

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

In my final report as President of the American Library Association, I must begin with gratitude. I am grateful for and humbled by the library workers across the nation who stand up for our professional values, who advocate for their communities, and who strive to provide equitable access to information for all who enter their physical or virtual doors. This year has been a tough one for us all as we adjust to living with COVID and face threats against our profession and selves through book challenges and harassment, but library workers are strong and continuing to push forward.

I would not be able to do all that I have done this year without our members, without our future ALA members, and without ALA staff. Partnership and collaboration have been key to this year, and together, we led for change on behalf of our brave communities.

Below highlights some of my activities since my [Spring 2023 Report](#), but in no way even begins 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.

National Library Week

National Library Week was a whirlwind of events, media coverage for ALA, and excitement and love for libraries. With the release of the Top 13 Most Challenged Books of 2023, I spent much of the week speaking to reporters from news outlets such as NPR and the Washington Post, and presenting on panels such as Judy Blume Forever with esteemed colleagues Leah Wolchok and Davina Pardo, directors of the Amazon Documentary Judy Blume Forever, author, advocate & retired librarian Pat R. Scales, Chris Finan the Executive Director of the National Coalition Against Censorship, and Suzanne Nossel the CEO of PEN America.

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 will continue its work beyond June and bring recommendations to the ALA Executive Board under incoming ALA President Drabinski's tenure.

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 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" and I will resume duties as co-chair in July with ALA Past President Julius C. Jefferson Jr.

Connect Live

During National Library Week, AASL President Kathy Lester and I hosted the ALA Connect Live “Our Brave Communities: Embracing School Librarians”. President Lester moderated a panel providing an overview of the current state of school libraries from Keith Curry Lance, principal investigator for the IMLS-funded national study, “The School Librarian Investigation—Decline or Evolution?”, as well as Liz Phipps-Soeiro highlighting efforts in Boston to increase the equity of access to certified school librarians; and Raegan Miller, Director of Development and Finance for the Florida Freedom to Read Project, and student organizer Cameron Samuels discussing building community support for school librarians fighting censorship.

ALA Interim Associate Executive Director Alan Inouye provided information on exciting legislation and support for library workers that came through during National Library Week, including the re-introduction of the Right to Read Act focusing on the importance of school librarians.

The session had over 500 registrants and strong engagement in the chat and Q&A from folks emphasizing the support and love of the full library ecosystem for school librarians, as well as key actions we can take to support and advocate for certified school librarians in every school.

Library Visits

I had the opportunity to visit Discoveries: The Library at the Mall, part of the Anne Arundel County Public Library system in Annapolis, Maryland. This vibrant location inside the Westfield Mall was bustling on a weekday afternoon with young patrons visiting their favorite hermit crab, teens getting a volunteer orientation for summer, and staff providing a warm welcome to visitors. Their Community Pantry is a highlight, distributing diapers, wipes, other baby supplies, and hygiene and menstrual products to anyone with a library card.

AASL Advocacy Letters

- American Library Association and American Association for School Librarians Letter to Board of Education Members of Wallingford Public Schools (May 2023)
- American Library Association and American Association for School Librarians Letter to Board of Education Members of Plainfield Public Schools (June 2023)

Published Interviews (Print, Television, Podcasts, & Social Media)

- [The Lost Debate](#) (Twitter Video, April 3, 2023)
- NewsNation, [Public libraries caught in political book ban crossfire](#) (April 18, 2023)
- Electric Lit, [American Libraries Are Taking a Stand Against Book Bans](#) (April 21, 2023)
- Mining Journal, [National Library Week celebrated this week](#) (April 24, 2023)
- Wall Street Journal, [There Were 1,269 Efforts to Ban Books in 2022. These Were the Most Targeted](#), (April 24, 2023)
- The 19th, [Why these 13 books faced more attempted library bans than any others in 2022](#) (April 24, 2023)
- NPR, [ALA: Number of unique book titles challenged jumped nearly 40% in 2022](#) (April 24, 2023, Radio)

- NPR, [Book bans are getting everyone's attention — including Biden's. Here's why](#) (April 24, 2023)
- CNN, [Judy Blume's books were formative for generations of readers. Here's why they endure](#) (April 27, 2023)
- Independent, [How to get involved in the fight against book bans](#) (April 27, 2023)
- [Vox Media](#) (TikTok and Instagram Video, April 27, 2023)
- AARP, [11 Library Freebies Beyond Books](#) (April 27, 2023)
- Amanpour & Company, [Book Bans Reach Historic Highs: How Libraries Became a Political Battleground](#), (Television, May 1, 2023)
- Good Morning America, [Author mom shares why kids need more AANHPI children's books](#), (May 2, 2023)
- ABC News, [Prime Focus: US libraries on the frontlines of homelessness](#) (Television, May 4, 2023)
- The 19th, [We asked book lovers to reflect on AAPI Heritage Month. Here's what they recommended.](#) (May 8, 2023)
- WLOS ABC, [Morning News](#) (Television, May 18, 2023)
- 'Eia ko'u mana'o: Reflections of a Native Hawaiian writer, [Interview with American Library Association President Lessa Pelayo-Lozada](#) (May 17, 2023)
- Youth Today: [NEWSUS book ban push draws students, parents and librarians into national fight](#) (May 23, 2023)
- BBC Culture, [Why is the US Banning Children's Books?](#) (May 25, 2023)
- Scripps News Live Interview (May 31, 2023)
- Podcasts:
 - [Checked In: A Davenport Library Podcast](#)
 - [Currently Reading](#)
 - [IFLA Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning Section's Podcast Project](#)
 - [Literacy Teacher's Life](#)
 - [The Reading Culture](#)
 - [Rogue Librarians](#)
 - [Tilting the Earth's Praxis](#)

Speaking Engagements

- Panelist, "[JUDY BLUME FOREVER x Right To Read Virtual Conversation](#)", National Coalition Against Censorship, Virtual (April 24, 2024)
- Guest Speaker, Prairie View A&M University John B. Coleman Library, Virtual (April 25, 2023)
- Remarks, "[Our Brave Communities: Embracing School Librarians](#)", ALA Connect Live, Virtual (April 25, 2024)
- Keynote, "[ALA Lecture Series](#)", University of Maryland iSchool, Virtual (April 27, 2023)
- Guest Speaker, "Our Brave Communities: Libraries Today & Tomorrow", Library Profession Webinar, Santa Ana Community College Library Technician Class, Virtual (April 27, 2023)
- Presenter, "Our Brave Communities: Libraries in the face of book challenges", Massachusetts Library Association Conference, Falmouth, MA (May 8-9, 2023)

- Featured Speaker, “Our Brave Communities: Libraries in the face of book challenges”, Florida Library Association Conference, Daytona, FL (May 17-18, 2023)
- Remarks, US Book Show AAPI Conversations Panel (May 22, 2023)
- Remarks, Serving with a Purpose Conference, Ontario, CA (May 23, 2023)
- Closing Speaker, California Library Association Conference, Sacramento, CA (June 1-3, 2023)

Additional Travel, Appearances, and Support:

- ALA Executive Board Spring Meeting, Chicago, IL (April 14-16, 2023)
- Los Angeles Times Book Awards to support the Freedom to Read Foundation, Los Angeles, CA (April 21, 2023)

Thanks

I began with gratitude, and I will end with gratitude. I am thankful for my family and friends, 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.

I am also grateful to ALA members for allowing me to represent us on the national and international level. It has been a true honor and career highlight, one that I do not think can ever be replicated. And a special thanks to ALA President-Elect, soon to be ALA President Emily Drabinski for being an amazing partner and collaborator in this work to ensure long-term health for ALA. The future is bright and I look forward to seeing what comes next for our mighty association.

Kūlia i ka nu‘u, and a hui hou.

Strive for the summit. Until we meet again.