

American Library Association President-Elect Report
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Spring 2023

Since my [Winter 2023 Report](#), ALA and its members have embarked on new journeys and events with hope and inspiration in the face of continued book challenges nationwide.

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.

Unite Against Book Bans

On March 22nd, [ALA released](#) “new data documenting* 1,269 demands to censor library books and resources in 2022, the highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling data about censorship in libraries more than 20 years ago. The unparalleled number of reported book challenges in 2022 nearly doubles the 729 challenges reported in 2021.” The continued rise in challenges and threats to library worker safety and livelihood, as well as threats to democracy and intellectual freedom intensify the need for ALA to be at the forefront of the issue, affirming the freedom to read and taking a proactive approach to organizing ourselves against book bans through the Unite Against Book Bans campaign.

Much of the work to organize, support, and be proactive as a large national organization must be done quietly and confidentially in order to ensure safety for those experiencing challenges and censorship. We continue to refine how we tell our story and determine how we can be visibly proactive and a group of intellectual freedom fighters are working through those strategies for events to be planned at ALA Annual Conference in Chicago and LibLearnX in Baltimore.

While I did not imagine my Presidential year to be focused on book bans and caring for our library field in this way, the seriousness of this issue has eclipsed other planned work – although is rooted in many of the areas I had hoped to focus on such as equity, diversity, and inclusion and the importance of partnerships. We cannot fight book bans alone and we know that the majority of books being targeted feature LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC stories and histories, with organized groups trying to erase these groups from our society.

I am thankful to those on the front lines of this fight and to the tireless support of our ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom staff led by Deborah Caldwell-Stone. Together we will get through this and we will ensure access to information for all.

LibLearnX: The Library Learning Experience

It was an honor to preside over the first in person LibLearnX in New Orleans. This event, a smaller, more intimate experience than ALA Annual Conference is a new endeavor and educational experience designed to motivate, inspire, and engage in discussions that will shape the future of libraries and their communities. Many sessions focused on book challenges around the country and how library workers and allies are fighting back and upholding our freedom to read. Some highlights for me included (in order of occurrence):

- Presiding over the historic ALA Bylaws Convention, a Special Session of ALA Council where ninety-eight percent (98%) of ALA Council voted in the affirmative to adopt the general revision of the American Library Association Bylaws as amended, for submission to the American Library Association membership, with the proviso that, after appropriate review upon adoption of the general revision by the ALA membership, all recommended policy insertions be made in the ALA Policy Manual. On the spring 2023 ballot, ALA members will vote to ratify the actions of the Council to RESCIND the American Library Association Constitution and ADOPT the general revision of the American Library Association Bylaws as presented.
- Providing welcome remarks for the I Love My Librarian Awards. These [10 award winners](#) are inspirations to us all.
- Moderating the ShopTalk, “Intersectional Justice in Libraries”, with panelists Annie Pho and LaJuan Pringle which discussed how intersectionality can address systemic oppression and discrimination. This ShopTalk was coordinated by my Presidential Advisory Committee.
- Providing welcome remarks and connecting with folks at the reception for “Book Bans, Libraries, and the Law: Standing Up to Library Censorship in Louisiana and Beyond” which was sponsored by Unite Against Book Bans, the Tulane Law First Amendment Clinic, and the Freedom to Read Foundation.
- Reading a passage at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunrise Celebration. This event is always a highlight for me.
- Co-moderating and coordinating the Mainstage Event, “Library Workers: Organize and Activate”, featuring panelists K.C. Boyd, Lesley Garrett, Candice (Wing-yee) Mack, and Elizabeth Martinez, co-moderated with ALA President-Elect Emily Drabinski. This intergenerational panel focused on the many ways library workers organize to create better conditions for their fellow library workers and to create better spaces and programs for their communities. Check out the [American Libraries](#) coverage of the panel.
- Hosting the [Youth Media Awards!](#)

In addition to these events, my Presidential Initiative Budget also provided for [two \\$2500 travel grants](#) for underemployed librarians.

ALA-Allied Professional Association

The work of the ALA-APA 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 began later than anticipated and the group hopes to present recommendations to the ALA-APA Board of Directors for consideration at the ALA Annual Conference meeting in June.

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 presenting an update to the ALA Executive Board at the Spring Meeting outlining a new strategy to bring in new library community members. The committee will continue to explore opportunities, challenges, and barriers to this new strategy which will utilize monthly donations and the idea of a "Friend of ALA".

Library Visits

Lisa Wells, Executive Director of the Pioneer Library System and Caroline Dulworth, Associate Director hosted me, ALA Staff Member Megan Cusick, and Overdrive Co-Founders and library supporters Steve Potash and Loree Potash for a tour at the Norman Public Library Central. This award winning, LEED certified building had space for creativity and learning for all ages, including a makerspace, literacy center, and more. While we were there, they were hosting a financial literacy class for elementary school aged children as part of the ALA Thinking Money for All Kids grant.

Advocacy & Board Statements

- Joint Letter with AASL President Kathy Lester to Tolland Public Schools, Connecticut (Feb 2023)
- Joint Letter with AASL President Kathy Lester to endorse Washington SB 5102 (Jan 2023)
- Joint Letter with AASL President Kathy Lester to Directors of Evergreen Public Schools (March 2023)
- [American Library Association Condemns Ongoing Threats Against Libraries](#) (March 27, 2023)

Published Interviews

- Financial Times, [Perennial threats to library funding stunt our great cities](#) (January 5, 2023)
- LA Progressive, Pressenza, and other places: [Despite Defunding and Privatization Attacks, Public Libraries Thrive](#) (January 15, 2023)
- The Guardian, [Why US libraries are on the frontlines of the homelessness crisis](#) (January 24, 2023)
- WTKR Channel 2, Video Clip, [Libraries eliminating fees to boost equity](#) (January 30, 2023)
- Denver 7, Video Clip, [Libraries eliminating fees to boost equity](#) (January 30, 2023)
- TCPalm, [Libraries stay relevant with digital resources, in-person events in post-pandemic era](#) (January 31, 2023)

- Student [C-Span StudentCam](#), [Behind the Ban](#) (Video, February 2023)
- Op-ED: StateTech Magazine, [Leveraging Libraries to End the Digital Divide](#) (February 2, 2023)
- Financial Times, [America's library wars are heating up](#) (February 6, 2023)
- BBC Brazil: [Como pobreza e drogas têm transformado bibliotecas nos EUA](#) (February 20, 2023)
- The 19th: [Book bans internalize 'shame' for young LGBTQ+ people, advocates say. Here's how they're pushing back.](#) (February 23, 2023)
- Greenville News: [Greenville County Library considers banning 24 books, faces LGBTQ+ censorship allegations](#) (March 2, 2023)
- Denver Gazette, [Aurora Public Library strives to reach more people through new strategies](#) (March 10, 2023)
- Teen Vogue, [Book Sanctuary Cities Like Chicago Are a Response to Book Bans, Censorship](#) (March 16, 2023)
- New Republic, [Conservatives Are Trying to Ban Books in Your Town. Librarians Are Fighting Back.](#) (March 16, 2023)

Speaking Engagements

- Moderator & Panelist, "The reluctant leader: Conquering stereotypes, imposter syndrome and rising to new heights", Joint Conference of Librarians of Color, St. Pete Beach, FL (February 9, 2023)
- Panelist, "Bringing Asian Pacific American Library Workers Together: An Overview of "Path to Leadership" Program", Joint Conference of Librarians of Color, St. Pete Beach, FL (February 10, 2023)
- Moderator, "What does a racially-just library ecosystem look like?", Joint Conference of Librarians of Color, St. Pete Beach, FL (February 11, 2023)
- Keynote, "Our Brave Communities", Spring 2023 Baker Diversity Lecture Series, Virtual (February 16, 2023)
- Keynote, "Our Brave Communities: Rising to the Challenge", Guam Department of Education Library Conference, Virtual (February 16, 2023)
- Guest Speaker, Portfolio Class, University of California Los Angeles Graduate School of Education & Information Science, Los Angeles, CA (February 22, 2023)
- Panelist, Representation on Both Sides of the Book, Libraries.Today, Virtual (March 1, 2023)
- Remarks, ALA Congressional Fly-In, Washington, D.C. (March 8, 2023)
- Presenter, "The Latest at ALA With the ALA President", Oklahoma Library Association/Mountain Plains Library Association Conference, Norman, Oklahoma (March 9, 2023)
- Guest Speaker, "The Latest at ALA With the ALA President", Palm Beach County Library Advisory Board Meeting, Virtual (March 13, 2023)
- Remarks, Association of College & Research Libraries Conference, Pittsburgh, PA (March 18, 2023)
- Keynote, "Inclusivity with ALA President Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada", San Jose State University School of Library & Information Science ALA Student Chapter, Virtual (March 22, 2023)
- Speaker, "Our Brave Communities", Alaska Library Association Conference, Virtual (March 26, 2023)

Additional Travel, Appearances, and Support:

- United States Board of Books for Young People (USBBY) Regional Conference, New York, New York (March 27, 2023)

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.