

# The State of AMERICA'S LIBRARIES

★ ★ ★ A Snapshot of 2024 ★ ★ ★

**TOP TEN MOST  
CHALLENGED BOOKS OF 2024**

PAGE 9


**CENSORSHIP BY THE NUMBERS**

PAGE 10

*Nearly 3 in 4 book challenges are from  
pressure groups or government sources*



# BOOK RÉSUMÉS



Unite  
Against  
BookBans

## A Free Resource to Fight Censorship in Your Community.

Book Résumés from Unite Against Book Bans is a free tool to assist teachers, librarians, parents, and community members in defending the freedom to read. **Each book résumé details a title's significance and educational value** and is easy to download and print for sharing with administrators, book review committees, and the public at board meetings.



Created in partnership with publishers, librarians, and *School Library Journal*.

# The State of AMERICA'S LIBRARIES

A Snapshot of 2024

*Produced April 2025*

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ALA's Celebrate National Library Week poster.

## INTRODUCTION

# Libraries Face Challenges But Continue to Serve

by LESLIE BURGER



**A**s I sit down to write this introduction and look back at 2024, it seems like such a long time ago. The State of America's Libraries report is meant to be a snapshot-in-time of the year that's past, and this year's report will cover the great work libraries of all kinds did in the past year.

That will include the lead-up to the election, when the American Library Association teamed up with the League of Women Voters for our Reader. Voter. Ready. campaign, which was picked up at libraries throughout the country. Our libraries worked hard to get the vote out, not for specific candidates, but for people to freely choose their next leaders. That's what democracy is all about.

Before the end of 2024, we had the results of that election. Since then, we learned that the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the only federal funding dedicated to libraries, is slated for elimination and grant funding will be stopped. Library services throughout the U.S. are in jeopardy because of this action. We don't yet know how the rest of 2025 will unfold, but I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge how much our library world is changing and how quickly. Check out our [#ShowUpForOurLibraries](#) campaign for more information.

But the work of libraries in 2024 is not to be ignored because library professionals continued to lead the way in their communities, and libraries continued to be the bedrock of our country.

Here are three major trends from 2024:

## Censorship

We continued to deal with book bans and adverse legislation, and you'll see that reflected in this report. But we also saw some states working to protect libraries and people showing up for our libraries. Plus, libraries and their communities continued to take advantage of resources on the [Unite Against Book Bans website](#).

## Artificial Intelligence

It's not enough to understand how to use artificial intelligence (AI) in libraries, although the library world continues to do so. Library workers are also busy understanding the ethical issues of using AI, from baked-in biases to copyright. We know libraries of all kinds have always led the way when it comes to technology, and the understanding of AI is top of mind.

## Sustainability

Libraries are playing a bigger role in helping their communities navigate environmental disasters, which are happening with greater intensity and frequency. From wildfires to hurricanes, libraries were there in 2024 with internet, shelter, and information for people who lost everything after climate-related events. In addition to reacting quickly in times of need, libraries are working ahead of tragedy to preserve collections and protect community culture by digitizing collections and strengthening infrastructure.

As always, our libraries are absolutely critical to our communities, our society, and our democracy. They continue to provide hope in dark times, and for that I could not be more grateful. ●



ALA's Banned Books Week poster.

*Leslie Burger is interim executive director of the American Library Association.*

# Don't Believe the Hype! Libraries of All Kinds Remain Essential to Their Communities

by CINDY HOHL



**S**ome headlines might have you believe that all libraries are caught up in the political divide. But surveys show that libraries remain strongly supported by people from both sides. The stories in the news aren't wrong, but the forces that would remove books simply because they are about LGBTQIA+ people or people of color are highly organized pressure groups. Turns out, most people want an educated United States of America, and libraries of all kinds are the purveyors of the services that help everyday Americans live better lives.

Not only do libraries garner wide support in our country, but in my travels and in my own city, people genuinely love their libraries. People speak warmly about their experiences in libraries. And most people aren't even aware of all that libraries provide. They might know about childhood literacy, summer reading programs, and all those books on the shelves. But libraries in the digital age have captured the hearts of people who listen to audiobooks or read digital versions of books on their apps (all you need is a library card!). Many don't know that libraries help people:

- Get a GED
- Apply for jobs
- Start a new business
- Use a 3D printer
- Connect with telehealth services

The list goes on and on. Libraries are the very heart of their communities, and each library tailors its services to its community. Here are a few examples:

## Strong broadband

Tribal libraries are near and dear to my heart. I am a member of the Santee Sioux Nation, and one of our concerns among Indigenous Peoples in our country is strong internet. Working with the American Library Association, we have seen more

libraries benefiting from government programs to provide internet to our Indigenous populations.

## Mental health

Library Media Specialist Diana Haneski has helped survivors at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, navigate the trauma of a mass shooting that took the lives of 14 students and three faculty. Haneski, who survived the shooting herself, has become a leader in the community's healing by providing a space in the school library for students to commune with her trained therapy dog, River, or to meditate in the Zen room. Haneski was one of 10 library professionals nationwide recognized early in 2024 with the American Library Association's I Love My Librarian Award.

## Tailoring to a rural community

In Bethel, Alaska, the library serves as a satellite of the University of Alaska Fairbanks and as the community library for this remote city that can only be reached by plane or boat. Kuskokwim Consortium Library Director Theresa Quiner pays close attention to her community's needs, from classes that teach camp cooking and canning to a partnership with local organizations to address homelessness. Quiner was also selected for the I Love My Librarian Award.

Stories like these abound in communities across our nation. It's no wonder that people love and appreciate their libraries. When libraries are threatened, whether by organized groups or by governments withdrawing financial support, we must show up for our libraries. Libraries create welcoming spaces where everyone feels and knows that they belong. Let's ensure they are there for us for years to come. ●

*Cindy Hoh is the 2024-2025 president of the American Library Association and director of policy analysis at Kansas City Public Library.*

# Freedom to Read Continues to Come Under Fire

by DEBORAH CALDWELL-STONE



**B**y any measure, 2024 represented a difficult time for libraries, library workers, and all those who champion the freedom to read. The number of demands to censor and restrict library resources remained at record levels, with 821 attempts to censor library books and materials across all library types reported to ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom in 2024.

While this is a decrease from 2023, when 1,247 attempts to censor library materials were reported to ALA, it is still the third-highest number of book challenges recorded by ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom since it began documenting library censorship in 1990.

## Organized censorship campaigns

These demands to remove and restrict books and other library materials are not the result of any grassroots or popular sentiment. The majority of book censorship attempts are now originating from well-funded, organized groups and movements long dedicated to curbing access to information and ideas. Pressure groups, elected officials, board members, and administrators initiated nearly 72% of demands to censor books in school and public libraries. Parents only accounted for 16% of demands to censor books, while less than 5% of reported book challenges were brought by individual library users.

The harms inflicted on our freedom to read by organized censorship campaigns can be seen in the numbers. From 2001–2020, during the two decades prior to the start of the organized censorship campaign, an average of 46 titles were challenged per year by pressure groups, board members, administrators, and elected officials, who brought 2.8% of the total documented challenges. In 2024, these groups targeted 4,190 titles for censorship, 71.6% of the total documented; these were primarily books addressing the lives, experiences, and concerns of LGBTQIA+ persons, or books addressing the

We are witnessing an effort to eliminate entire genres and categories of books from library shelves in pursuit of a larger goal of placing politics and religion over the well-being and education of young people and everyone's right to access and find information in our libraries.

lives, experiences, and concerns of Black persons, Indigenous persons, and persons of color.

## Attacks on those defending freedom

Not reflected in these numbers are the relentless attacks on library workers, educators, and community members who stand up to the censors and defend the freedom to read. These attacks are creating an environment of fear in which library workers are afraid to buy books or report censorship. Barriers to user access grow ever higher, with books under lock and key in "adult only" rooms that require ID to access, held in staff areas and available only upon request, or require parental permission, if the materials they're looking for are even still available.

We are witnessing an effort to eliminate entire genres and categories of books from library shelves in pursuit of a larger goal of placing politics and religion over the well-being and education of young people and everyone's right to access and find information in our libraries. It is impacting our youth and our communities.

- In Virginia, the board of the King George County Schools restricted access to more than 100 titles at the urging of a 76-year-old preacher, who is related to two board members. The books are now under lock and key or kept behind the librarian's desk, and the board has taken control of book selection.
- Nearly 400 books were removed from school libraries in Wilson County, Tennessee, after state legislators adopted a law that barred Tennessee schools from making any books available that "in whole or in part" contain sexual conduct, excess violence, or something that is "patently offensive." As a result, students lost access to many acclaimed works of literature, including Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*, and Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*.
- At the Community Library Network in northern Idaho, 140 young adult and non-fiction titles were removed from circulation at the urging of representatives from the organization Clean Books 4 Kids, denying the entire community access to those books.

### State legislation's impact on access

Legislatures in several states support and reinforce the efforts of pressure groups by adopting new laws that are intended to restrict readers' access to disfavored books in libraries and schools. Some of these laws censor books containing broadly defined "sexual content," like Tennessee's "Age-Appropriate Materials Act" and Utah's "Sensitive Materials Act."

Other proposed laws would allow library workers and educators to be criminally prosecuted or susceptible to private

right-of-action lawsuits for simply making books available in the library that a single person deems inappropriate for minors.

Other laws passed in 2024 create regulatory regimes that eliminate or restrict library workers' involvement in developing library collections or institute statewide control of library resources, eliminating local control of community libraries.

The most insidious attack on the freedom to read in 2024 is the coordinated and ongoing effort by several state attorneys general to overturn decades of legal precedent that hold that public libraries are public spaces intended for people's access to information and ideas that operate under the First Amendment. They seek a declaration that libraries and their collections are nothing more than an expression of elected officials' opinions that can be censored at will to deny people access to the ideas and opinions they do not like.

### Courts overturning book ban laws

Fortunately, courts are rejecting the claim that libraries belong to politicians and pressure groups rather than members of the community the libraries serve. Courts are overturning laws that infringe on our freedom to read. Federal courts in Arkansas, Iowa, and Texas have firmly rejected the claim that library users have no First Amendment rights.

Indeed, the federal court in Arkansas permanently barred enforcement of Act 372 (Arkansas' book ban law), holding that it violated the rights of both adult and minor library users. Library users, authors, publishers, and civil liberties groups are similarly challenging book bans and library censorship around the country, with active lawsuits challenging discriminatory book bans in Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, South Carolina, Texas

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*“The work that we’re engaging in, our work defending intellectual freedom, is nowhere near as complicated as rocket science or as high stakes as world domination. It will be hard, but we know it is worth doing, because the freedom to read is also the freedom to question what is out there, the freedom to share knowledge and beauty, and the freedom to dream.”*

– ERIC STROSHANE, MLS

Legislators in California, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Washington adopted new legislation protecting the freedom to read and the library workers who defend that freedom for their communities. Sixteen other state legislatures are considering similar legislation.

### Some states step in

Legislators who appreciate what libraries do for their communities and who take seriously their duty to protect constitutional liberties, are stepping up as well. Legislators in California, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Washington adopted new legislation protecting the freedom to read and the library workers who defend that freedom for their communities. Sixteen other state legislatures are considering similar legislation.

### Communities speak out for library workers, educators

At the same time, communities are rejecting the rhetoric of book banners, speaking out on behalf of free speech and standing up for library workers and educators:

- In New Castle, Indiana, dozens turned out to oppose a proposal to remove several books from the middle school library. “Removing or banning books is a slippery slope to government censorship and the erosion of our

country’s commitment to freedom of expression,” said one grandmother. All of the challenged books were retained by the board.

- Nearly 100 residents of Lapeer County, Michigan, turned out to support the library director and staff after rumors of a possible book ban reached the community. Commenters supported a decision to retain challenged books in the library’s collection, insisting that decisions regarding materials in libraries should be left up to the library directors and staff. “A person can decide that they do not want to read a particular book and that they do not want their child to read a particular book,” said one person. “But they cannot decide that an entire community cannot read a particular book.”

### Celebrating library workers

The courageous front-line librarians who stand up for the freedom to read and who stand against book bans are being recognized and celebrated. “The Librarians,” a documentary by director Kim Snyder and producer Sarah Jessica Parker, shines a spotlight on librarians Suzette Baker, Becky Calzada, Carolyn Foote, Martha Hickson, Amanda Jones, Nancy Jo Lambert, and Audrey Wilson-Youngblood, who all persevere in their defense of their users’ freedom to read despite being fired, harassed, stalked, and threatened with jail time.

Their commitment to the First Amendment right to receive information and ideas and their brave stand against censorship are the hallmarks of librarianship. Those who work in libraries understand that the official suppression of ideas and opinions harms both individuals and the society they live in and that libraries are fundamental to freedom in the United States. That is why they take on the hard work of protecting the public’s right to access a wide range of materials representing diverse viewpoints and ideas. It is work that will continue in 2025. ●

*Deborah Caldwell-Stone is director of ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom.*



# TOP 10 MOST CHALLENGED BOOKS OF 2024

The American Library Association documented **821 attempts to censor** materials and services at libraries, schools, and universities in 2024. The most common reasons for challenges were false claims of illegal obscenity for minors; inclusion of LGBTQIA+ characters or themes; and dealing with topics of race, racism, inclusivity, equity, and social justice. Of the **2,452 unique titles** that were challenged or banned in 2024, here are the top 10 most frequently targeted.

1



## All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto

by George M. Johnson

Why this book matters:  
[bit.ly/allboysBR](http://bit.ly/allboysBR)

2

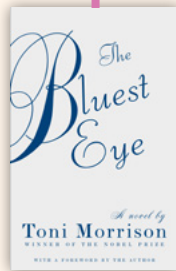


## Gender Queer: A Memoir

by Maia Kobabe

Why this book matters:  
[bit.ly/genderBR](http://bit.ly/genderBR)

3/4



## The Bluest Eye

by Toni Morrison

Why this book matters:  
[bit.ly/bluestBR](http://bit.ly/bluestBR)

5



## Tricks

by Ellen Hopkins

Why this book matters:  
[bit.ly/tricksBR](http://bit.ly/tricksBR)



## The Perks of Being a Wallflower

by Stephen Chbosky

Why this book matters:  
[bit.ly/wallflowerBR](http://bit.ly/wallflowerBR)

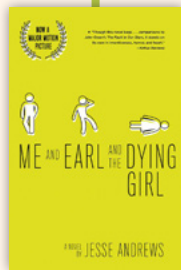
6/7



## Looking for Alaska

by John Green

Why this book matters:  
[bit.ly/alaskaBR](http://bit.ly/alaskaBR)



## Me and Earl and the Dying Girl

by Jesse Andrews

Why this book matters:  
[bit.ly/earlBR](http://bit.ly/earlBR)

8/9



## Crank

by Ellen Hopkins

Why this book matters:  
[bit.ly/crankBR](http://bit.ly/crankBR)



## Sold

by Patricia McCormick

Why this book matters:  
[bit.ly/soldBR](http://bit.ly/soldBR)

10



## Flamer

by Mike Curato

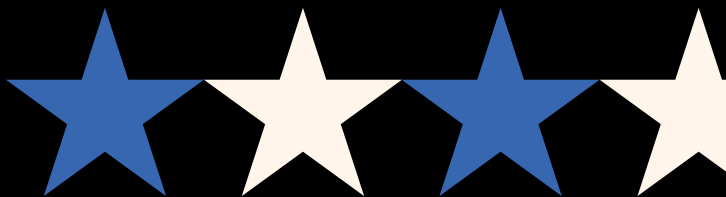
Why this book matters:  
[bit.ly/flamerBR](http://bit.ly/flamerBR)



OFFICE FOR  
Intellectual Freedom  
American Library Association

# CENSORSHIP

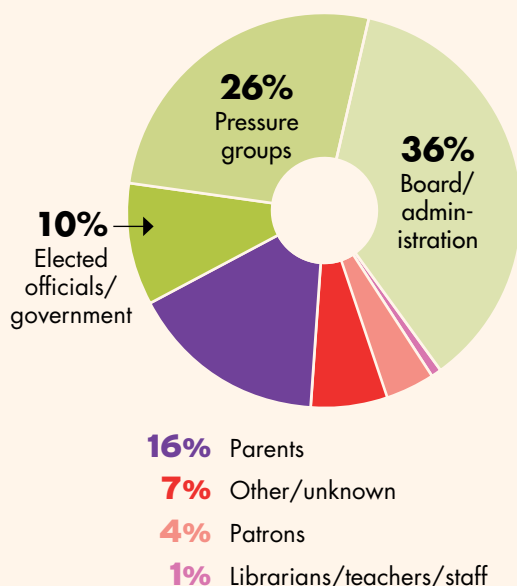
## BY THE NUMBERS



The American Library Association documented another year in an unabating deluge of efforts to censor library materials in 2024, continuing an extremist campaign to suppress access to books that began in 2021. Last year, **2,452 unique titles** were challenged, the third-highest number ever documented by ALA and significantly exceeding the annual average of 273 unique titles over the period from 2001–2020. **Learn more at [ala.org/bbooks](http://ala.org/bbooks).**

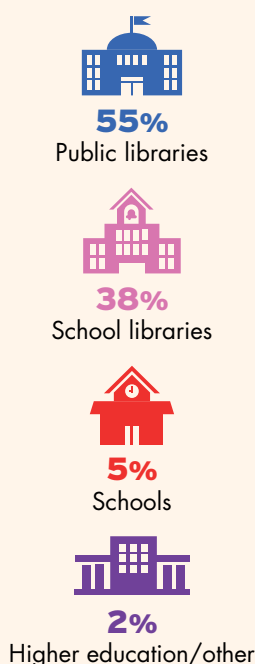
### WHO CHALLENGES BOOKS?

Nearly **72% of censorship attempts** in 2024 were initiated by pressure groups and decision makers who have been swayed by them.



Statistics based on 5,813 book challenges.

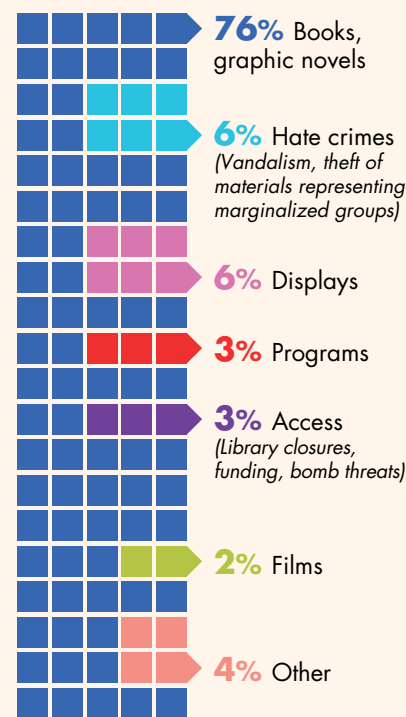
### WHERE DO CHALLENGES TAKE PLACE?



Statistics based on 804 cases with known locations.

### BOOKS AND BEYOND

ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked **821 censorship attempts** in 2024. Here's the breakdown:



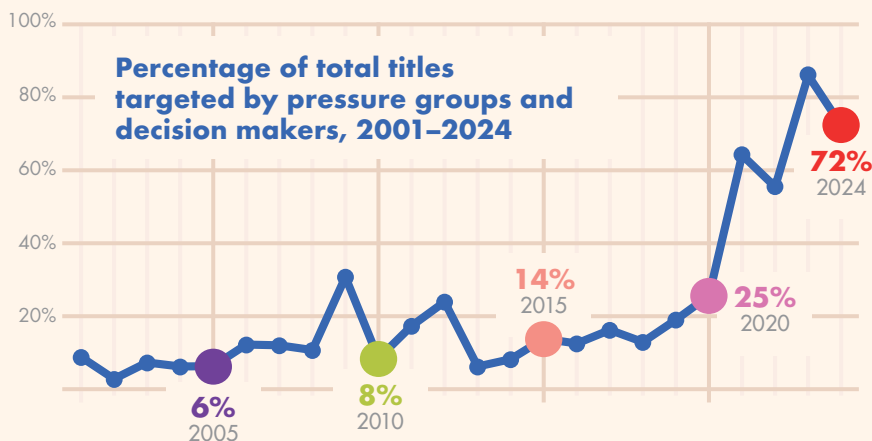
### CENSORSHIP TRENDS

The majority of library censorship can be tied to organized campaigns. Pressure groups and the administrators, board members, and elected officials they influenced targeted 4,190 total titles in 2024. From 2001–2020, this constituency attempted to remove an average of 46 titles per year.

CENSORSHIP  
STATISTICS  
COMPILED BY:



OFFICE FOR  
Intellectual Freedom  
American Library Association



# Welcoming All to the Library

edited by PHIL MOREHART

U pheaval and uncertainty have rocked the library world in recent years, from record book bans and challenges or threats to library workers' lives and livelihoods for simply doing their jobs. But despite it all, librarians soldiered forward and deployed innovative ways to introduce communities and students to everything that the library offers.

## Prioritizing mental health

Public libraries across the US are supporting those in their communities who are seeking help with mental health issues by designating shelves with books that address mental illness, addiction recovery, and other stigmatized topics—materials they intend to give away or don't expect to see returned.

San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) provides free addiction recovery materials through its Read to Recovery program. Staff are trained to use Narcan to reverse opioid overdoses, but with the city in the throes of an addiction crisis, it isn't enough, says Doreen Horstin, manager of SFPL's Park branch.



Doreen Horstin, manager of San Francisco Public Library's Park branch, adds a book to the Read to Recovery shelves, which provide free addiction recovery materials to patrons.

PHOTO: JAIME WONG/SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

“We can't just administer Narcan and not do anything else,” Horstin told [American Libraries](#). “We're all about books. That's what we do. It's still the number one service that we offer.”

In 2022, Horstin started expanding the system's collection of addiction recovery materials before connecting with Matt Dorsey, now a member of San Francisco's Board of Supervisors. Dorsey suggested that some people might want to keep and annotate their books, especially workbooks like those published by Alcoholics Anonymous. Together, they [successfully advocated](#) that the city board make these items free for all.

High levels of demand have spurred SFPL to invest heavily in Read to Recovery. Currently, four locations have these no-checkout shelves, and library staffers are working to roll out the initiative to all 28 locations and its Jail and Reentry Services program. Between January 2023 and July 2024, SFPL used almost \$66,000 from its Library Preservation Fund to purchase materials covering a variety of approaches to addiction recovery. Read to Recovery gave away 3,703 recovery-related books in the fiscal year that ended in June 2024.

## Exploring the universe

NASA voyaged a little closer to home when it held a [workshop](#) for Tribal libraries at New Mexico State Library in August 2024.

Facilitated by Christine Shupla and Claire Ratcliffe Adams from the [NASA Science Activation program's NASA@ My Library](#) project and with input from area Tribal libraries, the Co-Design Space Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program explored an array of space-related programming and activities that libraries could adapt, from passive programming to physically engaging activities and even engineering design. Advisors also stressed the need to make the activities culturally relevant for their Tribal communities.

After a crater-creation activity, participants discussed replacing the materials with local materials and incorporating aspects of the local topography and even local art. Throughout the workshop, Shupla and Adams reiterated that the participants' thoughts and input were critical—that they were the keepers of knowledge of their communities and that their voices were respected.

“I like how the instructors were reassuring throughout the session,” said one participant. “Making sure everyone was comfortable and making it feel safe to share ideas.” Another participant said, “I tend to not participate, but observe, because I’m not a scientist. It was awesome (feeling comfortable) to design too!”

The Space Science Institute’s National Center for Interactive Learning, in partnership with the American Library Association (ALA), Cornerstones of Science, Lunar and Planetary Institute, and Education Development Center, leads the NASA@ My Library program.

## Walking for freedom

For the past two years, students at Tom C. Clark High School in San Antonio, Texas, have been able to learn about censorship and freedom-to-read issues thanks to a program initiated by the school librarian. “It’s important for students to be aware of what they have access to,” Lucy Podmore, librarian at Tom C. Clark High School in San Antonio, Texas, [told I Love Libraries](#). Understanding the myriad factors that impact that access, however, can be another story.

So, during Banned Books Week in 2023, Podmore decided to reconsider typical programming and switch to a freedom-to-read perspective—one that could educate students and their families about what goes into decisions affecting library bookshelves. Central to that event was what Podmore dubbed the Freedom Walk, an outdoor path on the school’s campus with interactive stations along the way.



A stop on the Freedom Walk at Tom C. Clark High School in San Antonio, Texas.  
PHOTO: TOM C. CLARK HIGH SCHOOL

Collaborating with social studies teachers to align with curricula, the Freedom Walk occurred in the school’s central courtyard during student lunch periods and was comprised of five interactive stations centered around censorship issues: First Amendment rights, censorship terms, school district collection development and reconsideration policies, books as windows and mirrors, and voter registration/education. The stations gave nearly 500 students the opportunity to reflect and learn about their own experiences with censorship through games and introspective prompts.

In 2024, Tom C. Clark High School received a [Sara Jaffarian Award for Exemplary Humanities Programming](#) for its Freedom Walk initiative. It was the first time the award had been granted to a high school. The \$5,000 award is presented annually by the ALA’s Public Programs Office and is sponsored by ALA’s Cultural Communities Fund in cooperation with the American Association of School Librarians.

The best part about the experience, says Podmore? The students were really getting into it.

“They were asking a lot of questions,” she recalls. “I thought, ‘Holy smokes, they’re interested in this.’”

## Providing access

Georgetown, Delaware, is the county seat of Sussex County and a rural community characterized by numerous farms and agricultural activity. Despite being the hub of county governance, many areas in and around Georgetown lack access to essential internet infrastructure. Even within town limits, some residents either do not have internet access or cannot afford it, creating significant barriers to education, employment, and connectivity in today’s digital world.

Thanks to [Community Connect: Fostering Digital Access](#), a grant program launched by ALA and Capital One that provides rural public libraries with resources and support to assist patrons in establishing and sustaining affordable and high-speed home internet connections, Georgetown Public Library (GPL) was able to give its patrons access to the internet through its hotspot lending program. GPL was one of 30 libraries to receive five Wi-Fi hotspots (including service contracts) and five laptops for lending to patrons. It also received a \$2,000 stipend to support implementing financial capability and digital literacy programs.

Throughout the grant period, GPL circulated their hotspots 122 times and laptops 28 times. Patrons were able to check out hotspots and laptops for up to one week. Those without home internet due to cost or rural location were excited to have access.

“The hotspots seemed to be the biggest success,” a GPL library worker said. “They never sat on our shelves. As soon as they were returned, they were put on the holds shelf for another patron.”

GPL also partnered with a local financial advisor to offer an investing workshop to a local homeschool group as well as a personal finance workshop targeted towards adult patrons. It also offered a computer basics class for Spanish-speaking patrons, which used the Digital Learn curriculum and met on Saturdays for 12 weeks.

“For me this was a very important experience to be able to work in my business and be able to make a document or presentation,” said a GPL patron. “This class has been very important for me and my family.”

## Meeting neurodiverse needs

To fill in service gaps exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Warren County (Ky.) Public Library (WCPL) opened four satellite libraries. These one-room, full-service satellites, housed by community partners, are meant to support populations that would otherwise struggle to visit a full-size branch because of socioeconomic, transportation, or other barriers.

Continuing with that outreach, WCPL began working with LifeWorks at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, a 28-unit residential community that offers two-year stays for neurodiverse young adults and focuses on independent living and job readiness. WCPL opened a satellite location at the facility—making it the state’s first public library branch dedicated to serving neurodiverse patrons.

Warren County Public Library opened a satellite location at the facility—making it the state’s first public library branch dedicated to serving neurodiverse patrons.



Participants at LifeWorks, a residential community for neurodiverse young adults, hold bags from Warren County (Ky.) Public Library (WCPL). WCPL recently opened a satellite branch at LifeWorks.

PHOTO: WARREN COUNTY (KY.) PUBLIC LIBRARY

Earl Willis, WCPL’s special populations liaison, hosts several programs every week. The satellite is designed to be a sensory-sensitive environment, enabling individuals with autism, ADHD, or other learning differences—who can become overstimulated in crowded public areas—to concentrate on their studies, read a book, or browse digital library resources. With natural light from two large windows and carpet to reduce noise, the space is conducive for learning. Its location away from living spaces and LifeWorks’ main activity area provides a calm place for participants to spend time without distractions.

Because of his decades of library experience, Willis is incredibly familiar with the neurodiverse population and can build strong bonds with LifeWorks participants by being there daily. He provides detailed training sessions on how to access and utilize the library’s services, like Hoopla and Libby, which are enhanced even further by the enrichment activities and social groups he’s created. There are book, poetry, and music clubs where participants can share and learn from others.

Library classes and workshops are offered at a variety of times to accommodate LifeWorks participants’ unique schedules. Additionally, those interested in careers in library services can shadow Willis to learn what it might take for them to also become professional librarians. Several have expressed interest in library work after volunteering with him.

Willis notes that he has already seen a change in the way participants view the library, primarily because the satellite

is less intimidating than a typical library branch. “It’s a more personal experience,” [he told American Libraries](#). “While the public library may not have been a familiar environment before, they now know about the many resources available to them.”

## Creating a sense of place

Northwestern University (NU) in Evanston, Illinois, and the Chicago office of the national nonprofit World Relief work together to offer free summer programming for families who are refugees or seeking asylum. In 2021, after the U.S. military withdrew its final troops from Afghanistan, tens of thousands of Afghan families fled to the U.S. That’s when NU’s Seeley G. Mudd Library (ML), its science and engineering library, joined the partnership, hosting dozens of these families’ children in its makerspace each summer.

The student-named Fun Summer Program encourages participants to gain new academic skills, develop leadership experience, and build connections in their new community. The partnership’s success helped earn ML librarian Ted Quiballo a 2024 I Love My Librarian Award from ALA.

Each summer, nearly 70 students participate in the program. On a typical day, students build mini robots and program their movements with block-based coding, create

On a typical day, students build mini robots and program their movements with block-based coding, create 3D prints, laser-cut name tags, or learn about the intersection between sports and technology.

3D prints, laser-cut name tags, or learn about the intersection between sports and technology through tools like the HomeCourt app, which uses artificial intelligence to record reaction times and helps users practice hand-eye coordination.

The program is facilitated by interns recruited from across Chicago who often share similar cultural, religious, or language backgrounds with the students. The interns are trained in ML’s technologies as well as pedagogical practices that are culturally responsive and support social-emotional learning. For example, after a lesson, students teach what they just learned to one another rather than instructors taking charge. Students and interns engage in joyful moments of play and connect by conversing in Arabic or Dari and discussing their family traditions during Muslim holidays.

“Kids in the program tell their parents how excited they are to go each day,” [wrote Quiballo and Sarah P. Lee](#), a graduate researcher in NU’s Learning Sciences program, in [American Libraries](#). “We hope the students also notice how we center their interests and value their knowledge, skills, and experiences as a form of expertise. We know there isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach to this work, but we lead successfully when we prioritize authentic connections and care.” ●

*Phil Morehart is a communications manager at the American Library Association.*



Ted Quiballo (right), instructional technologies librarian at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, shows interns for World Relief Chicago’s youth summer program how to use a 3D scanner.

CREDIT: NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

# Leveraging Generative AI: A Proactive Approach for Future-Ready Libraries

by LEO S. LO

Imagine a student receiving personalized reading recommendations that ignite a lifelong passion for learning, or a librarian swiftly identifying misinformation to protect their community. Thanks to artificial intelligence (AI), these scenarios are becoming a reality in libraries today.

Over the past two years, libraries have rapidly shifted from cautious exploration to actively integrating AI—particularly generative AI—into their operations. The 2024 [Clarivate global survey](#) found more than 60% of libraries now evaluating or planning AI projects, making AI their top technological priority. This accelerated adoption highlights the urgent need for librarians across all types of institutions to develop AI literacy, enabling them to effectively, ethically, and confidently integrate AI into their daily work.

## Defining AI literacy

I define [AI literacy](#) as “the ability to understand, use, and think critically about AI technologies and their impact on society, ethics, and everyday life.”

AI literacy encompasses technical knowledge of foundational concepts like machine learning and neural networks; ethical awareness to address algorithmic bias, privacy, and accountability; critical thinking to evaluate AI-generated content for accuracy and bias; practical skills for hands-on proficiency with AI tools; and understanding AI’s societal impact on equity, economics, culture, and sustainability.

## Strategic importance of AI literacy in libraries

The strategic importance of AI literacy in libraries is clear. As shown by our [study with Association of Research Libraries](#)

[\(ARL\) library leaders](#) and supported by Clarivate’s findings, libraries have rapidly moved from exploring AI to actively integrating it into their operations. By 2025, nearly one-third of ARL libraries had begun implementing AI, while most continued exploring its uses.

Public libraries view AI as essential for content discovery, operational efficiency, and research support, and school libraries are similarly adopting AI through initiatives like “[LibraryReady.AI](#),” highlighting their commitment to enhancing educational services.

Despite optimism about AI’s potential, libraries face key challenges, including resource gaps for smaller libraries, varied staff attitudes requiring tailored professional development, and the rise of AI-generated misinformation that demands increased ethical vigilance from library professionals.

## The path forward

To successfully navigate these opportunities and address the associated challenges, libraries must prioritize AI literacy through targeted training and accessible professional development, supported by strong internal and external collaborations. By investing in AI literacy, libraries reinforce essential community values like trust, inclusivity, and democratic participation, ensuring their continued relevance and leadership in an increasingly AI-driven world. ●

*Leo S. Lo is dean and professor of the College of University Libraries and Learning Services at the University of New Mexico and President of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)*

# Investing in libraries' civic and broadband infrastructure in 2024

by SHAWNDA HINES

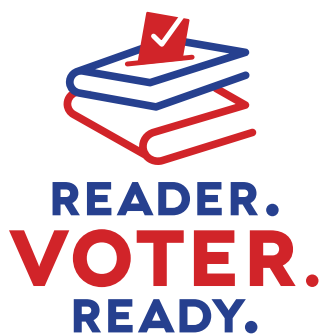


Civic participation was a thrust of library advocacy in the leadup up to the 2024 elections. Voting is one of the greatest privileges and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship, but turnout in national elections is consistently less than two-thirds of eligible voters. As institutions that provide access to information, resources, programs, and public spaces for all, libraries are a cornerstone for civic engagement.

In April 2024, ALA launched the Reader. Voter. Ready. campaign to inform and prepare library workers and supporters to build on this foundation and support voter engagement in the November elections.

As part of this effort, ALA undertook a national

partnership with another trusted local institution: the League of Women Voters. The organizations released a collaboration toolkit for local libraries and leagues and co-hosted live webinars featuring partnerships between local Leagues and public, academic, and school librarians. The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) contributed to Reader. Voter. Ready. with the September release of a booklist for young readers, "[Inspiring Future Voters](#)."



Inspiring Future Voters, ALSC's Reader. Voter. Ready. booklist for young readers.



With single-party control of both houses of Congress and the executive branch, ALA is preparing for anticipated cuts in library and education funding for FY2026 in the 119th Congress.

Following the 2024 elections, ALA leaders and staff pivoted to policy analysis in preparation for a second Trump Administration and the 119th Congress. In November, ALA launched a popular semi-monthly, member-exclusive webinar series to inform members of the range of issues and actions expected to arise in 2025.

### White House budget prompts #FundLibraries campaign

Meanwhile, the annual congressional appropriations cycle circled back in March 2024, when the White House presented its budget proposal. The administration's \$30 million recommendation for the Innovative Approaches to Literacy school library program matched the FY 2023 level of support. More disappointing, President Biden recommended [a decrease](#) for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA).

Shortly thereafter, ALA launched its #FundLibraries campaign, hosting a congressional fly-in with the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies in Washington, DC. Library advocates responded: In one month, a record 20,000 advocates called on their members of Congress to sign "Dear Appropriator" letters in support of library funding.

As has been the case for years now, all work on congressional funding stalled. House and Senate appropriators provided some indication of their willingness to support library funding through LSTA and [the Innovative Approaches to Literacy \(IAL\) program](#). The House FY2025 spending bill

called for significant cuts in funding for LSTA and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)—the largest source of federal funding for America's libraries—while the Senate spending bill called for an increase in LSTA funding.

Congress was unable to enact any final spending bills last year and passed a temporary spending measure (called a Continuing Resolution) to keep the government operating through March 2025, maintaining the funding rate for LSTA at \$211 million and IAL at \$30 million—level with FY24—until work on the final bills is wrapped up.

At press time, Republicans are seeking to move a full-year Continuing Resolution with cuts to some domestic spending, though it's unclear if library funding will be cut. Passage of this proposal is uncertain. With single-party control of both houses of Congress and the executive branch, ALA is preparing for anticipated cuts in library and education funding for FY2026 in the 119th Congress.

### Changes in IMLS leadership

Also in March, IMLS [announced](#) the departure of Director Crosby Kemper following the end of his four-year term. In 2025, President Trump appointed Deputy Secretary of Labor Keith E. Sonderling as Acting Director of IMLS.

### Learn Without Limits E-rate funding

ALA also led efforts to improve another vital source of funding for public libraries and schools—the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) E-rate program. The Learn Without Limits initiative championed by FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel was unveiled at the 2023 ALA Annual Conference and enabled support for a cybersecurity pilot, Wi-Fi on school

Almost half of public libraries (46.9%) currently offer hotspots for patrons to check out—an increase of 14.6 percent since 2020.

buses, and hotspot lending through libraries and schools in 2024.

Almost half of public libraries (46.9%) currently offer hotspots for patrons to check out—an increase of 14.6% since 2020—according to the [2023 Public Library Technology Survey](#), published by the Public Library Association.

“Until everyone has an affordable home internet connection, hotspots are a promising alternative in most communities—and America’s libraries have proven success in lending them,” ALA President Cindy Hohl said.

More than half of all public libraries each year apply for [E-Rate](#) funding to support the broadband capacity needed to serve communities nationwide. Unfortunately, E-Rate is one of four programs within the FCC’s Universal Service Fund (USF) that is being contested in federal courts. In November 2024, the Supreme Court accepted a case challenging the constitutionality of the Universal Service Fund from the Fifth Circuit Court. ALA has filed amicus in support of the E-Rate program and overall Universal Service Fund.

ALA is also showing up for libraries in the courts, where many battles will be fought over the next few years. ALA will monitor and be vigilant, preferably in concert with other major national organizations, and act strategically when warranted.

## White House recognizes libraries’ efforts to save lives from overdose

On October 8, 2024, the White House [recognized](#) the efforts of libraries to save lives from overdose. ALA President Cindy Hohl participated in a discussion of the issue in Washington with Administration officials and national leaders.

ALA is one of more than 250 organizations and businesses that have made voluntary commitments to the White House Challenge to Save Lives from Overdose, a nationwide call-to-

ALA is one of more than 250 organizations and businesses that have made voluntary commitments to the White House Challenge to Save Lives from Overdose, a nationwide call-to-action to stakeholders across all sectors to increase training on, and access to, life-saving opioid overdose reversal medications like naloxone.

action to stakeholders across all sectors to increase training on, and access to, life-saving opioid overdose reversal medications like naloxone.

ALA—led by its division, the Public Library Association—has developed [resources](#) to help libraries respond to the overdose crisis, supported by funding from the IMLS. ●

*Shawnda Hines is deputy director of communications for the American Library Association’s Public Policy and Advocacy Office.*

# About This Report

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## About ALA

The American Library Association (ALA) is the only non-partisan, nonprofit organization dedicated entirely to America's libraries and library professionals. For almost 150 years, ALA has provided resources to inspire library and information professionals to transform their communities through essential programs and services. The ALA serves academic, public, school, government, and special libraries, advocating for the profession and the library's role in enhancing learning and ensuring access to information for all.

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