



SRRT

Social Responsibilities
Round Table **EST. 1969**

July/August 2025
Issue 229

Newsletter



Review: SRRT @ Annual



ADVOCACY & TASK FORCES

All SRRT members are encouraged to join Task Forces that interest them.

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

- [Elder Justice Task Force \(EDJF\)](#)
Coordinators: [Joseph Winberry](#) and [Kristina Shiroma](#)

Seeks to partner with adults 65 and older, libraries, and communities to identify, understand, and address the needs of this growing and diverse population.

- [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 \(HHPTE\)](#)
Coordinators: [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: [Mark Hudson](#) and [Mark Rosenzweig](#)

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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<https://connect.ala.org/srrt/home>



<https://www.facebook.com/SRRTALA>

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On the cover:
Librarians protest with
hotel workers in Philly.
Photo by Carol Inskeep.

Librarians Stand with Hotel Workers in Philly!

Text by Mark Hudson, Photos by Carol Inskeep, Katharine Phenix, and Ann Sparanese.

Responding to a call from UNITE HERE Local 274, SRRT members mobilized and joined at least 40 other ALA members in solidarity with hotel workers at ALA Annual in Philly.

The picket line was loud and energetic, with chants and drumming that went on for well over an hour.



Elder Justice Task Force (EJTF) Celebrated its One-Year Anniversary at the 2025 ALA Annual Meeting

Kristina Shiroma, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, School of Information Studies, Louisiana State University

On Monday, June 30th, EJTF members Joseph Winberry, Rebecca Beadle, Manon Merewether, and Kristina Shiroma presented our panel “Organizing In/Beyond ALA: Lessons from the First Year of the Elder Justice Task Force.” The panel was well attended and received some great input from the audience. We intended our 2025 ALA Annual Meeting panel as a way to present our task force as a case study for those interested in working with their communities and professional organizations to affect change around timely needs that libraries can and should help address.

Formed under the Social Responsibilities Round Table, EJTF was developed during our current era of profound societal aging to address inequities for older adults through the lenses of libraries, social justice, and community organizing. The EJTF seeks to partner with adults 65 and older, libraries, and communities to identify, understand, and address the needs of this growing and diverse population.

EJTF is organized into 4 working groups each focused on one of our 4 strategic goals:

Goal 1: To Challenge ALA and the library profession to be more inclusive of older adults through increased anti-ageist representation of this population in the programs, services, and education offered. We have been hard at work auditing the ALA website to identify areas where representation, language, and visibility of older adults can be strengthened. Through this audit, we aim to provide constructive recommendations that encourage ALA to adopt more age-inclusive practices.

Goal 2: To collect and Showcase Resources, including programming support for serving older adults in libraries. This year, we launched the EJTF webpage as a central hub for accessing and contributing tools, materials, and examples from the field. Year 2 will see continued growth and refinement of our website.



Kristina Shiroma, Joseph Winberry, Rebecca Beadle, and Manon Merewether. Photo by April Sheppard.

Goal 3: To Create Community via a network for those seeking to serve older adults and disrupt stereotypes about this population in the library profession. As part of this effort, we developed the EJTF mini-grant to support LIS students and early career professionals working to support elder justice. Grantees have been selected, and we look forward to formally announcing them soon. Stay tuned!

Goal 4: To Facilitate Training for library staff on best practices for serving older adults. We are currently developing a series of training modules designed to support this goal. These trainings aim to extend the impact of the effective practices already taking place within our individual communities by creating shared learning opportunities and bridging gaps between libraries.

As we enter our second year, EJTF is poised for growth, but we cannot do this work alone! We invite all library workers, LIS faculty, students, and community members who are committed to aging equity and inclusion to join us.

Whether you’re seeking to start age-inclusive programming at your library, to disrupt ageist narratives in LIS education, or to simply learn more about how libraries can advance elder justice, we welcome your participation.

And if you missed our anniversary this year, don’t worry, we plan to celebrate our 2nd anniversary next year at Annual in Chicago. We may even bring cake!

You can learn more about our work and find ways to get involved [on our webpage](#). [Join us today!](#)

Highlights of SRRT History¹

By Alfred Kagan, African Studies Bibliographer and Professor of Library Administration Emeritus, University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign

Copy of speech given at Building Radical Collections: Advocacy, Access, and Alliances with SRRT and Indie Presses program on Saturday, June 28, 2025.

Good morning all. Since 1969, SRRT has been a strong voice for decades to push ALA in a more progressive direction. Some of the bravest and most principled people have fought hard to make ALA more relevant in our contemporary society. The fact is that history has proved us right over-and-over again on civil rights, environment, feminism, freedom of expression, LGBT equality, services to poor people, against militarism and US wars, and on whistleblowers.² One early SRRT victory was to establish “social responsibility” as a core value of the association.

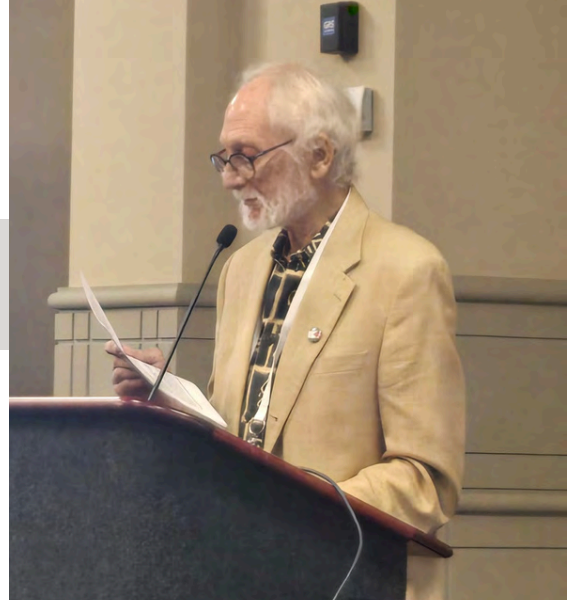
Regrettably, in the current retrograde period we are seeing some of these victories overturned. Sadly, the core value of social responsibility was abolished last year, (along with the core values of democracy and privacy) which is already having negative consequences. Indeed, the history of SRRT is replete with pushing controversial issues to the forefront and eventually getting buy-in from the ALA leadership and Council. For example, SRRT had to fight hard to stop a 2019 proposal to downgrade the ALA Council to an advisory body under an all-powerful Executive Board. Early on SRRT won an expansion of the ALA Council with 100 at-large members, but that was reduced to 36 at-large in 2023. SRRT won support for a nuclear freeze in 1984, but the Council deleted that from the ALA Policy Manual last year.

I have been lucky to have known and been inspired by many of the past generation’s leaders that came out of SRRT, such as Herb and Mary Biblo, Sandy Berman, Mitch Freedman, Pat Schuman, Betty Turock, John Berry, and E.J. Josey.³

We have brought an incredible list of national progressive leaders to speak at ALA conferences, such as Daniel Ellsberg, Rosa Parks, Jesse Jackson, Cornell West, Bill McKibben, Phyllis Bennis, and Palestinian poet Mosab Abu Toha. And when Mitch Freedman was ALA President in 2002-2003, he brought in Naomi Klein, Amy Goodman, Michael Moore, Ralph Nader, and Winona LaDuke.

How It All Began

SRRT was established in 1969 as part of the larger social movements of the time that wanted to change the world. It immediately became ALA largest round table with 1050 members. The first meeting in January 1969 was full of librarians who were already political activists, working in the Free Speech Movement, Anti-Vietnam War, Black Panthers, labor unions, and other social change groups. People had such energy, enthusiasm, and commitment that they got up at 6 am and went to bed at 2 or 3 am.



Al Kagan. Photo by April Sheppard.

John Berry, early SRRT member and long-time editor of Library Journal wrote:

“...So incensed were many older members by the seemingly disrespectful demeanor of the ‘young rebels’ – their contempt for traditional values and authority, their long hair and short skirts, their uninhibited lifestyles, their disdain for the wisdom of their elders – that they opposed their very presence at microphones to interrupt the ‘business’ of the association by the insertion of ‘issues.’

“Atlantic City was probably the greatest library convention in library history anywhere, any time. Anybody who was not there can’t have any idea how different it was from anything that ever happened before (or since, I might add).”

3,000 to 4,000 people attended the 1969 ALA Membership Meeting and it lasted 10 hours!

The issues debated were:

- Intellectual freedom,
- Reform of curricula and an end to the ineffective ALA accreditation of library schools,
- The Equal Rights Amendment (for women’s equality) & moving ALA Midwinter out of Chicago because of Illinois’ failure to endorse ERA,
- Support for an Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty,
- Opposition to the Vietnam War, and
- Community control and advocacy for the urban poor.

The initial agenda included democratizing the Association.

SRRT won:

- Open meetings,
- Ballot statements by candidates for President and Councilors,
- Changing ALA Council composition to 100 at-large members,
- Roll-call votes,
- Establishing an outreach office, and
- Social responsibility as an ALA “core value.”

Most of the original resolutions were adopted by ALA Council in 1971. The Council’s final report stated that ALA should be able to take a position on current social issues, and libraries could become more effective instruments for social change. These changes made it possible for younger and more progressive librarians to get elected to ALA’s governing body and to serve throughout the association.

Summing up SRRT’s first decade, Arthur Curley (1994-1995 ALA President) wrote that SRRT had made a profound difference in public library services throughout the country. Libraries have gone from collections-centric to people-centric. Public libraries in effect discovered their communities and

embarked on new ways to reach the underserved. In 1979, there were 34 SRRT members in the ALA Council, and SRRT and Black Caucus activist E. J. Josey was elected to the ALA Executive Board!

1. This is an enhanced longer version of a talk I gave at the American Library Association conference in Philadelphia on June 28, 2025. It relies on my personal experience and the research for my book, *Progressive Library Organizations: A Worldwide History* (McFarland, 2015), and 2 update articles published in the *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, volumes 4 (2018) and 10 (2024), which is freely available online. The book gives complete historical listings of all SRRT task forces, programs/actions, and chapters/affiliates.

2. SRRT works mainly through its task forces and its governing body, the Action Council. The task forces organize programs and develop resolutions, often aimed at making ALA policy through the ALA Council. The number of programs per year has varied from just a few to 16 in 1996. There have been more than 70 different issue-oriented task forces, and more than 50 local and state affiliates. There are 288 items in the online SRRT Resolution Archive.

3. Herb and Mary Biblo were active in SRRT for almost their entire adult lives. [Learn more about the Bilbos in the full article online.](#)

[Learn more about SRRT’s rich history throughout the years as well as the issues that have made an impact on the profession and society in the full article online!](https://www.ala.org/srrt/history)

<https://www.ala.org/srrt/history>

My 2025 ALA Annual Conference Experience

John Oluwaseye Adebayo, Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, WI



*SRRT Travel Award Winner
John Oluwaseye Adebayo*

“Attending the American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference & Exhibition 2025 in Philadelphia has been one of the most transformative experiences in my professional journey.”

Attending the American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference & Exhibition 2025 in Philadelphia has been one of the most transformative experiences in my professional journey. As a first-time attendee and proud Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) Conference Travel Grant recipient, this opportunity fulfilled a longtime dream. For years, I had envisioned participating in the ALA conference; this year, through the generous support of the SRRT, that vision became a reality. I am deeply grateful.

From the moment I stepped into the Pennsylvania Convention Center, the atmosphere was full of energy, ideas, and shared purpose among attendees. The conference opened with a compelling keynote by Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, who shared stories from her Young Adult memoir, *True Gretch*. Her reflections on resilience, leadership, and the fight for equitable access resonated deeply with me and set a powerful tone for a deeply enriching week.

The conference schedule was dynamic and diverse, spanning sessions on AI ethics, outreach and engagement, library leadership and management, collection, access, technical services, library programs and services, intellectual freedom, and more. As I navigated various educational sessions, committee meetings, and the incredibly vibrant Library Marketplace, I constantly learned from presenters, different hallway conversations, and spontaneous networking moments. The diversity of participants and topics encouraged rich cultural blending and strengthened my global outlook as a scholar and advocate for socially responsible librarianship.

One of the major highlights of my attendance was the opportunity to present my poster titled: "Navigating Digital

Rights in the AI Era: Expanding the Components of Privacy Literacy among Library Users." Sharing my research with a large international audience of scholars, librarians, and technology specialists was humbling and empowering. During and after my presentation, I received constructive feedback and opportunities to contribute to privacy literacy toolkits, an invitation for collaborative work and speaking engagements at a webinar; these efforts will amplify library's role in protecting digital rights.

Equally inspiring was my experience attending the SRRT Action Council Meeting, where I learned about the conversations driving the passion, advocacy, and enduring commitment of SRRT members to social justice in librarianship. Listening to updates about ongoing initiatives, I further reaffirmed how my professional passion aligns perfectly with SRRT's values. It was also a valuable networking space, as I connected with ALA staff and SRRT members who offered encouragement and guidance on how to stay actively involved in the round table's advocacy efforts.

In conclusion, the overall experience has broadened my understanding of the dynamic responsibilities of librarians and information professionals in the age of AI and repositioned me for excellence in research and practice. Hence, I am returning to my academic and professional circles with renewed vision, more profound commitment, and new intellectual tools to advocate for digital equity, privacy literacy, and user-centered information policies. I sincerely thank the Social Responsibilities Round Table for investing in me, and I look forward to continuing and contributing meaningfully to SRRT's mission.



Navigating the Chaos of ALA Annual

Libby Anderson, Adult Services Supervisor, Rowan Public Library, Salisbury, NC

SRRT Travel Award Winner
Libby Anderson

As someone who is still in the early stages of my career as a librarian, having recently transitioned from the financial services industry to working in adult services at a public library, attending my first ALA Annual Conference was a somewhat overwhelming experience. Although I've attended conferences in the past, none quite prepared me for the enormity of ALA. The sheer volume of sessions left my head spinning, and navigating the sprawling maze of the Pennsylvania Convention Center was a challenge in itself. Yet, despite the chaos, I was determined to make the most of this invaluable opportunity.

I have gone to a lot of music festivals over the years, and I found that my approach to ALA very much mirrored those experiences more so than any of the financial industry conferences I've attended. Before attending a music festival, I carefully review the lineup, listen to the bands, and meticulously craft a schedule of the shows I want to see. I even laminate my schedule to protect it from the weather! However, once I'm actually at the festival, all that planning tends to fly out the window, and I change everything up based on my mood and the energy of the moment. Despite this unpredictability, however, I never regret the planning process. It always helps me discover new acts, and lends towards my having a deeper overall experience at the festival.

Similarly, I arrived at ALA with a well-organized schedule on the conference app, but just as with those music festivals, I found myself mixing it all up each day. One key factor in my decision making was my recent promotion to a supervisory role at my library. I found myself gravitating toward sessions that would help me in this new capacity. One of the most impactful of these was a session on *Onboarding for Equity and Inclusion in Libraries*. The session offered practical strategies for fostering a welcoming, inclusive

“As someone relatively new to SRRT, I initially struggled to find a clear way to get involved. These meetings gave me a better view of how the round table operates, and illuminated opportunities for deeper engagement.”

environment right from the start of an employee's experience working at a library. I plan to take this knowledge back to my team and work to create an onboarding process where new staff feel empowered, valued, and equipped to succeed in their roles.

Another session that left a lasting impression on me was *Cardholder Signup Policies: Access in Practice*, a topic I've been interested in for some time. I hope to bring ideas from this session back to my library and inspire our team to work towards providing equitable library access to all members of our community. This session reinforced the importance of breaking down existing barriers to access and promoting inclusivity through the creation of thoughtful practices and policies.

A final highlight of my experience was attending the *SRRT Annual Membership Meeting and Action Council Meeting*. As someone relatively new to SRRT, I initially struggled to find a clear way to get involved. These meetings gave me a better view of how the round table operates, and illuminated opportunities for deeper engagement. I was particularly excited to hear that a new onboarding process is being developed for SRRT members, and I hope this will make it easier for others to get involved in the important work that SRRT is doing. I am so grateful to have received the SRRT Travel Grant, and I look forward to continuing my involvement with what I believe is a truly vital group within ALA.



Radical Publishers

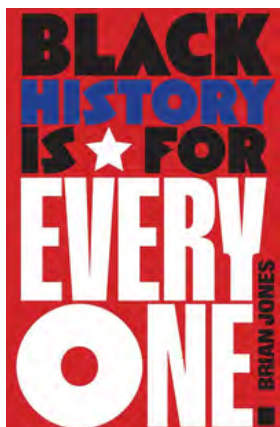
Derek Wilmott Montoya, Assistant Professor, Acquisitions & Collection Management Librarian, University of Toledo, OH

Those attending the Saturday morning session, “Building Radical Collections,” at the ALA Conference in Philadelphia, June 26-July 1, 2025, had the opportunity to hear Al Kagan’s rendition of the rich history of SRRT and the support for social responsibility causes from its inception in 1969 to the present. This was followed by a panel of representatives from six independent presses, who shared their publication histories and presented some of their recent and forthcoming books. Clair Kelley, 2025 ALA Emerging Leader award winner, and Olivia Blake, SRRT Coordinator, co-moderated the panel. Sample copies were available for attendees to take with them. If you were unable to attend the conference in person, you can still enjoy some of the titles shared below, as well as those from their websites.



Sara Calvarese, Claire Kelley, Al Kagan, and Olivia Blake. Photo by April Sheppard.

A special thanks to the speakers: Olivia Blake (Coordinator, SRRT), Al Kagan (Professor of Library Administration Emeritus, University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign), Claire Kelley (2025 ALA Emerging Leader, Seven Stories Press), Anne Rumberger (Haymarket Books), Patrick L. Hughes (VP, North America, Pluto Press), Tyler Hubbert (Feminist Press), Alyssa Hassan (Associate Director of Marketing, Beacon Press), Johnny Temple (Akashic Books) and Lana Pochiro (Verso Books).



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Black History is For Everyone

By Brian Jones

ISBN: 9798888904473

<https://www.haymarketbooks.org/books/2605-black-history-is-for-everyone>

With a distinct prose, Brian Jones takes readers on a journey that explores how the study of Black history challenges our conceptions of race and the stories told about the United States.



Prisons Must Fall

By Jane Ball and Mariame Kaba, Illustrated by Olly Costello

ISBN: 9798888904411

<https://www.haymarketbooks.org/books/2588-prisons-must-fall>

A children’s book tackling the complex issue of the carceral industrial complex and prison reform.



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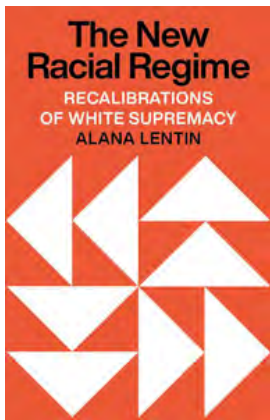
Immigration Detention Inc.: The Big Business of Locking Up Migrants

By Nancy Hiemstra and Deirdre Conlon

ISBN: 9780745349466

<https://www.plutobooks.com/9780745349466/immigration-detention-inc/>

An examination of the burgeoning U.S. immigration detention system spanning from the 1980s to 2019.



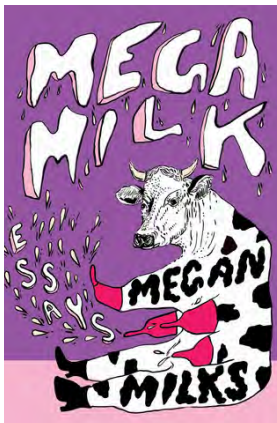
The New Racial Regime: Recalibrations of White Supremacy

By Alana Lentin

ISBN: 9780745347967

<https://www.plutobooks.com/9780745347967/the-new-racial-regime/>

A deep dive into how modern regimes recalibrate the racial narrative to maintain control and power.



The Feminist Press at CUNY publishes books that ignite movements and social transformation. Celebrating our legacy, we lift up insurgent and marginalized voices from around the world to build a more just future. feministpress.org

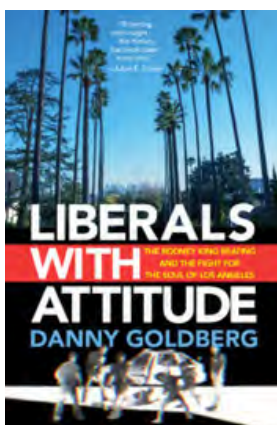
Mega Milk

By Megan Milks

ISBN: 9781558613393

<https://www.feministpress.org/books-overflow/mega-milk?rq=mega%20milk>

Mega Milks' essays explore all things milky, from human lactation, Big Dairy, the bull semen industry, and the roots of white supremacy.



Akashic Books is a Brooklyn-based independent company dedicated to publishing literary fiction, crime fiction, art/pop culture titles, and political nonfiction by authors who are either ignored by the mainstream, or who have no interest in working within the ever-consolidating ranks of the major corporate publishers. akashicbooks.com

Liberals With Attitude: The Rodney King Beating and the Fight for the Soul of Los Angeles

By Danny Goldberg

ISBN: 9781636142593

<https://www.akashicbooks.com/?s=liberals+with+attitude>

Details the 16 months in 1991-1992 between the beating of Rodney King by four police officers and the resignation of LAPD chief Daryl Gates.



Beacon Press is the oldest publisher, founded in 1854 by the American Unitarian Association, and is now a publishing arm of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Beacon Press publishes non-fiction works, and their mission is to “change the way readers think about fundamental issues.” www.beacon.org

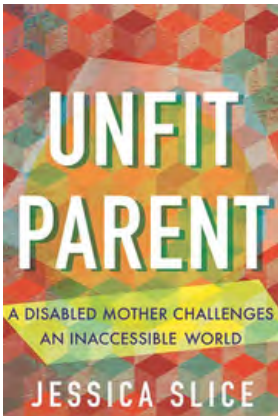
My Name Means Fire

By Atash Yaghmaian

ISBN: 978087020722

<https://www.beacon.org/My-Name-Means-Fire-P2229.aspx>

Atash Yaghmaian's coming-of-age memoir set during the Iranian Revolution, the Ayatollah Khomeini's regime, the Iran-Iraq War, and her battles of abuse, gender oppression, and religious superstition. This story will challenge the reader on the difficulties, stigma, and misleading information about dissociative identity disorder (DID).



Unfit Parent: A Disabled Mother Challenges an Inaccessible World

By Jessica Slice

ISBN: 9780807019238

<https://www.beacon.org/Unfit-Parent-LARGE-PRINT-EDITION-P2167.aspx>

This story takes on the myths of those who think disabled people are not fit to care for their children. The author merges her personal story with interviews and fact-based studies that contradict the negative stereotypes, making the case that disabled parents are often better prepared to adapt to the demands of parenthood.



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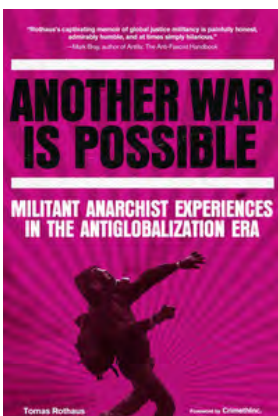
Surviving the 21st Century

By Noam Chomsky and José Mujica

ISBN: 9781804299517

<https://www.versobooks.com/products/3262-surviving-the-21st-century>

Two renowned leftist political figures of the 20th and 21st centuries reflect on the most significant global issues happening today.



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Another War is Possible: Militant Anarchist Experiences in the Antiglobalization Era

By Tomas Rothaus

ISBN: 9798887441054

https://pmpress.org/index.php?l=product_detail&p=1772

A journey into the anti-globalization movement from its high-water mark between 1999 and 2001, through the view of an anarchist.



Seven Stories Press is an independent book publisher of political non-fiction, world literature, and other works of the radical imagination. We have a children's imprint, Triangle Square Books for Young Readers, and Spanish-language imprints Editorial Siete Cuentos and Ocean Sur. [sevenstories.com](https://www.sevenstories.com)

Iosi, the Remorseful Spy

By Miriam Lewin and Horacio Lutzky

ISBN: 9781644214572

<https://www.sevenstories.com/books/4735-iosi-the-remorseful-spy>

A true story based on the espionage of José Pérez, who infiltrated the Argentine Jewish community in the hopes of thwarting an alleged plan, based on conspiracy theory, to take over Patagonia for a new Jewish state. The story follows two anti-Semitic terrorist attacks in the 1990s that remain unsolved to this day.



Common Notions is a nonprofit, movement-based, and worker-run publisher of books that provide timely reflections, clear critiques, and inspiring strategies that amplify movements for social justice. We are a proud signatory on the US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI). [commonnotions.org](https://www.commonnotions.org)

The Weather Report: A Journey Through Unsettled Climates

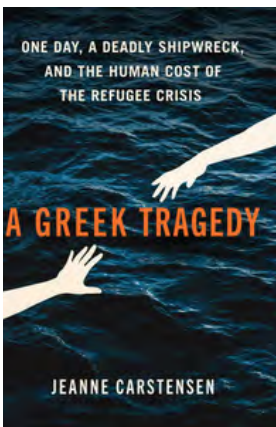
By Andrew Ross

ISBN: 978195335440

<https://www.commonnotions.org/the-weather-report>

In this book, the author's journey around the world from 2023 to 2024 highlights the significant changes to Earth's climate and current catastrophes. He uses this information to offer a pragmatic path forward to reestablish scalable projects of mutual aid and care to support peoples' economic, ecological, and social well-being.

An honorable mention for attending and sharing their books, but not a panelist:



Atria Books (<https://atriabooks.biz/>) Since 2002, Atria Books has published bestsellers and books of general interest, and is a division of Simon & Schuster.

A Greek Tragedy: One Day, a Deadly Shipwreck, and the Human Cost of the Refugee Crisis

By Jeanne Carstensen

ISBN: 9781668083147

<https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/A-Greek-Tragedy/Jeanne-Carstensen/9781668083147>

On October 28, 2015, a boat with hundreds of refugees capsized off the coast of the Greek island of Lesvos. The resulting loss of life pulls the veil off the current asylum system through testimonies of those who survived and the follow-up investigative report.

Emergency Declaration Against War and Genocide

Mark Rosenzweig, Co-founder of Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG) and the journal *Progressive Librarian*, co-coordinator of SRRT-International Responsibilities Task Force (IRTF)

The following speech was given to SRRT Action Council on June 28, 2025.

Colleagues, comrades, fellow members of the SRRT and the ALA Action Council:

I speak today not simply as a member of this Action Council, but as a career librarian—one who believes in what that word still can mean.

At our best, we are caretakers of memory, stewards of knowledge, defenders of the public good. At our best, we do not remain silent when history is being erased in real time. And so I speak to you now in that spirit, because we are at a moment that demands more than statements, more than caution, more than delay.

We are watching, right now, the attempted destruction of an entire people in Gaza. Over 56,000 Palestinians have been killed. Schools, libraries, hospitals—bombed. Civilians—starved, displaced, disappeared. And at the same time, as this horror unfolds under U.S. protection and funding, we now stand at the edge of yet another war—this time with Iran.

Just days ago, the United States committed bunker-busting airstrikes on Iranian nuclear sites. This is not an isolated action. It is part of a wider escalation, a dangerous turn in a decades-long campaign of sanctions, demonization, and threats. And it is happening now, I believe, for a reason: because attention was finally being paid to Gaza. Because the global public has been rising up. And so, once again, we are being told to look elsewhere. To fear a new enemy. To forget.

We must not forget. We must not remain silent. And we must not allow our professional organizations to be neutralized into irrelevance at the moment when moral clarity is most needed.

I am calling today on SRRT—and through us, the greater ALA—to issue an emergency declaration in the name of American librarianship:

- No to war on Iran. No to unconstitutional military action against Iran. No to regime change covert actions.
- No to continued U.S. support for the genocide in Gaza.
- End all U.S. military, diplomatic, and financial complicity—now.

Librarianship is not separate from the world. We are not above politics—we are embedded in them. Our profession's values compel us to speak in defense of human rights, of dignity, of intellectual and physical freedom. What does "access to information" mean to a child buried beneath rubble? What does "freedom to read" mean in a city with no books, no water, no power, and no people left alive to read?

If we believe in peace, if we believe in justice, if we believe in human life, then we cannot remain on the sidelines while war crimes are funded with our tax dollars and waged in our name.

Other professional organizations are speaking out. Historians. Anthropologists. Medical workers. Educators. We, too, must take a stand.

I urge us to act without delay. To vote to adopt and circulate a declaration. To urge the full ALA to join us. To stand in solidarity with the people of Gaza and the people of Iran—and with all those who believe that another world is possible, and necessary.

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Cultural Democracy and the Library's Public Mandate

Mark Rosenzweig, Co-founder of Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG) and the journal *Progressive Librarian*, co-coordinator of SRRT-International Responsibilities Task Force (IRTF)

In this moment of deepening social fragmentation, rising authoritarianism, and the erosion of both political and cultural norms, it is increasingly urgent to recover the principle of cultural democracy—the belief that all people have not only the right to access cultural resources but to actively participate in shaping them. While often overshadowed by procedural debates about electoral democracy or policy reform, cultural democracy addresses the deeper infrastructure of democratic life: the shared space of meaning, memory, imagination, and identity. Libraries and archives—public, academic, school, special, and community-based—are indispensable to that space. They are not merely adjuncts to democratic society. They are among the very conditions of its possibility.

The concept of cultural democracy has a long and varied history, emerging in different contexts as a challenge to elitist, hierarchical, or commodified understandings of culture. It was articulated in the 1930s by figures such as Horace Kallen and Alain Locke as a democratic alternative to both mass cultural conformity and cultural exclusion. It was later embraced by progressive cultural policy thinkers, including those involved in the New Deal-era Federal Arts Project, and has found recent expression in community arts movements, information justice work, and anti-racist archival practices. Across these efforts runs a shared belief: that culture is not a possession of the few, but a creative,

collective, contested process in which all people have a stake and a voice.

For institutions like libraries and archives, this idea has profound implications. It challenges the idea that our work is exhausted by providing equitable access to materials or by safeguarding information. Important as those functions are, cultural democracy asks something deeper: that we ensure not only that people receive culture, but that they have the means and opportunity to make it. That they are not simply audiences, users, or patrons, but cultural agents and participants.

Too often, in recent years, libraries and archives have been pressured to adopt reductive models of service: as information vendors, productivity hubs, or neutral facilitators of access. This technocratic framing reduces the scope of our mission to efficiency and customer satisfaction, occluding the ethical and political commitments that underlie our institutions. It displaces a sense of collective cultural responsibility with a discourse of performance metrics and managerial outcomes. But cultural democracy demands something more.

To commit to cultural democracy is to reject the myth of institutional neutrality. There is no such thing as a culturally neutral library or archive. Every act of selection, classification, preservation, and presentation is shaped by social values and power structures. What is remembered and what is forgotten,

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We must say what so many already know: the time of polite silence is over.

Let the American Library Association say it clearly:

We oppose genocide.

We oppose imperial war and unconstitutional exercise of military force in violation of international law.

We oppose the use of our profession's silence to shield atrocity.

And we act because our values demand it.

Thank you.

whose voices are amplified and whose erased, what counts as knowledge and what as noise—these are all decisions with ethical and political weight. As Toni Morrison reminded us, “Canon-building is empire-building. Canon-defense is national defense.” Libraries and archives cannot pretend to be above or outside such struggles. We are in them.

This is not to say that cultural democracy implies a politicization of library services in the partisan sense. Rather, it demands that we take seriously the structural conditions of culture-making. It calls for an active commitment to justice, inclusion, and collective self-expression. It means curating collections that reflect the histories, knowledges, and voices of marginalized communities—not as a matter of token representation, but as a recognition of epistemic and cultural sovereignty. It means designing programs and spaces that foster not just access but dialogue, dissent, and co-creation.

It also means defending the library and archive as public institutions—places where people can gather without commercial transaction, without surveillance, without fear. In an increasingly commodified and datafied society, the free, open, and collectively governed nature of libraries and archives is radical in itself. But that radicality is under siege. From coordinated book banning efforts to ideological attacks on librarians and educators, we are witnessing a backlash not just against specific materials, but against the very idea of pluralism and shared culture. These are not isolated incidents—they are part of a broader project to narrow the cultural imagination, suppress inconvenient histories, and impose conformity.

In response, we cannot afford silence or proceduralism. We must assert the library and archive as institutions of cultural freedom. That freedom includes the freedom to read, but also the freedom to remember, to dissent, to speak one’s truth, to reimagine what is possible. As the late June Jordan wrote, “We are the ones we have been waiting for.” Cultural democracy demands that we empower our communities to be just that: the authors of their own narratives, not passive recipients of a prefabricated culture.

The stakes are particularly high for archives (excuse me, librarians), where decisions about what to preserve—or what to deaccession—shape the historical record itself. In a moment of intensified historical revisionism and erasure, archival practice must be understood as a form of cultural resistance. Community archives, participatory archiving models, and movements for reparative description are all part of the larger project of reclaiming memory as a democratic right. Archives are not neutral containers of the past, but active sites of struggle over meaning and power.

Cultural democracy is not a fixed blueprint. It is a living, evolving process—always incomplete, always contested. It thrives where people have the means and freedom to make culture together, across lines of difference, toward common futures. Libraries and archives have the infrastructure, the credibility, and the public trust to model this process—but only if we are willing to meet the moment.

Doing so requires clarity of purpose, moral courage, and political imagination. It means moving beyond the comfort of tradition and the illusion of neutrality. It means standing against repression and exclusion, even when doing so invites controversy. It means affirming, in word and deed, that culture belongs to everyone—and that democracy, if it is to survive, must be built not only in courts and legislatures, but in classrooms, reading rooms, metadata schemas, and community conversations.

We cannot defend democracy without defending the cultural conditions that make it possible. And we cannot defend those conditions without libraries and archives that are willing to take a stand—not only for access, but for cultural self-determination. Not only for inclusion, but for justice. Not only for memory, but for liberation.

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