

ALSC Matters

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Officially Speaking

Thank You for Your Service!

Dear ALSC Members,

To begin my first column as the new president of ALSC, I wholeheartedly thank all of you for your generous hard work for and service to our organization. One of the first challenges of serving as president is getting a firm grasp of the vast array of things happening within ALSC: the committees, grants, awards, fellowships, institutes, and so forth. It's a lot! Yet, none of this work would happen without a strong commitment from ALSC members. I am almost finished with making the appointments to our more than 20 process committees, and this work could not happen without many of you agreeing to volunteer your time and talents. I truly appreciate your support! I also recognize that sometimes members have to decline due to reasons related to capacity or personal or familial health, and in these cases, I completely understand. First and foremost, please always take good care of yourself and your loved ones.

Although the process committees are nearly finalized, new appointments may open throughout the next year because sometimes members must resign for various reasons, so feel free to contact the co-chairs of any process committees for which you are interested in serving. When I make process committee member appointments, I typically ask the co-chairs if they have any recommendations, so them having your name to share with me would be helpful. Also, be sure to keep your volunteer forms up-to-date because, when searching through the database, I reach out to the members whose forms are the most current.

Soon, I will start the appointments for the award committees with the help of the advisory appointment team I have assembled to ensure that a diverse group provides feedback to me as I do this important work. I offer special thanks to Tanya DiMaggio, Lucía González, Georgina Rivas-Martinez, and Deborah Taylor for agreeing to serve in this capacity. Once you complete or update your volunteer form for one or more award committees, [please email me](#) about your preferences, so I can add them to my notes.

Thanks for all that you do to make ALSC the leading and most vibrant organization for supporting and enhancing library service to children. I hope all of you are experiencing the richness that ALSC has to offer and are excited about the upcoming year and all the good work that will happen. I am deeply honored to serve as your president.—*Jonda C. McNair, Charlotte S. Huck Endowed Professor of Children's Literature, The Ohio State University, 2023–24 ALSC President, she/her/hers*

Thank You to Our Friends!

Many thanks to the following generous contributors to Friends of ALSC. To learn how you can support ALSC, visit our website.

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Bright Ideas

Personalized Reader's Advisory: The Just for You! Program

Reader's advisory is one of the best parts of being a youth services librarian. Getting to tell our patrons about a great book we just know they will love is always such a joy! But sometimes patrons can feel like they are too busy to stop and have a conversation with a librarian. The Alsip-Merrionette Park (Illinois) Public Library came up with a solution—the Just for You! Books and Treats Surprise Program!

Since launching in 2019, we have made 480 Just for You bags, and it's quickly become a favorite way for patrons to find their next great read. The program starts when patrons fill out a registration sheet either online or in-person. The [registration sheet](#) is made up of Reader's Advisory questions. Patrons write down if they prefer to read picture books, beginning readers, fiction, or non-fiction. They choose their favorite genres, and the titles of their favorite books. They also write down their least favorite genres, and if there is anything they do not want to read. Patrons can answer these questions when they have time—even patrons with a busy mix of after-school clubs and sports leagues, who might not have time to stay at the library for long, can find the time to turn in a quick registration sheet.

After receiving a completed registration sheet, we get to work making the perfect bag for each child. Each bag contains a library book checked out to the patron's library card, and three treats. The treats are picked based on each patron's age and interests. They are usually a mix of extra prizes from Summer Reading, coupons donated from local businesses, and individually made craft packs.

When choosing the treats that go in each bag, what matters most is that the patron knows they were chosen with care.

We always include a handwritten note from the librarian who made the bag that thanks the patron for joining the program. It also explains that the library book must be returned to the library. Then, the librarian explains why that book and those treats were chosen. Writing the notes by hand is a bit more time-consuming than typing them, but it's worth the extra effort—patrons see those handwritten notes as a sign the librarian truly cares. Some patrons will write a thank-you note back to the librarian and return it with their book. We have even had a patron send a thank-you card in the mail!

We track our program in an Excel spreadsheet. There is a tab for every month when a patron can request a bag. When a patron's bag is made, we open that month's tab on the Excel spreadsheet. In the row for that patron, we list the patron's demographic and contact information, the book and treats they received, and when they were notified that their bag was ready. This way, when patrons sign up again, we can search their name in the entire Excel workbook and see every book they've received. We use this to make sure that patrons don't receive the same book twice.

The Just for You program can help library patrons find their new favorite books and can quickly become a favorite program for everyone—staff and patrons alike.—*Ann Baillie, youth services assistant manager, Alsip-Merrionette Park (Illinois) Public Library*

San Francisco's Arts-Based Literacy and Learning for Summer

California First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom visited with 30 San Francisco teenagers in July, during an afternoon workshop of poetry, dance, and creative maker-space activities at San Francisco Public Library's (SFPL) The Mix teen center.

Recognizing the importance of movement, creativity, and the arts in summer learning, the workshops were led by experts from several local arts organizations including ODC/Dance, YouthSpeaks, and SFPL's own teen librarians. Youth participants also received copies of books selected from the [First Partner's Summer Book Club booklist](#). The Summer Book Club is an annual initiative in partnership with the California State Library to help children of all ages cultivate a love of reading and books.

"Today's workshops were the culmination of our goal to integrate arts education into the First Partner's Summer Book Club. Literature and the arts are critical for children's mental health, social and emotional development, language mastery, and long-term academic achievement, and both provide an antidote to excessive time online," said First Partner Siebel Newsom. I look forward to a continued partnership with the California State Library as we scale this model to libraries across the state."

The First Partner was accompanied on her visit to San Francisco Public Library by Mayor London Breed, California Poet Laureate Lee Herrick, California State Librarian Greg Lucas, California Arts Council Executive Director Jonathan Moscone, and San Francisco City Librarian Michael Lambert.

The teens broke up into three groups to participate in three distinct creativity workshops:

- A poetry workshop with California Poet Laureate Lee Herrick with support from nonprofit organization Youth Speaks, led by its executive director, Michelle Mush Lee.

- The Mix maker space workshop, a hands-on creative craft project with The Mix manager, librarian Jason Hill.
- A dance and movement workshop with nonprofit organization ODC with Brandon "Private" Freeman and Colton Wall.

The Mix at SFPL is an innovative, teen-designed learning space inside the San Francisco Main Library. It provides space and equipment for youth ages 13-18 to explore, create, and develop digital media and computer skills, get involved in creative pursuits from crafts to music to creative writing, as well as discover and engage with the library's traditional books and materials.

Participants also had the opportunity to engage with the First Partner and with one another about the thought-provoking titles that appear on the First Partner's Summer Book Club, including Caldecott Honor title *Ain't Burned All the Bright* by Jason Reynolds and illustrated by Jason Griffin, the young adult edition of *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson, and Printz Award-winner *We Are Okay* by San Francisco author Nina LaCour.

"This afternoon was really inspiring. I'm excited about the First Partner's Summer Book Club list because all the books on it have their own special message, and we can learn more about the experiences they describe," said Charlize Becerra, a participant in the workshop, as she browsed through books on display.

This [Summer Book Club list](#) was curated by the First Partner in partnership with librarians across the state. The books highlight themes such as navigating mental health struggles, identity and belonging, and the importance of exploration and curiosity. The books range in reading levels from preschool to high school.

Human Rights Project Fosters Advocates for Change

The "[Global Human Rights Research Project](#)" at Prospect Sierra School in El Cerrito, California, received the 2023 [American Association of School Librarians'](#) (AASL) Roald Dahl's Miss Honey Social Justice Award, which recognizes collaboration between school librarians and teachers in the instruction of social justice using school library resources.

In a six-week collaboration between the school's two middle school librarians, Julia Bourland and Mia Gittlin, and seventh-grade Humanities teachers, Lauren Konopka and Matthew Williams, students became experts and advocates for change on at least one human rights violation central to the theme of an historical novel of their choosing. At the end, the librarians attended the students' multifaceted presentations, which included a book review, an infographic explaining the historical incident they studied, and a call to action on how others can speak out about similar human rights violations that are happening today.

"The committee was impressed with the degree of collaboration between the school librarians and humanities department," said Committee Chair Margaret Lincoln. "This project was a powerful way to bring literature, social justice, and advocacy together with a call to action to help learners consider how they might speak out about human rights violations happening in our own world today."

School librarian, Julia Bourland, shared, "The primary objectives in this collaboration were for students to make connections between human rights violations that occurred in the past and current ones, to increase student agency in understanding global injustice, and to help them find their voice inspiring others to learn about the issue and take action."

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

Member News

Pat Scales (far left), 2008-09 ALSC president, was honored with the Freedom to Read Foundation's 2023 Roll of Honor Award during the ALA Annual Conference in June. Pat's work as a school librarian and intellectual freedom advocate has had a long-term, visible impact, such as the "Scales on Censorship" column published by *School Library Journal*, as well as countless books tackling intellectual freedom issues in schools and libraries. Pat has made advocacy for the freedom to read a full-time endeavor since her retirement from teaching 16 years ago. Congratulations, Pat!

Lucía Martínez González (left), 2021-22 ALSC president, was named the 2023 recipient of REFORMA's Elizabeth Martínez Lifetime Achievement Award. Created in 2013, the award recognizes an individual who has achieved excellence in librarianship over an extended period of service (20+ years) and has made significant and lasting contributions to REFORMA and the Latino and Spanish-speaking communities. Warm wishes, Lucia!

Aimee Villet, youth director, and her colleagues in the Youth Department of the Glen Carbon (IL) Centennial Library, received the [2023 Illinois Library Association Intellectual Freedom Award](#) for their outstanding contributions to defending intellectual freedom. Kudos, Aimee and colleagues!

After 40 years of library work, most recently as director of youth and family services at the DC Public Library, **Ellen Riordan**, 2014-15 ALSC president, retired at the end of June. Wishing you all the best in your next chapter, Ellen!

Professional Award Applications Open

Every year ALSC offers more than \$100,000 in the way of professional awards, grants, and scholarships! We encourage ALSC members to take advantage of these opportunities!

Currently, applications are open for the:

Bechtel Fellowship - up to a \$7,500 stipend to allow a qualified children's librarian to spend a month or more reading at the University of Florida's Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature

Distinguished Service Award - \$2,000 and an engraved pin, honoring an individual member who has made significant contributions to and had an impact on, library services to children and ALSC

Penguin Random House Young Readers Group Awards - \$600 stipend for up to four winners to attend their first ALA Annual Conference

Submission deadlines vary. Click on each award above for complete details. For more information, on all opportunities, see the [ALSC professional awards webpage](#).

Intellectual Freedom Webinars from ALSC

In 2022, ALA recorded 1,269 demands to censor books, the highest number of attempted bans since tracking began more than 20 years ago. Unfortunately, children's materials highlighting marginalized groups rank high among these attempts.

ALSC's Intellectual Freedom and Managing Children's Services committees have joined together to present two upcoming webinars on children's book challenges. ALSC is offering these webinars free to all members.

Understanding and Embracing Collection Development Policies and Procedures

Monday, September 11, 2 p.m. (CT)

Hosted by the Intellectual Freedom committee, this webinar focuses on the importance of a library's collection development policies and procedures, what they should ideally feature, and how to leverage them to keep the library relevant to customers.

Training Frontline Staff to Deal with Book Challenges Effectively

Monday, September 18, 2 p.m. (CT)

Members of the Managing Children's Services Committee will discuss ways to ensure that frontline staff is ready to meet a challenge, including training tips.

Click on the webinar titles above for complete information on each event, including registration information.

Emerging Leaders Program: Applications Open

ALA is still accepting applications for the 2024 class of Emerging Leaders (EL). Details on the program criteria can be found on the [Emerging Leaders webpage](#). **The deadline for applications is Friday, September 8, 2023.**

The ALA EL program is a leadership development program that enables newer library workers from across the country and Canada to participate in problem-solving work groups, network with peers, gain an inside look into ALA structure, and have an opportunity to serve the profession in a leadership capacity. The program puts participants on the fast track to ALA committee volunteerism as well as other professional library-related organizations.

Before applying, please read the program information on the [Emerging Leaders webpage](#). Questions? Contact the [EL program manager](#).

Applications Open for I Love My Librarian Award

ALA invites library users nationwide to submit nominations for the [I Love My Librarian Award](#) through September 30, 2023! Ten outstanding librarians will receive \$5,000 and the honor of a lifetime, including a celebration at ALA's 2024 LibLearnX Conference in Baltimore. Honorees will also receive complimentary LibLearnX registration as part of their award package. We know librarians of all kinds go above and beyond to serve and educate their patrons every day, so please spread the word in your community about this life-changing opportunity! Promotional tools including graphics, social media copy, printable materials, and a sample press release are all [available on the award website](#).

New Toolkit from University of Washington iSchool

Back in 2020, ALSC provided a letter to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in support of a University of Washington Information School (iSchool) project, Autism-Ready Libraries. The project, subsequently funded by IMLS, aimed to improve libraries' capacity to provide early literacy programming to autistic children and their families.

We are pleased to share that the iSchool released the Autism-Ready Libraries Toolkit (ARLT) in May 2023. The toolkit includes early literacy programming and training materials to empower librarians to effectively serve autistic children and their families.

[The toolkit is available free online.](#)

CBC Free Speech Kit

In support of the right to free speech and against censorship and book bans, the Children's Book Council has compiled relevant resources for librarians, teachers, and booksellers. The kit includes:

- Keep Bans off Our Books sticker
- #FREEDOM coloring page to copy
- The Pride Love & Acceptance poster created by Chan Chau, in partnership with School Library Journal. (Originally made available in fall 2022.)
- A page about a book teaching kids about banned books, by Pat Scales with ALA
- A letter from Raj Halder and Sourcebooks about their upcoming title, This Book Is Banned

[Complete this form](#) to request a free copy of the free speech kit.

If you have any questions regarding this resource, please [email the Children's Book Council](#).

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