other benefits for library workers.

Evidence demonstrates that the student debt crisis is racialized and gendered. Advocating for student loan cancellation is not a radical or even a particularly controversial position. And it IS a library issue.

There is substantial evidence that student loan debt helps perpetuate racial wealth, income and achievement gaps, and that canceling student loan debt will help redress this systemic inequality. Women are disproportionately impacted by student debt. Not only do women come out of college with more debt, they take longer to pay it off because of deeply ingrained pay disparities and lack of access to necessities like paid family leave and affordable child care. Black women have the highest amount of debt.

Some argue that many library workers are eligible for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PLSF) program, and point out that ALA called on the US Department of Education to improve PLSF. In January, the association issued a statement encouraging library workers to apply for PLSF during a waiver period that expands eligibility through October 31.[1] PLSF, even during this expanded eligibility, is not an adequate substitute for loan cancellation. In fact, PLSF could be said to widen the wealth gap, since only those who can afford to pay their student loans for 10 years and then cross their fingers their application is approved can wait for PLSF.

The NAACP[2], the Brookings Institution[3], the ACLU[4] and hundreds of other organizations[5] have made the case for the cancellation of student debt; in fact, the NAACP offers a simple approach for organizations to answer their call to continue to apply pressure and demand that elected leaders ensure equitable and affordable pathways for education.

Comparable professional organizations such as the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers[6], the National Education Association[7] and the American Bar Association[8] agree and have issued strong statements that student loan cancellation is in the best interest of their members. Why has ALA not already taken the position that student loan cancellation is in our best interest?

Support for canceling student loan debt directly aligns with ALA's Fundamental Value of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, as well as diversity as a Key Action Area. ALA already implicitly acknowledges the issue of financial inequity for librarians of color through programs such as the Spectrum Scholarships, as well as explicitly recognizing the need to safeguard the rights of the majority in the library field, women, through such committees as COSWL.

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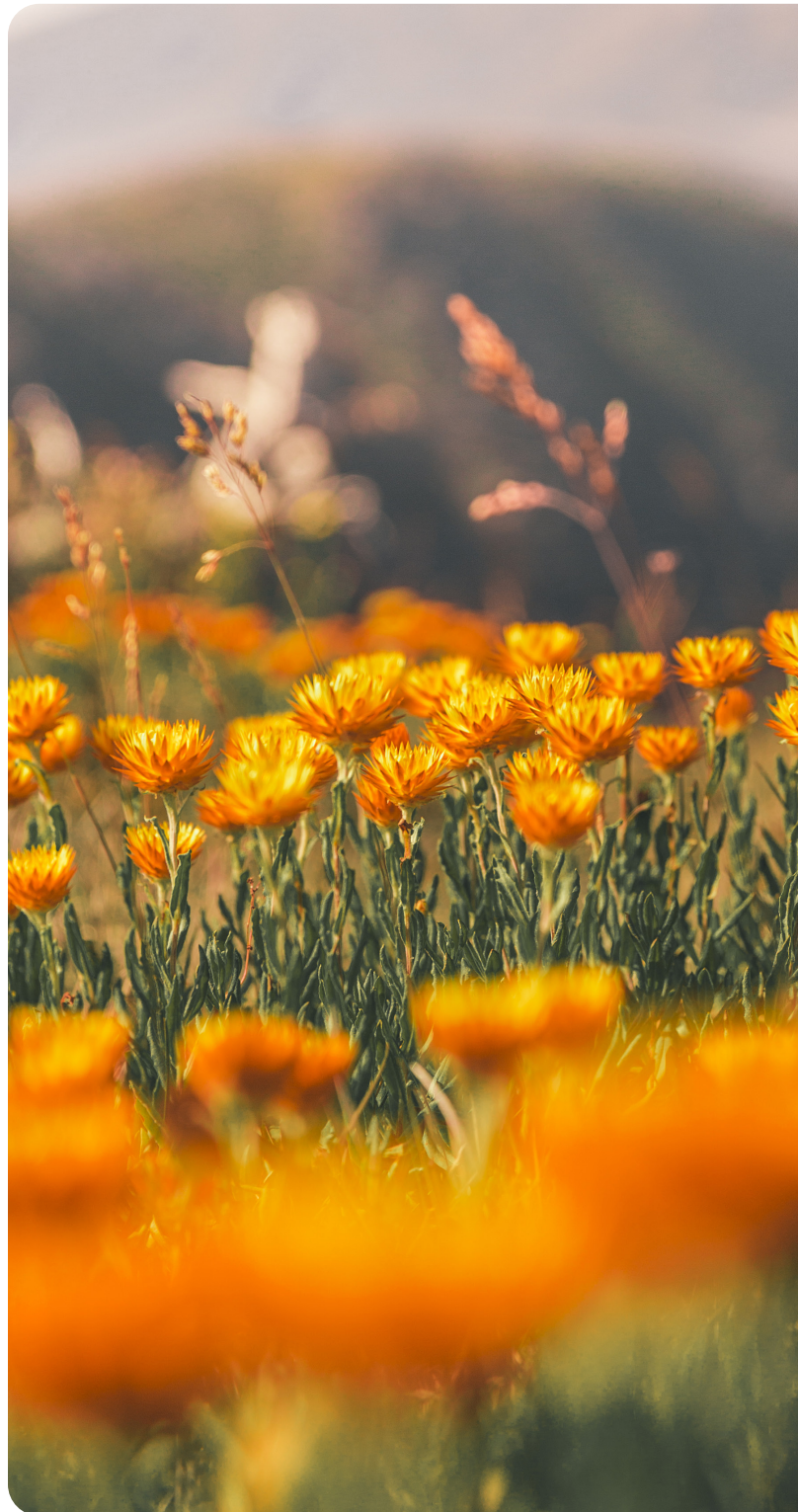


photo by [judah](#)

# Thoughts on



Submitted by April Sheppard, SRRT Coordinator-Elect

# Student Loan Debt

*Background for the SRRT resolution on student loan cancellation*

One of Biden's campaign promises was the forgiveness of \$10,000 in student loan debt. It hasn't happened and he has since retracted his support. However, he has paused repayment for two years, showing he does have the power to forgive the debt. As of March 9th, the Biden administration issued a directive to student loan companies not to send out payment notices. Many take this to imply the freeze will be extended again.

The last student loan balance I saw was \$1.7 trillion. The government has consistently made tax cuts and bailouts over the years. The TCJA cost \$1.9 trillion,

which was added to the deficit. From 2007 to 2011, Congress approved approximately \$19.6 trillion in bailouts. The PPP Plan cost \$800 billion. I'm not saying these programs and spending aren't "worth it," but showing there is a precedent and the cost does not differ greatly from other "handouts."

**Student loans disproportionately affect students from marginalized groups, particularly students of color**

Many librarian jobs require master degrees; however, it is one of the lower paying fields. There are averages in the resolution, but the low end salaries can be VERY low. For example, in December, there was a library director posting that listed a starting salary of \$34,000.

Inflation and gas prices. A new report shows that 64% of Americans live paycheck-to-paycheck: [www.cnbc.com/2022/03/08/...](http://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/08/...)

Student loans are extremely hard to erase through bankruptcy. In February, the Department of Education tried to stop the forgiveness of Ryan Wolfson's loans after a judge ruled he had undue hardship: [www.businessinsider.com/...](http://www.businessinsider.com/...)

Student loans now count towards one's debt-to-income ratio. When I bought my first house, my student loans did not greatly impact my ability to qualify for a mortgage. I bought a new house in 2020. Now, the lenders add 1% of student loan debt to your monthly DTI ratio, regardless of your actual payment. Despite making more money, I nearly didn't qualify. My sister can't. She is a social worker (another low paying field). Her monthly income based loan payment (that counts towards her public loan forgiveness) is \$0. She has proof of this, but the lender still counts 1% of her total loan in her DTI. She is forced to rent a house for \$1,400 while I pay \$540 less each month for a much nicer house, in a better neighborhood, with a huge yard.

Student loans disproportionately affect students from marginalized groups, particularly students of color. According to Braxton Brewington, after 20 years, Black borrowers still owe about 95% of their student loan debt. Black women are the group hit the hardest. One problem is the lack of generational wealth: [fair.org/home/...](http://fair.org/home/...)

The biggest argument against student loan forgiveness is that it's not fair to those who have paid off their loans or didn't attend college. One could argue that what is equitable is not always what is fair. Professor Kate Padgett-Walsh has stated that, "equal opportunity is what's fair." With rising tuition, housing, and inflation costs, "student loan debt is much more burdensome... than in previous generations, and is preventing them from taking formative adult actions." [grow.acorns.com/is-student-loan-forgiveness-fair](https://grow.acorns.com/is-student-loan-forgiveness-fair) (one of my favorite tweets is: [mobile.twitter.com/Phil\\_Lewis\\_/status/...](https://mobile.twitter.com/Phil_Lewis_/status/...))

This is outdated, but paints the picture of how many hours of minimum wage it takes to pay tuition: [newrepublic.com/article/122814/...](http://newrepublic.com/article/122814/...) And here's an example of how much you need to earn annually to afford a house in 50 metro areas in the US: <https://www.hsh.com/finance/mortgage/salary-home-buying-25-cities.html>



# OurStoryBridge: “Unexpectedly” Addressing Social Justice and Social Change



**Jery Y. Huntley, MLS, Founder and Volunteer, OurStoryBridge and Adirondack Community  
Keene Valley Library, Keene Valley, NY**

**N**o one would have anticipated the role our library would play in addressing social issues when we started Adirondack Community: Capturing, Retaining, and Communicating the Stories of Who We Are! This multi-year online local history project, sponsored by the rural Keene Valley (NY) Library, shares the rich social and cultural history of the town of Keene, nestled within New York State's Adirondack Mountains. Since kick-off in June 2019, over 225 three-to-five minute audio stories told by community members young and old have been posted online, accompanied by related photographs from the library's archives. There have been 6,000 unique users to our website in a town of 1,100. We have found noteworthy value in this online story project throughout the pandemic, as residents listen to stories of previous disasters and gain comfort in hearing about long-term community strength.

Although the original categories for stories that community members selected were: People, Outdoor Activities, Work, Catastrophes, Community, Arts and Culture, Daily Life, and the Natural and Man-Made Environment, it soon became apparent that other themes were relevant to our small, rural, mountain community. Listen to When Dave and Jim Got Married for community reaction to a wedding announcement. Or Even Here: A Discussion of Race in the ADK's, to learn about how two Black students shocked their community when they shared what growing up in a White community was like. Almost 98 and Still Kickin' is a remarkable story about a woman who did what she wanted. Black Lives Matter in Keene relates the origin of local protests, told by the amazing woman with a background as a civil rights history professor who spearheaded them. Uncle Bill in Handcuffs tells the story of the Rev. William Sloan Coffin, civil rights leader. Refugee Crisis in Keene brought the genocide in Rwanda

to our neighborhood. We immediately started podcasts combining stories on these new topics. The quantity and quality of stories of social justice and social change were unexpected and enrich our local collection as they demonstrate the critical importance of libraries in addressing community and social issues.

Seeing the impact of Adirondack Community shortly after the first stories were released, we realized that other libraries, historical societies, and issue-related organizations could start story projects on our model.

**By engaging with the stories, younger generations can participate, learn about their community, and become proud, kind citizens**

This led to the founding of OurStoryBridge: Connecting the Past and the Present, released September 29, 2020, at the virtual annual meeting of the Association for Rural and Small Libraries.

OurStoryBridge is a free tool kit for producing a crowdsourced story project, which collects and shares a community's unique history online. OurStoryBridge supports the creation of three-to-five minute, locally created audio stories with related photographs; it also supports their online accessibility, posting the stories on a website that appeals to both young and old and can be produced at a low cost.

Our mission is to be a resource and tool kit for OurStoryBridge projects that preserve and circulate local audio stories, both past and present, through accessible online media; to promote, build, and assist with the deployment of these resources in communities across geographic, cultural, socioeconomic, racial, and organizational strata; and to help strengthen these communities through the sharing of their stories, and including encouraging younger generations to become engaged community members.

Seventeen months since release, there are five OurStoryBridge projects: the model in the town of Keene, NY; the second in Tremonton, Utah; then Igiugig, Alaska, an Indigenous community; Lake Placid, NY; and finally Steger-South Chicago,

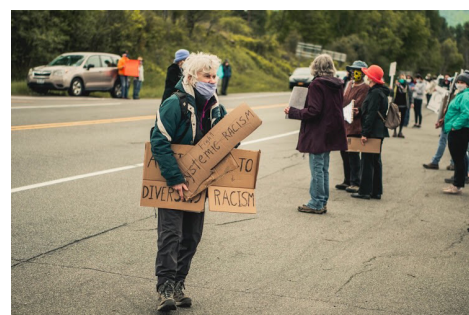
Illinois. Additional communities, mostly spearheaded by libraries, have started taking stories and are expected to release their story project websites soon. A recent grant will allow the Igiugig Tribal Council and OurStoryBridge to work together to create more story projects in Indigenous communities in Alaska.

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**Bottom Left:** Ruth Kuhfahl (Courtesy of the Keene Valley Library)

**Bottom Center:** CorrieAnne Stoner (Courtesy of CorrieAnne Stoner)

**Bottom Right:** Monique Weston Clague (Courtesy of Monique Weston Clague)





# The SRRT Resolution on Student Debt Cancellation

Submitted to the Resolutions Committee March 15, 2022

Whereas student loan debt directly affects library workers;

Whereas the median pay for librarians and library media specialists is \$60,820 [1] while the median pay for all master's degree holders is \$80,340 [2];

Whereas 60% of graduates with master's degrees [3] and 29.34% of all adults under the age of 30 [4] have student loan debt;

Whereas the average student loan debt for master's degrees is \$86,368, adjusted for inflation [3];

Whereas student loan debt has been shown to negatively affect quality of life with 82% of student loan holders reporting their debt impacting their ability to save for retirement, 51% reporting delaying buying a house, 14% delaying starting families, and 18% struggling to purchase daily necessities [5];

Whereas the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has called student debt a racial justice issue that widens the racial wealth gap and threatens the financial stability for borrowers of color [6];

Whereas inflation has grown 7.5% in the last year with food prices growing by 7%, electricity by 10.7%, gas utilities by 23.9%, and housing prices by 4.4% [7];

Whereas wages are only expected to grow 3.4% [8];

Whereas student loan forgiveness programs, such as Perkins Loan Forgiveness and Public Service Loan Forgiveness [9], already exist;

Whereas the Department of Education has already exhibited the ability to cancel the student loan debt of select borrowers [10] while President Biden has exhibited the ability to delay repayment [11];

RESOLVED, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members, calls on President Biden to cancel student loan debt for all borrowers.

Mover: Sherre Harrington, sharrington@berry.edu

Second: Al Kagan, akagan@illinois.edu

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## Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Task Force Report for March 2022

Submitted by LaJuan S. Pringle, Chair, Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Task Force

The 23rd Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Sunrise Celebration was held virtually during LibLearnX on Monday, January 25. The theme of the celebration was based on Dr. King Jr.'s 1957 speech entitled "Give Us the Ballot—We Will Transform the South." Our keynote speaker was historian and author Keisha N. Blain, who co-wrote *Four Hundred Souls* with Ibram X. Kendi. Blain highlighted her recent book, *Until I Am Free*, which focuses on Fannie Lou Hamer's role in the expansion of voting rights for African-Americans. ALA Executive Director, Tracie D. Hall, delivered the ceremony's Call-To-Action. The [event](#) is available through ALA's YouTube channel for viewing.

A few years ago, I read *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* and was immediately intrigued by this person. For as long as I had been learning about the Civil Rights movement, I had never heard of Rustin or his involvement with Dr. King Jr. Bayard Rustin was a true trailblazer, not only as one of the main organizers for both the 1941 and 1963 March on Washington events, but he also lived his life as an out, Black, gay male during a time of low visibility and tolerance for members of the LGBTQIA community. I'm very interested in presenting programs and information on

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the people who were part of Dr. King's inner circle during this momentous period in history, including A. Philip Randolph, Dorothy Cotton, and yes – Bayard Rustin. I'd like to organize an event/discussion to take place during the 2023 Annual Conference in Chicago. I'm also hoping to leverage my positions as Treasurer of the Rainbow Round Table and member of BCALA to partner with those groups in this endeavor. If anyone is interested in assisting with this program, please reach out to me for more information. I'm looking forward to putting this program in motion.

## IRTF Report

Submitted by Al Kagan and Tom Twiss

In recent weeks the International Responsibilities Task Force (IRTF) has been working on projects related to three general concerns: free speech/intellectual freedom, U.S.-Iranian relations, and the recent Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Regarding free speech, for the 2022 ALA Midwinter meeting IRTF member Mark Hudson wrote a "[Resolution Calling on the US Executive Branch to Drop Espionage Act Charges Against Julian Assange](#)". SRRT Action Council (AC) approved that resolution, but because of the lack of time at Midwinter, ALA Council forwarded it to a later meeting. In the meantime, SRRT AC sent the resolution to the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) for its consideration. IFC members have expressed several concerns, including the belief that ALA normally does "not make statements for individuals." In response, Al Kagan has compiled a "Report on ALA Council Resolutions Concerning Individuals," which notes twelve ALA resolutions during the period 2000-2022 that specially referred to a person or a group of people by name. Ultimately, on March 10 ALA Council rejected the resolution overwhelmingly, 13-119 with 9 abstentions.

A second free speech area we have been working on has involved state legislation that requires companies contracting with state agencies to pledge they will not boycott Israel. Courts in five states have determined that these "anti-BDS laws" violate First Amendment rights. We in IRTF have located [more than 150 library-related Requests for Proposals \(RFPs\) and contracts](#) that contain explicit state-mandated pledges not to boycott Israel. Consequently, IRTF asked the ALA Executive Board to issue a statement condemning this restrictive legislation. At its March 15 meeting the Executive Board did not commit to writing a statement, but members encouraged us, in light of the new information we provided, to submit a new resolution on this issue to Council. We are also putting together a discussion group on this legislation for ALA's annual conference this summer. Confirmed speakers include Alan Leveritt, publisher of the *Arkansas Times*, which currently has a lawsuit against Arkansas's anti-boycott legislation, and Luna Martinez, a Bertha Justice Fellow at the Center for Constitutional Rights. We will also have a statement from the ACLU and will show a clip from the recent Julia Bacha documentary [Boycott](#).

Regarding the important topic of U.S.-Iranian relations, we continue to finalize plans for an exciting program with Trita Parsi. Parsi is an award-winning author and the 2010 recipient of the Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order. He is an expert on US-Iranian relations, Iranian foreign policy, and the geopolitics of the Middle East. He has authored three books on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, with a particular focus on Iran and Israel. Noam Chomsky has called Parsi "one of the most distinguished scholars in Iran."

Finally, with everyone else, IRTF members have been shocked and saddened by the brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine. When we learned that the ALA Executive Board was writing a statement on Ukraine, we drafted a memo for the SRRT Action Council to submit to the Board. In it, we proposed that the Board's statement include the following points:

- We note the danger to the people of Ukraine and their democracy.
- We call upon all sides to protect all libraries, archives, and cultural institutions.
- We express our solidarity with libraries, archives, and cultural institutions, and call upon US libraries and archives to provide material support and information services to libraries, archives, and related associations in Ukraine.

- We condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- We call for an immediate ceasefire, and negotiations between all parties to guarantee the peace and security of all parties involved. We suggest that the [Minsk II agreement of 2015](#) provides an appropriate starting point for such negotiations.
- We support the territorial integrity of the country and equal rights for all population groups.
- Due to the dangers of setting off a wider war, and in accordance with ALA Policy B5.4, we call for a nuclear freeze on the development and deployment of nuclear weapons in the region and in the world.

Unfortunately, members of SRRT AC were not able to respond in time to submit this memo. Ultimately, a weaker statement was issued by the ALA [Executive Board](#). In contrast, we note the strong statements by the [Association of Research Libraries \(ARL\)](#) and the [Nordic library associations](#) and the moving appeal of the [Ukrainian Library Association](#).

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

Submitted by Julie Ann Winkelstein, co-coordinator

One of the aspects of addressing homelessness and poverty through libraries is to be aware of our library collections and how they represent the lives of people who are without a permanent place to be. Over the past several years, I've been collecting quotes from a range of books, including picture books, children's fiction and adult fiction, that represent various societal attitudes toward homelessness. Some of them are actually about people who are unhoused and common themes include paternalism, benevolence, characters who have done something "wrong," and stereotyped language describing the characters, such as talking about their dirty shoes or missing teeth.

Other books have nothing to do with homelessness or poverty and yet describe random scenes that include characters who are described as "homeless" and who seem to be used as shorthand for adding to the atmosphere of a scene, as if they aren't really people. Difficult as I find the first examples, I think the ones in this second group are the most egregious, because they don't acknowledge the stigma and stereotype they are perpetuating and in fact are probably unaware of them.

Here are some examples.

### First Example

From *When Dimple Met Rishi*, by Sandhya Menon

I found this book engaging and appreciated the characters and the writing, so I was surprised to come across this short paragraph:

"Across the street, an old homeless man was yelling at thin air in a flat Boston accent. Rishi wondered what his story was; how someone from Boston ended up there, a fifty-something-year-old street person." (p. 214)

This is the only time this character appears. We know nothing about him, including whether or not he is unhoused, how old he is, who he is and why he's talking. We know what the main character assumes about him and we know that he must have some function in the plot – maybe instead of describing the environment, the author used this man as a shorthand to give readers an idea of what the area is like – that throwing in an "old homeless man" saves having to say more than that, because readers will now know everything there is to know about the surroundings?

### Second Example

*The Sea*, by John Banville (won the Man Booker Prize)

# OurStoryBridge: “Unexpectedly” Addressing Social Justice and Social Change *continued from p. 5*

With a second update just released, the Teacher’s Guide brings over 300 stories and podcasts collected to date into classrooms across the country; including sagas of racial injustice and the fight for equality, LGBTQ+ stories, women’s empowerment, community struggles and strength, volunteering, and a myriad of other social issues. The Teacher’s Guide is found on both the Adirondack Community and OurStoryBridge websites, and consists of the following: a “How To” document outlining how to use the stories for lessons in any school in any community; the “Story Selection Chart,” a tool to match stories with specific courses; the “Story Summaries,” which are brief synopsis of the 300 stories and podcasts currently available; and the “Sample School Assignment.” By engaging with the stories, younger generations can participate, learn about their community, and become proud, kind citizens. When uploaded online, stories from new OurStoryBridge projects across the country are added to the collection.

Potential impacts an OurStoryBridge project could have on a community are:

Assist residents in appreciating the history that shaped their community, while also understanding it today, and envisioning what it can become tomorrow. Create closer bonds and new alliances between residents and promote connections that lead to acts of kindness, assistance, and support in times of need, especially considering diversity.

By integrating stories into the school curriculum, younger generations can become more engaged and proud of their community, which could encourage them to reside in their home community after high school, college, trade school, or any number of life’s adventures.

By preserving stories that are in danger of being lost, libraries can help to honor the legacies of older generations, capturing their stories in their own words, while presenting them in 21st century, accessible media.

Help position libraries as strategic community-building resource centers, involving and educating multi-generational residents.

Re-ignite a passion for library archives, including oral histories and photographs

Any community interested in OurStoryBridge can email [createyourstoryproject@gmail.com](mailto:createyourstoryproject@gmail.com) for more information and to join our monthly e-newsletter. Follow our Facebook pages, OurStoryBridge and Adirondack Community Story Project, for news, tips, and curated stories.

## BOOK REVIEW



### Loaners: The Making of a Street Library, by Ben Hodgson and Laura Moulton

Reviewed by Vikki Terrile,  
Queensborough Community College, CUNY

Laura Moulton created Street Books in 2011 as a public arts project, where she would take a bike equipped with a storage box packed with gently used books into Portland, Oregon as a way to connect with people living outside. Originally intended as a three-month project, Street Books celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2021, along with the publication of *Loaners: The Making of a Street Library*, written by Moulton and Ben Hodgson.

Hodgson started his affiliation with Street Books as a patron, hassling Moulton for not having (or having read) any Wodehouse. His stories capture his years as an outdoorsman, living on the streets and in the woods of Portland. Hodgson eventually becomes an inventory specialist for Street Books, arranging and shelving books the street librarians can take on their shifts, as well as serving as a street librarian himself. Hodgson and Moulton both share stories about Hodgson’s struggles with mental illness and how the experience of homelessness causes (or worsens existing) mental illness, and these stories are a glimpse into how the stress and boredom of street life take a heavy emotional toll.

The stories Hodgson and Moulton share are powerful in their brevity and realism.

*continues on p. 11* →

One that stood out for me was Laura's "Success Story" where she describes seeing a young woman she had given a book to and had a great talk with in the morning, dozing on heroin a few hours later. She says, "My notion of a success story, and my understanding of what constitutes a happy ending has changed over time...a girl could check out a novel in the morning from a street library and be in a heroin nod by lunchtime. It didn't mean our conversation hadn't counted. Maybe the success part of the story came when she'd spotted me from a distance that morning and came running across the square to return the book she'd borrowed last week" (p. 213).

Through Hodgson's and Moulton's alternating vignettes, *Loaners* tells the story of Street Books, but more than that, it illustrates the power of stories and books to connect us and to center human dignity.

## Interview with Laura Moulton and Ben Hodgson



**Can you describe the relationship Street Books has with the local public libraries?**

**Laura:** Our very first summer, we had a visit from Multnomah County Library - Geoff Brunk from their Outreach Services brought us 3 boxes of great books that he'd curated for us after reading an article about Street Books in the Oregonian newspaper, (Louis L'Amour and Stephen King were among the authors). After that, the library offered us a monthly box of books for our street library.

**Has that changed in the last ten years?**

**Laura:** Though we don't have an official relationship with the county library, we've had the aforementioned support in the form of a monthly box or 2. Also, one summer for some reason our patrons kept returning books to Multnomah County branches, no matter how often we reminded them that we were separate. Some very good librarians sent us a number of "Courtesy Returns" during that time, so we got the books delivered back to our PO Box. It was a really kind thing for them to do and definitely outside their job description - above and beyond the call of duty, you could say.

**What about the relationship(s) Street Books' patrons have with the public library?**

**Laura:** There are so many things that have changed because of the pandemic. Many of our Street Books library patrons really relied on the county library system for a place to sit and read the newspaper indoors, a place to charge a phone or access the internet. When the pandemic caused the closure of public spaces, that was a real loss for patrons who had used that space as a respite. Our patrons might visit our library for the community and camaraderie, but they also used to come to us because they had amassed fines at the county library or maybe were just outside the mainstream enough that we were the handiest option for books. I know that the Multnomah County library has made an effort in recent years to lower the barriers library patrons might face, with new policies like no more late fees or fines for losing a book. Before the pandemic, the county library had hired a full-time social worker at the downtown branch, in an effort to support patrons who were living outside or otherwise struggling.

**Laura's story "Success Story" about Roxie is probably the one that has stuck with me the most, I think because I, like many librarians, have had similar kinds of experiences with patrons. Can you say more about how you understand success with Street Books?**

**Hodge:** If we [were] doing it for the money, I don't think we would do it. Every street library that opens up will be an example of success - if only one street library starts up because of our example, it will have been worth it.

**Laura:** I think success comes in small increments when you have a street library inside a global pandemic. The value of relationships and community is heightened during a time when people are cut off from one another and struggling to survive. If a patron comes to a Street Books library shift and lingers for conversation and friendship, it feels

like a win whether they take a book out that week or not. Other "successes" might include finally wooing a patron in to look at our collection: I think of past patrons who walked a wide berth around us each week and then finally stopped to check out a Louis L'Amour western. Then some weeks later, maybe we didn't have any L'Amour in, but we had a copy of *All the Pretty Horses* by Cormac McCarthy, and the patron was amenable to trying it out. Then the next time the patron showed up, he requested the next book in that series. So that is an example of how the relationships are built - very like the experiences you and other librarians have. Our library happens outside and is a bit renegade, but we have a lot in common with other libraries. I feel like my overall sense of success comes in the community we've built - both with our patrons and also our Street Books team. We have survived a lot and it's because we value looking out for one another.

**What is the most memorable book request you've ever gotten?**

**Hodge:** The Spanish language chess book that the Cuban men ordered at our shift at the Workers' Center, and the fact that we filled that request.

**Laura:** I would echo Hodge here. We got some great requests from the Workers' Center (like Carl Jung's *Man and His Symbols* in Spanish). Hodge loves to tell a story of the guy who didn't want the copy of Nietzsche we had, not because he didn't want to read Nietzsche but because he didn't like the particular translation we were offering. Pretty funny. And I think of the story I tell in the book about the young man who requests a book on raw foods and then after we buy him one, he doesn't show up the rest of the summer and it goes to somebody else (though it has a happy, miraculous ending!).

**How has working with Street Books changed you as a reader?**

**Hodge:** I for one have read tons of stuff I don't know that I would have found outside the huge library of our own.

**Laura:** Early on I realized that I should probably read a bit of every genre since I wanted to have a general sense of all the books that people were requesting. I lean toward literary nonfiction and fiction, poetry, etc. But I read some romance and true crime and a few westerns. I have always been a reader and loved books, but I think working at Street Books and having thousands of conversations about books over the years has reminded me of the power a book has to transform a person's day/life/world. I am so grateful to have been able to use books to build bridges, to reach people on the margins and to create a community of people talking about their favorite books and their life stories. Street Books has been such a gift to me.



ALA is late to join the voices that support cancellation of student loan debt. But it is not too late. Please join SRRT in holding the association accountable to its assertion of being an advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion by supporting this resolution as it makes its way over the next months.

[1] ALA encourages library workers to ascertain eligibility and apply for Public Service Loan Forgiveness waiver before October 31. <https://www.ala.org/news/member-news/2022/01/ala-encourages-library-workers-ascertain-eligibility-and-apply-public-service>

[2] \$50K & Beyond. NAACP. <https://naacp.org/campaigns/50k-beyond> "Data suggests that cancellation policies beyond \$50,000 would benefit all demographics, eliminate racial disparities in student debt, and boost our struggling economy. We must continue to apply pressure and demand that the leaders elected by the movement we built follow through on racial equity and ensure equitable and affordable pathways for education."

[3] Student loans, the racial wealth divide, and why we need full student debt cancellation. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/student-loans-the-racial-wealth-divide-and-why-we-need-full-student-debt-cancellation/> "Because education does not achieve income parity for Black workers, the disproportionate debt Black students are taking to finance their education is reinforcing the racial wealth gap. Today, the average white family has roughly 10 times the amount of wealth as the average Black family, while white college graduates have over seven times more wealth than Black college graduates."

[4] Cancel Student Debt. ACLU. <https://action.aclu.org/petition/cancel-student-debt-50k-every-borrower> "Students of color pursue higher education in a social and economic system built on racist ideologies that is set up to work against them and perpetuate racial wealth and income and achievement gaps. To redress this systemic inequality, the ACLU, Center for Responsible Lending (CRL), and more than 300 other organizations are calling on the Biden-Harris administration and Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona to use their authority under the Higher Education Act to cancel \$50,000 of student debt per borrower, and Congress must act as well."

[5] The more than 400 nonprofit and community organizations stating that canceling student debt would stimulate the economy, help reduce racial wealth gaps, and could have a positive impact on health outcomes include the American Federation of Teachers, the American Association of University Professors, the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the American Psychological Association, the National Association for College Admission Counseling, and the School Social Work Association of America.

[6] Student Loan Debt Relief for Social Workers. National Association of Social Workers. <https://www.socialworkers.org/Advocacy/Policy-Issues/Student-Loan-Forgiveness> "NASW promotes student loan debt relief for social workers as part of its ongoing work to improve working conditions, salaries, and other benefits for members of the profession and to ensure that consumers have access to qualified professionals. NASW will continue its advocacy and support for proposals to

provide student loan debt relief for social workers in all settings."

[7] Cancel Student Loan Debt. National Education Association. <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/action-center/take-action/cancel-student-loan-debt> "Immediate and broad cancellation of federal student loan debt is a necessary step to ensure we all can thrive—no exceptions."

[8] American Bar Association. <https://www.abajournal.com/news/article/aba-urges-suspension-or-forgiveness-of-some-student-debt-in-letter-to-new-chief-of-federal-student-aid-office> "we ... urge the executive branch to assist student loan borrowers by forgiving or canceling some level of debt"

## UPDATES *continued from p. 9*

This book is written in the first person and is about a man whose wife died. He's also reflecting on his childhood and youth. Again, I appreciated the excellent writing and the insights it provides. But also again, I was taken aback by this brief description.

He's gone back to visit an old haunt and there's a young girl there:

"She wore a faded apron over a jumper that she could only have knitted herself, a man's corduroy trousers balding at the knees, and those zippered ankle boots of Prussian-blue mock-velvet that were all the rage among old ladies when I was young and latterly seemed exclusive to beggar women and female winos." (p. 40)

My concern about this one is probably self-evident – no one should be referred to as either a beggar woman or a female wino. Whatever reason Banville had for using these descriptions, they are stigmatizing, dismissive and serve to perpetuate attitudes that don't need encouragement.

### Third Example

*Garden of Lamentations* by Deborah Crombie

This book is part of her series about Duncan Kincaid and Gemma James.

In this book are two scenes that include someone experiencing homelessness – neither related to the plot. Here's one of them:

Melody [a sergeant and main character] has just been reprimanded by Superintendent Krueger because Melody's boss, Gemma, isn't at work:

"She tapped her computer to life and tried to look busy. Thank God their one active investigation was into the death of a homeless man whose body had been found in Battersea Park. The pathologist's report was in her inbox. Glancing through it, she took a little breath of relief. Malnutrition, hypothermia, kidney and liver failure from chronic alcoholism. Natural causes, then. Poor old bloke, but his demise was not something that required Gemma's immediate presence" (p. 127).

Dying of poverty and homelessness are natural causes? By using this death, the author is reinforcing all stereotypes associated with homelessness – the stereotypes that make it so challenging for our country to address this societal failure.

### Fourth Example

*A Very Large Expanse of Sea*, by Tahereh Mafi.

This excellent young adult book is about a 16-year-old girl, Shirin, who is Muslim and wears a hijab. She is stereotyped, denigrated, and even attacked, and has learned to keep an emotional barrier between herself and others. But she meets a boy, Ocean, at her new high school, and has conflicted feelings about being with him. The book does an outstanding job of representing Shirin's feelings and experiences and is definitely worth reading. However, in this scene, she is talking with Ocean about how she feels about what others think and say. She's trying to warn him not to get involved with her and he says he doesn't care what others think of him. She tells him he thinks that, but he does care. When he asks how she can say that, she answers:

"Because," I said, "because I always say that. I always say that I don't care what other people think...It's not true, because it hurts every time, and that means I still care. It means I'm still not strong enough because every time someone says something rude, something racist – every time some mentally ill homeless person goes on a terrifying rampage when they see me crossing the street – it *hurts*..." (p. 169)

I was sorry to see the inclusion of a "mentally ill homeless person" as an example of what she has endured, especially since there seem to be many more examples in her life that come from housed people. Focusing on someone she thinks of as being unhoused, whether or not they are, and making assumptions about their mental health, only serves to reinforce assumptions readers already have. The author may have had a similar experience with someone who fits these assumptions but to me it's irresponsible to use this as an example.

My hope is that by describing these few examples, it will increase your awareness of the language used in the books you read and offer to your library users. I'd also like to see authors, editors, and publishers focus on the power they have to de-stigmatize homelessness by what they write, edit, or publish. Using a person's housing status as a stand-in for various negative aspects of a scene or plot line needs to stop.

Interested in learning more about the HHPTF? Visit our blog here: <https://hhptf.com/>

## Rainbow Round Table

### Submitted by Kat Breitenbach, RRT Chair

The Rainbow Round Table is currently accepting nominations for our non-book awards, the RRT Award for Political Activism, the Newlen-Symons Award for Excellence, and the Larry Romans Mentorship Award (with @godort). Submission deadline is March 31. <https://www.ala.org/rt/rtrt/awards>

In addition, our book awards will be adding two new categories when they're announced at LLX - the Barbara Gittings Literature Award will have a distinct poetry category, and the Mike Morgan and Larry Romans Children's and Young Adult Literature Award will have distinct children's and young adult categories (so officially two awards).

Rainbow Round Table (RRT) of the American Library Association is committed to serving the information needs of the LGBTQIA+ professional library community, and the LGBTQIA+ information and access needs of

*continues on p. 13* ➔

individuals at large. We are committed to encouraging and supporting the free and necessary access to all information, as reflected by the missions of the American Library Association.

## IFLA LGBTQ Users SIG Statement Regarding Ukraine

### Submitted by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) LGBTQ Special Interest Group (SIG)

The IFLA LGBTQ Users SIG is a working group with its main focus on libraries, archives and documentation centres and how these places welcome LGBTQ+ users and support LGBTQ+ library staff.

We are expressing our concern regarding the current events taking place in Ukraine. We are strongly against any type of war and we hope that this situation will come to an end as soon as possible. We are especially worried about LGBTQ+ people in Ukraine as this group tends to be forgotten and even further marginalised in situations such as war.

If you are, or if you know an LGBTQ+ person in Ukraine in need of help, we encourage you to contact us at [ifla.lgbt@gmail.org](mailto:ifla.lgbt@gmail.org). We will do our best to connect you with relevant organisations that could possibly be of further help.

We are expressing our solidarity with all our Russian colleagues who support knowledge and culture and who are in no way responsible for this situation. We are worried as well about the LGBTQ+ community in Russia. You are also welcome to contact us if you have some questions.

In hope for peace we are united!

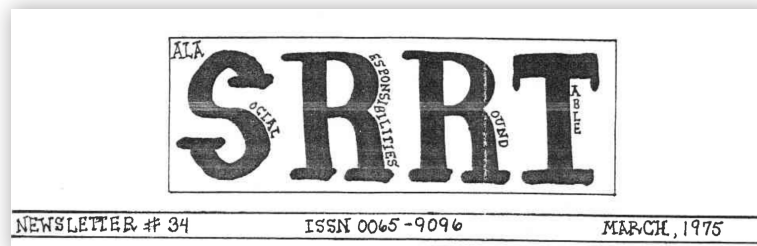
An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.

- Mahatma Gandhi

## VOICES FROM THE PAST

In every issue, we offer excerpts from past newsletters. This excerpt is from the March 1975 newsletter, issue #34 and is a statement to SRRT members from Clara Stanton Jones, who ran for ALA president in 1974 and became the first African-American ALA president.

The SRRT newsletter archive can be found here: <https://www.ala.org/rt/srrt/newsletter-archive>



"In behalf of her 1974-campaign, Ms. Jones declared, in a March message to SRRTERS:

"If librarians ever accepted the image of librarianship as benign and unrelated to reality, that illusion has vanished under the impact of the profession's present involvements. Strong links to vital issues of our times have been forged by our vigorous fostering of library legislation, defense of intellectual freedom, community outreach, interlibrary cooperation for improved service, special library service, information and referral service, etc. It is necessary for librarians to fully appreciate their importance and to act upon the potential effectiveness of their position at the heart of civilization. There is danger that we will retreat into the safety of mere custodianship of physical materials. Such a danger is ever-present with librarians, just

as much as the recurring threat of violation of intellectual freedom. This means that germane problems tormenting society should be considered and discussed in our professional meetings and writings. Certainly, all issues do not require an official or public stand, and there is no room for political partisanship, but there is need for librarians to examine pertinent current events to determine whether or not the weight of the profession should be brought to bear."

# 2022 ALA CANDIDATES

Below is just an informational email listing SRRT members running for ALA Councilor-at-Large as well as candidates from "sister" groups, such as related round tables and ethnic affiliates. This is by no means an endorsement of anyone nor does it assume that candidates not listed below are unworthy of your vote.

## SRRT Members Running for ALA Councilor-at-Large

Charles Kratz (SRRT, RRT, IFRT, SustainRT, IRRT)

Eric Gomez (SRRT, RRT, EMIERT, IRRT, REFORMA)

Jamie Fujiko Kurumaji (SRRT, RRT, EMIERT, REFORMA, Black Caucus of ALA, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association)

Jim Neal (SRRT, IFRT, IRRT, American Indian Library Association, REFORMA, Black Caucus of ALA, Chinese American Librarians Association, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association)

Joanna M. Arteaga La Spina (SRRT, REFORMA)

Kenny Garcia (SRRT, RRT, REFORMA)

Maggie Farrell (SRRT, SustainRT, RRT, IFRT, IRRT, REFORMA, Black Caucus of ALA, Chinese American Librarians Association)

Nick Buron (SRRT, IFRT, Black Caucus of ALA)

Rodney Lippard (SRRT, SustainRT, RRT, IFRT, EMIERT)

Sara Kelly Johns (SRRT, RRT, IFRT, SustainRT, EMIERT, IRRT, REFORMA, Black Caucus of ALA)

Steven D. Yates (SRRT, SustainRT, RRT, REFORMA, Black Caucus of ALA, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association)

Maria F. Estrella (EMIERT, REFORMA)

Marina Morgan (SustainRT)

Marliese Thomas (IRRT)

Muzhgan Nazarova (IRRT)

Ophelia Morey (IRRT, Black Caucus of ALA)

Ramin Naderi (EMIERT)

Richard E. Ashby, Jr (EMIERT, Black Caucus of ALA)

Sophia Sotilleo (IFRT, Black Caucus of ALA)

Tarida Anantachai (Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association)

Tiffeni Fontno (Black Caucus of ALA)

Tina H. Lerno (REFORMA)

Twanna Hodge (American Indian Library Association, REFORMA, Black Caucus of ALA, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association)

Valeria E. Molteni (REFORMA, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association)

Valerie Tagoe (REFORMA)

## Other Candidates Running for Council from "Sister" Groups

Adriana Blancarte-Hayward (EMIERT, IRRT, REFORMA, Black Caucus of ALA)

Adriene Lim (IFRT, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association)

Amber Williams (RRT, EMIERT, American Indian Library Association, REFORMA, Black Caucus of ALA, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association)

Anchalee (Joy) Panigabutra-Roberts (IRRT, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association)

Andrea Malone (IRRT)

Antonio Apodaca (REFORMA)

Bradley Kuykendall (Black Caucus of ALA)

Camille Chesley (RRT, Black Caucus of ALA)

Chulin Meng (Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association)

Edwin Rodarte (REFORMA, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association)

Eric D. Suess (IFRT, IRRT)

Erin Berman (RRT, IFRT)

Glen J. Benedict (RRT)

Hong Yao (Chinese American Librarians Association, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association)

Janice Welburn (REFORMA, Black Caucus of ALA)

Joseph Thompson (SustainRT, IFRT)

Judy Jeng (Chinese American Librarians Association)

Kaitlin Crotty (RRT, IFRT)

Karen G. Schneider (RRT, IFRT, SustainRT)

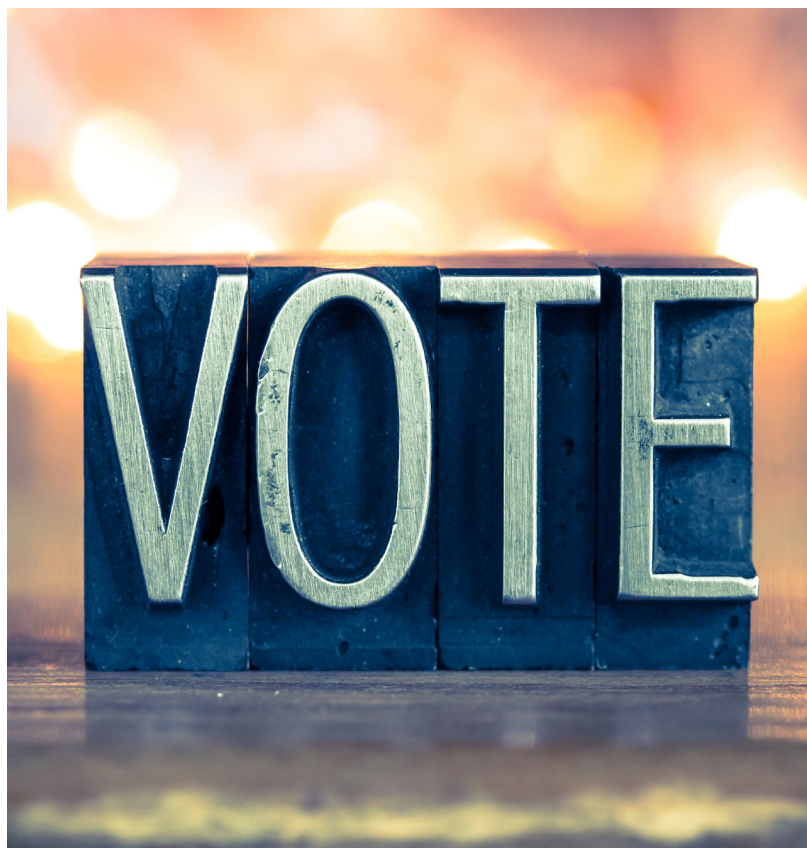


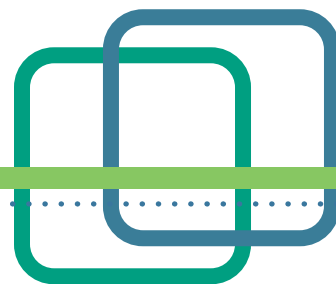
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# Call for Submissions



**SRRT**  
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The SRRT Newsletter is always looking for good articles, essays, and letters to the editor. The next submission deadline is **May 30, 2022**.

The SRRT Newsletter invites submissions from library and information workers, students, educators, and all others who recognize the critical importance of libraries in addressing community and social issues. Please send your submissions electronically in one of the following formats: MS Word, RTF, PDF, or plain text pasted into the body of an email. Submissions should be 500 to 1,000 words and should include the article title, author's name and title, and school or place of work (optional). Graphics are encouraged. If using images that are already on the Internet, the URL of the image and a caption or description may be added to the text of the submission.

Please email original submissions to SRRT Newsletter Co-Editors Julie Winkelstein and Doreen Dixon at [jwinkels@utk.edu](mailto:jwinkels@utk.edu) and [srrt.newsletter.content@gmail.com](mailto:srrt.newsletter.content@gmail.com), indicating "SRRT Newsletter" within the subject line of your email. A confirmation of receipt will be sent in a timely manner.

## Submissions to SRRT Newsletter Reviews

Submissions for book or media reviews should be sent to Laura Koltutsky, SRRT Newsletter Reviews Editor, at [laurakoltutsky@gmail.com](mailto:laurakoltutsky@gmail.com), indicating "Reviews" in the subject line of your email.

Submissions should be sent electronically in MS-Word format or a Word compatible format. Reviewers should keep their reviews to 300-500 words; any length much shorter or longer should be discussed with the reviews editor prior to submission. Reviewers should avoid conflicts of interest. Full disclosure should be made to the reviews editor when appropriate.

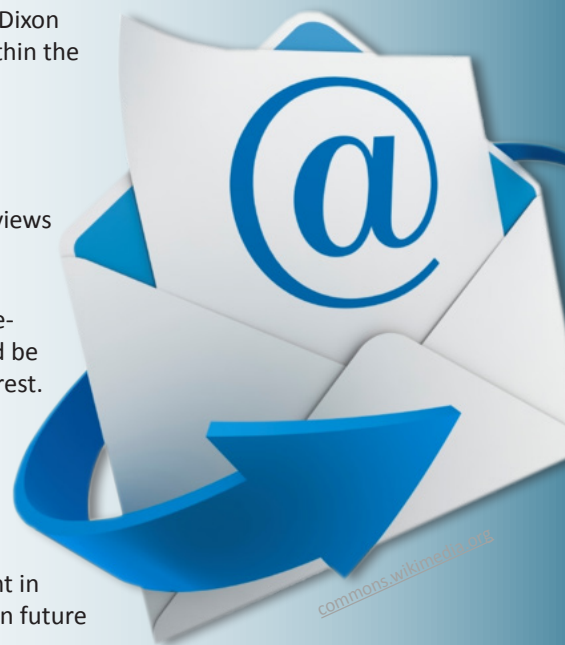
## Submissions to SRRT Newsletter Letters to the Editors

The Newsletter invites readers to submit letters to the editors relating to social responsibilities and libraries. The letters should be respectful and thoughtful, either respond to specific content in the newsletter or include suggestions for topics of interest to SRRT members to be addressed in future issues. We will only publish letters of more than 200 words in exceptional circumstances.

Letters may be edited for length, grammar, and accuracy. You will be notified if your letter will be published.

Submit your letters to Laura Koltutsky at [laurakoltutsky@gmail.com](mailto:laurakoltutsky@gmail.com). Please indicate "SRRT Newsletter Letter to Editors" in the subject line of your email. You may submit your letter as an attachment in one of these formats: .doc, docx; or in the body of your email message.

Letters must include your full name, address, a telephone number and email address if you have one. This is for us only -- we don't share this information.



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