

American Library Association President-Elect Report Lessa Kanani‘opua Pelayo-Lozada Winter 2023

Since my [Fall 2022 Report](#) I have had the opportunity to travel the nation and the world on behalf of the American Library Association, providing keynote speeches, speaking on panels, and working the ALA booth (while improving my Spanish!). The excitement and warm responses that I have received in these spaces are not only inspirational, but much needed fortification in a time when libraries and library workers are under attack to defend our freedom to read and must unite against book bans.

Throughout my virtual and in person visits in the United States, stories of resilience and hope in the face of adversity abound. Our library workers, in the words of the February 2022 Califa Webinar “are not okay” but are still showing up everyday for their communities in the best ways that they can. Within the association we are working to support our library workers through program support, advocacy, policies, and more, but our library workers cannot do those things without also ensuring safe, equitable, and properly compensated work places. Within ALA-APA, we are working to develop the infrastructure and resources needed to support our library workers. More information on the beginning steps of that journey are below.

This report highlights some of the work that align most directly with my presidential initiatives and theme of Our Brave Community but in no way even begin to scratch the surface of the myriad of support, resources, and programs offered through the association by our strong staff and members who make all of this possible.

ALA-Allied Professional Association

In alignment with my focus on strengthening ALA-APA and advocacy for library workers, at the Fall 2022 ALA-APA Board of Directors meeting, the board approved a working group to explore areas that ALA-APA might expand with greater financial capacity including but not limited to advocacy work on behalf of library workers, initiatives, and staffing. The working group will present recommendations to the ALA-APA Board of Directors for consideration at our Spring meeting in April.

Branding Working Group

Work continues on the ALA Branding Working Group under the leadership of co-chairs ALA Past President Julius C. Jefferson Jr. and United for Libraries Past President Skip Dye with myself as their liaison to explore expanding ALA’s brand to include public library supporters and lovers as well as to explore a replacement to the Libraries Transform Campaign. The working group will be entering their next phase of work with a consultant to be funded in part by my Presidential Initiatives budget.

ALA Connect Live

In December, the first ALA Connect Live of my president, “Our Brave Communities: Facing Censorship Head On with ALA” welcomed panelists Martha Hickson, School Librarian at North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School, Brian Raitz, director of the Parkersburg and Wood County Public Library, and Lisa Varga, Executive Director of the Virginia Library

Association, for a conversation on censorship issues in libraries, legislation and how ALA has helped fight back against book banning efforts. The discussion was moderated by Intellectual Freedom Committee Chair Lesliediana Jones.

Additionally Ed Garcia, Committee on Legislation Chair, and ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office Senior Director Alan Inouye provided information on what the 2022 election results mean for libraries plus some previews about gearing up for library advocacy in 2023.

The session had over 500 registrants and strong engagement in the chat and Q&A from folks also facing challenges and censorship in their own communities.

Library Visits

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

- House of Wisdom, a state of the art library focused on being a place of learning, inspiration, and connection. The library featured a makerspace, outdoor garden, women's room, and rare books collection donated by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammed AlQasimi. The featured art exhibit geared towards children during our visit featured the trials and successes of Frida Kahlo's life. Past President Julius C. Jefferson and I were given a tour by new librarian Alfi.
- Sharjah Public Library, featured a fully immersive virtual experience for children and a 3-D space experience as well as several exciting initiatives such as "Everyone's Library", a COVID initiative which waived the membership fee for one year for everyone who signed up in March 2021. The focus on outreach and community building was strong, including learning about a branch of the library which brought the desert sand into the building to create a more enticing and welcoming space for a community where sand played a large role in their lives. Past President Julius C. Jefferson and I were given a tour by Eman Bushulaibi, Library Director.

Hawai'i Libraries

- Leeward Community College Library and Librarian Annemarie Paikai, hosted me for my keynote and panel and shared their own strong work in equity, diversity, and inclusion, sharing how many of their efforts focus on supporting underrepresented Native Hawaiian students. The library also features a beautiful window wrap designed by a Native Hawaiian student Taylor Wilson featuring the legend Nā Kia'i o Pu'uloa, "The Protectors of Pu'uloa".
- Nānākuli Public Library, part of the Hawai'i Library System featured signage in both English and 'olelo Hawai'i and a robust Hawaiiana collection. Their indoor/outdoor space is used for library events as well as community events and was hosting a baby shower the day that State Librarian Stacey Aldrich took me for a tour.

Orange County Educational Arts Academy

- Orange County Educational Arts Academy, a school library for students K-8 is in the midst of a transition as School Librarian Dustin Alexander works on a shoestring budget to provide high quality materials and programming for his students, including creating immersive library experiences for his students with live music, lighting, and literacy. The event at OCEAA was especially exciting as the Santa Ana Public Library provided outreach featuring their new robots who help teach children relaxation and meditation techniques.

Advocacy

- Joint Letter with AASL President Kathy Lester to the Members of the District of Columbia City Council in support of B24-0443, the Students' Right to Read Amendment Act of 2021 to codify a requirement for professionally staffed school libraries (October 2022)
- Joint Letter with AASL President Kathy Lester to the Board of School Directors of the North Allegheny School District in Pennsylvania to maintain library assistants at all schools (October 2022)
- [ALA Praises Introduction of Workforce Legislation](#) (December 7, 2022)
- The ALA Executive Board released a [statement in support of human rights and freedom of expression in Iran](#) (December 9, 2022)
- [ALA applauds passage of FY 2023 federal budget, key increases in funding for libraries](#) (December 23, 2022)

Published Media

- Vice: [Libraries Are Beefing Up Security After a Series of Violent Threats](#) (October 18, 2022)
- Colorado Public Radio: [Libraries add museums, tool rentals and job centers to help meet community needs and stay relevant](#) (October 19, 2022)
- Muddy River News: [Banned Book Club seeks to stand up to censorship](#) (October 26, 2022)
- Business Insider: [A reckless version of free speech is spreading across America, partly because of unchecked rhetoric by Elon Musk, Kanye West, and Kyrie Irving. We can't be complicit.](#) (November 9, 2022)
- Publishers Weekly: LibLearnX Set to Debut In-Person Event In New Orleans - Publishers Weekly (December 11, 2022)
- 19th News: ['It's your job to be you': American Girl book promotes inclusion but faces right-wing backlash](#) (December 14, 2022)
- Teen Vogue: [American Library Association President: Librarians Are Facing Harassment](#) (December 19, 2022)
- El Don, Santa Ana Community College Newspaper: [Libros y raíces: LibroMobile fills a literary need as Santa Ana's only bookstore](#) (December 19, 2022)
- TruthOut: [School Librarians Are in the Crosshairs of Right-Wing Book Banners and Censors](#) (December 24, 2022)
- Georgia Voice: [Republican Outrage Over LGBTQ Books Escalated in 2022](#) (December 30, 2022)

- New York Times: [A Colorado Library Closed Because of Meth Contamination](#) (January 4, 2023)

Speaking Engagements

- Guest Speaker on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Public Libraries, University of Illinois at Urbana Champagne's LIS Program Organization and Access Course (October 13, 2022)
- Keynote, "Resurgence of Book Banning: The Impact on Libraries and Librarians", University of Delaware Free Speech Week, Virtual (October 17, 2022)
- Keynote, "Resurgence of Book Banning: The Impact on Libraries and Librarians", Tenn-Share Showcase, Virtual (October 25, 2022)
- Panelist, [Oppenheim Nonprofit Showcase](#), Virtual (October 18, 2022)
- Keynote, "Our Brave Communities", Sharjah International Library Conference, United Arab Emirates (November 09, 2022)
- Remarks, Committee on Legislation Retreat, Washington, D.C. (November 17, 2022)
- Keynote, "Our Brave Communities", Hawai'i Library Association Conference, Honolulu, HI (November 18, 2022)
- Panelist, "Aia ke ola i Kahiki: A discussion amongst Kānaka Diaspora Librarians", Hawai'i Library Association Conference, Honolulu, HI (November 18, 2022)
- Interviewee, "I Nā Au o Ka 'Ike - In the Currents of Knowledge", Hawai'i Library Association Conference, Honolulu, HI (November 19, 2022)
- Remarks, ALA Member Orientation, Guadalajara International Book Fair (November 26, 2022)
- Remarks, ALA Development Office Event: Treasuring our Treasures, Virtual (November 28, 2022)
- Keynote Speaker, Literacy Night, Orange County Educational Arts Academy, Santa Ana, CA (December 01, 2022)
- Keynote Speaker, "Be Brave: Leadership at All Levels", ALA Student Networking Event, Virtual, (December 06, 2022)
- Moderator, Affordable Connectivity Program Grants, ALA Instagram Live, Virtual (December 08, 2022)
- Remarks, "Our Brave Communities: Facing Censorship Head On with ALA", ALA Connect Live, Virtual (December 15, 2022)

Additional Travel, Appearances, and Support:

- ALA Fall Executive Board Meeting, Chicago, IL (October 21-23, 2022)
- Letter of Congratulations to the Philippine Librarians Association, Inc. (PLAI) on celebrating its 100th anniversary on October 24, 2022 at the National Library of the Philippines (October 24, 2022)
- Association of Tribal Libraries, Archives, & Museums, Temecula, CA (October 27, 2022)
- National Book Awards, New York, New York (November 17, 2022)
- Children's Literature Council of Southern California Awards Ceremony, Pasadena, CA (November 12, 2022)
- Los Angeles Public Library 150th Anniversary Kick-Off Event (December 7, 2022)

Thanks

It takes a village to make an ALA President and I am thankful for the community and staff of the Palos Verdes Library District and the ALA staff and members who continue to support me and the tasks and duties of the presidency. Almost every ALA office supports this role in a myriad of ways and nothing would be possible without them.