

ALSC Matters

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Officially Speaking

2024 ALSC Charlemae Hill Rollins President's Program

Dear ALSC Members: This past June while attending our annual conference in Chicago, Illinois, I had the opportunity to visit the Chicago Public Library's Carter G. Woodson Branch, which houses the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, the largest such collection in the Midwest. Harsh was the first African American branch head in the Chicago Public Library system and was devoted to providing books written by and about Blacks for her patrons, regularly requesting grants and even using her own personal funds to purchase materials. Celebrated Black authors such as Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Richard Wright, and Zora Neale Hurston were regularly featured as guest speakers at the George Cleveland Hall Branch, the first to be established in Chicago's Black community. Harsh worked from 1932 until 1958 as head of the Hall Branch, and Charlemae Hill Rollins was the children's librarian there from 1932 until 1963. Rollins assisted Harsh in building the collection of books by and about Blacks.

The papers of Charlemae Hill Rollins are housed within the Harsh Research Collection. While going through the Rollins papers, I found a wealth of treasures, such as these:

- A note from Langston Hughes to Rollins
- Rollins's diary
- Her desk name plate
- A letter she wrote to Miss Lucile Deaderick, the editor of the ALA Bulletin at that time, about retiring ALA President Althea Warren's decision to hold ALA conferences in cities where Negro librarians could not attend all meetings
- Rollins's ALA membership card
- Photographs of Rollins and Harsh with other librarians at the Hall Branch
- Photographs of children who participated in branch book clubs and reading programs

Jordan McKenna, a librarian who works in the Harsh Research Collection, shared one of the most important treasures with me: the actual piece of paper on which Gwendolyn Brooks handwrote a poem for Rollins upon her retirement. McKenna made my day when she allowed me to hold the poem in my hands!

Rollins, whose work was closely aligned with that of Harsh, is well known for her advocacy efforts related to the representation of Blacks in children's literature. She edited multiple editions of *We Build Together: A Reader's Guide to Negro Life and Literature for Elementary and High School Use* (see the 1967 edition: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/7f9eeaf0-ec86-0134-ee46-096986f5ac8f>), challenged the purchasing of racially offensive children's books by the Chicago Public Library, wrote letters to publishers asking them to publish more books for children about

prominent African Americans, and wrote several biographies herself after retiring. Her biography *Black Troubadour: Langston Hughes* (see <https://archive.org/details/blacktroubadourl0000roll>) won the 1971 Coretta Scott King Author Award.

Rollins was an active member of ALA for many years, serving as president of the Children's Services Division (the first African American to do so) and chair of the 1956–1957 Newbery/Caldecott Committee. ALSC's annual Charlemae Hill Rollins President's Program is named in her honor due to her service and prominence within the profession and is held each year during the ALA Annual Conference. The 2024 program will focus on the legacy of celebrated African American librarians such as Augusta Baker and Effie Lee Morris, with an emphasis on Rollins. The co-chairs, Jason Driver and Erica Marks (special thanks to both!), are hard at work with ALSC staff on the 2024 program, which will inform attendees about these legendary librarians and how their work remains relevant today.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the 2024 ALA Annual Conference, which will be held June 27 to July 2 in San Diego, California (see <https://2024.alaannual.org/>), for what I hope will be an informative and exemplary ALSC Charlemae Hill Rollins President's Program!—*Jonda C. McNair, Charlotte S. Huck Endowed Professor of Children's Literature, The Ohio State University, 2023–2024 ALSC President, she/her/hers*

Coming Together to Support ALSC and the Profession

If there's one thing that I'm very quickly learning in this new role as ALSC vice-president, it's that no matter how prepared you think you are, you're wrong.

This isn't meant to scare, but rather to express how much goes on behind the scenes that it can be easy to miss between conferences. I have no end of gratitude for the work of the ALSC staff and the many volunteers who take part in committee work throughout each year. It can be easy to forget how many hundreds of volunteers there are working year-round. They are holding meetings, organizing workshops, panels and webinars, building and nurturing professional networks, and working with staff and the board to build a robust and resilient organization that benefits children's librarians, authors, illustrators, educators, and publishers now and into the future. To each and every one of you who do this work, Thank You!

When I joined ALSC back in 2010, I could never have imagined the journey that would take me to this point. I have had the opportunity to take part in many different aspects of ALSC work over the years, from awards to board nominations to manual revisions, and so much more. And yet I still feel I have barely scratched the surface. This new role, however, allows me to get a much more thorough understanding of what makes ALSC the amazing organization that it is. And now I have the challenge and honor of working to appoint folks to the many committees that will ensure stability, growth, and resiliency during my term as President.

Now for everyone's favorite part of these posts: the ask! I know that everyone is incredibly busy, and the world feels like it's on fire—the attacks on children's librarianship can make us feel unappreciated and scared. But we can come together as an organization, as colleagues and friends, to fight back and ensure that ALSC remains a space for people to find hope, comfort, and joy. Together we can create tools and networks to build each other up and keep fighting the good fight. So, I am asking you to volunteer, if you are able, to help us continue our work. ([Find the committee volunteer form here](#). Have your ALA password handy.) It is my duty over the next year to appoint chairs and members to process committees, and I am excited to get to know more of you in that time and have the opportunity to work with you over the following year.

There are so many great committees, task forces, and discussion groups working in areas of advocacy, organizational support, professional development, and much more. Are you interested in intellectual freedom? What about literacy and programming? We've got opportunities for that! Do you have ideas about how to improve the work that ALSC does? We have Budget, Membership, EDI, and Organizational Effectiveness committees and task forces, among others, that will give you a chance to help ensure ALSC is doing its best work!

Now is the time to come together, strong and united, and I am thrilled to be working with such an incredible group of people, including President Jonda McNair, Past-President Amy Koester, and the many amazing board members, staff, and volunteers over the coming years. I look forward to seeing many of you at [LibLearnX in Baltimore](#) (January 19-22) and celebrating the Youth Media Awards (always a highlight).

Once more, thank you all for the opportunity to serve in this capacity. I look forward to hearing from many of you in the coming months!—*With gratitude, and in solidarity, Rob Bittner, ALSC Vice President*

Thank You to Our Friends

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ALSC Voices

ALSC Profile

Celebrating colleagues with 25 years or more years of ALSC membership

Starr LaTronica
Library Director
Brooks Memorial Library, Brattleboro, Vermont
ALSC Membership: 25 years

Where did you attend library school?

University of California, Berkeley

What was your very first library position?

I knew I wanted to be a librarian and someone suggested I start by volunteering, so I began my library career in the perfect spot for me—the Albany (CA) Public Library! It was tiny, but filled with books, devoted and interesting patrons, unique activities and terrific colleagues. I worked with two of the best librarians I have ever known, Elizabeth Overmyer and Joan Ariel. Eventually, I was hired to work part time while attending library school, and I had the opportunity to create my first puppet show (*The Judge* by Margot Zemach), contribute to storytime (*Pierre* by Maurice Sendak), and join the creative cohort that provided a wide range of programming including storytelling programs for adults and a mummer's play. It was also the first time I canvassed in support of a ballot measure to provide designated library funding and met the incomparable and legendary Regina Minudri, steadfast and supportive Phyllis Partridge, and my dear friend and mentor Linda Perkins. There is not a single day that I do not channel one or more of those five women while working in this field.

What do you love most about your current job?

What I have always loved, from my very first day in a library—making a positive contribution, no matter how small, every single day in people's lives. As a child, I came to libraries for the books. As an adult, I became a librarian because of the people. I became a director to support library services by working to institute policies that serve the community, such as eliminating fines.

What do you remember about your favorite teacher?

Miss Forward was my third-grade teacher and what I remember most about her was her kindness, to every one of her students. She treated each of us as individuals, and we knew she loved us. She also read to us every afternoon, and often created book-related activities or adjusted our lessons to reflect what she was reading (e.g. staging a spelling bee to demonstrate a scene from a book we had read). She is still an inspiration to me.

Who would you most like to swap places with for a day?

There is nowhere I would rather be.

Do you prefer being the driver or the passenger?

The passenger! I get to look around, choose the music, chat, daydream, even take a nap.

What is your favorite term people use to describe you?

Helpful...and enthusiastic.

What was your favorite thing to play with when you were a child?

When I was five, I got a doll's washing machine with a round window in the front panel. I could fill it with water and use a little crank to agitate it. Then, in third grade, I got a Barbie, which is when and how I learned to sew. I still love to sew, and I don't really even mind doing laundry, so there you are.

What is the best compliment you ever received?

When kids say, "you're funny." Also, I was totally flattered to be featured in three books as a librarian character: *Looking for Bobowicz* and *The Artsy-Smartsy Club* by Daniel Pinwater, and *Marked Man* by Archer Mayor.

Bright Ideas

Fantastical Creatures Visit the Gail Borden Library

In September 2023, as part of its celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, the Gail Borden Public Library District (GBPLD) in Illinois opened an exhibit of 20 paper mache sculptures on loan from the Mexican Cultural Center of DuPage. Known as "Alebrijes," these brightly-colored folk art pieces take the shape of fantastical creatures. Among those on [display at GBPLD's Main Library](#) through mid-January, are Goliath, a 16-foot deer, giraffe and eagle, and Lacuarium, a seahorse-dragon. If they sound familiar, Alebrijes were featured in the 2017 animated fantasy film *Coco*.

Throughout September, GBPL coordinated events with Hispanic Heritage Month and the Alebrijes. The month featured an Alebrije exhibit scavenger hunt, multiple dance and music performances, an Ofrenda Day of the Dead Exhibit, Alebrijes art contest for local area students, button give-aways featuring photos of patrons with their favorite Alebrije, and more.

"We love hosting these Alebrijes," said Carole Medal, GBPLD's CEO. "It fits our mission statement so well as we are 'the library where imagination and transformation flourish, fueled by the power of community.'"

Thus far, the Alebrijes have been a huge hit. The library is attracting many visitors of all ages and student field trips. Four additional Alebrijes have been added, bringing the total on display currently to 24.

How Dr. P's 3 P's of Professionalism Informed My Career as a Librarian

When I was in grad school at Louisiana State University working on my MLS in the late 1970's, Dr. Charles D. Patterson gave all of his students the most meaningful tidbit of wisdom to apply during our careers as a librarian. He called it "The P's of Professionalism". Today, I refer to it "Dr. P's 3 P's of Professionalism", out of respect for him.

Quite simply, he explained that librarians have a responsibility to demonstrate your professionalism as a librarian by doing three things: **1. Publish, 2. Participate, and 3. Party**. When I heard this third P, I thought "Oh yeah - I am so into this profession!!". After all, I was attending LSU, well-known for being a "party school" at the time. Little did I appreciate the truth behind this word.

The importance and meaning of the first two are fairly obvious. To him, to "publish" meant to contribute to the literature of libraries – to share with others. This writing can include not only research articles, but also articles about all aspects of practical librarianship (including programming experiences and ideas), interviews with authors, and reviews of books. We in ALSC are fortunate to

have several means of publishing – writing for *Children & Libraries* (our professional journal), *ALSC Matters* (our newsletter), and the *ALSC Blog* (our informal, conversational way of getting out information).

He felt to “participate”, you must join and support your professional organization(s) – whether at the local level, the state level, and/or the national level. But don’t just be a joiner! Being an active participant is also important. Support and attend your organization’s conferences and workshops (whether virtual or in person), present ideas and experiences with others at these conferences, contribute to your professional publications, and volunteer for committee work and leadership roles. When your organization expresses a need for financial support, be sure to give what you can – be it time, money, or expertise. My experience has been that the more you put into your organization, the more you will be rewarded both professionally and personally. It has been incredible to look back at all of the ways that ALSC has given me opportunities to try new things, to stretch and grow in both these ways.

When he said “party”, yes, he meant just that – to let down your hair and enjoy being with your colleagues. But over the years, I realize now he meant much more than just building a network with your colleagues. It is about building long-term friendships. Seeing and socializing with the friends you have made from across the country and around the world that share the same interests and passions you have is one of the most satisfying aspects of librarianship. Recently, most of my 2015 Newbery Medal Committee met up in Hollywood with Kwame Alexander for the World Premiere of the Disney+ adaptation of his award-winning book *The Crossover*. We had the best 3 days ever – enjoying each other’s company and being treated as special guests celebrating the success of “our book.”

You, too, can take Dr. P’s 3 P’s of Professionalism to heart as you get yourself out there to make libraries better and stronger for everyone! Publish/share your library ideas and successes. Fill in that volunteer form to participate this year. And, by all means, party with us. I can’t think of a better, more caring, more widely diverse group of people that I want to spend time with than all of the friends that I have made through my 25+ years as an active member of ALSC.—*Stephanie Bange, ALSC Priority Group (VI) Consultant*

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

Member News

Jane Botham (left), 1986-87 ALSC president, was inducted into the Wisconsin Library Hall of Fame last month. She was lauded for her innovation, mentorship, collaborative efforts, advocacy, leadership, and her passion in serving the "whole child." Her influence and leadership in youth services, her ability to lift and support others in becoming leaders themselves, and her sense of humor were noted in the nomination and letters of support. Jane was "surprised and tickled pink" at receiving the honor. Congratulations, Jane! *(Photo courtesy of Marge Loch-Wouters)*

Lucía Martínez González (middle), 2021-22 ALSC president, accepted a position to serve on the Board of Directors of the Jane Addams Peace Association, shortly after completing her term on ALSC’s Board of Directors. Also, in August, the mayor and City Council of North Miami, Florida, voted unanimously to approve the naming of a playground (next to her former library) in Lucia’s name! Yay, Lucia! *(Photo courtesy of Lucia Martínez González)*

Karlie Herndon (above right) was recently appointed as curator of the de Grummond Children’s Literature Collection at The University of Southern Mississippi. A former student employee and intern

at USM, Karlie returned to the collection August 2022 as assistant curator and was later named interim curator, following the retirement of Ellen Ruffin. Congrats, Karlie! *(Photo courtesy of Karlie Herndon)*

Liz Deskins, adjunct professor, Kent State University (Ohio), is the co-author of LGBTQIA+ Books for Children and Teens, Second Edition (2023, ALA Editions). The resource guide provides a range of LGBTQIA+ titles along with guidance on fostering spaces that are safe, warm, and welcoming for all young readers. Kudos, Liz!

STEAM Programming Webinar: Inspiring Curiosity and Exploration

Join ALSC for the webinar Full STEAM Ahead: Maximizing Wonder and Learning in Library Programs on Thursday, November 16, at 1pm ET/12pm CT/11am MT/10am PT, to learn how library staff of all experience levels can encourage young learners to engage with foundational STEAM concepts by utilizing trusted early literacy models and encouraging unstructured exploration. [Learn more and register now!](#)

2024 Slate Announced

The [2024 slate of ALSC candidates](#) is now available on the website. President Jonda McNair announced the slate on the ALSC Blog this morning. We sincerely thank those standing for election for their time and commitment to ALSC. ALSC also thanks the 2024 Nominating and Leadership Development Committee, including Co-Chairs Susan Dove Lempke and Elisa Gall, Jessica Agudelo, Joanna K. Fabicon, Sophie Kenney, Rachel Godwin Payne, and Susan H. Polos.

The ALA election period is March 11 through April 3, 2024. Renew your membership by January 31, to ensure that you receive your ballot for the election. For more information, [visit the ALA election site](#).

Carnegie Library to Host Williams-Garcia Lecture

ALSC's Children's Literature Lecture committee chose Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh as the site of the 2024 lecture featuring award-winning writer Rita Williams-Garcia. The author of more than a dozen books for children and teens, Williams-Garcia is the recipient of multiple awards, including the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, the Scott O'Dell Historical Fiction Awards, three Coretta Scott King Author Awards, and a Newbery Honor Award. The date and time of the lecture, next spring, will be announced soon.

Share Your Mock Election Results with Us!

It's November and that means the annual Youth Media Awards press conference (YMAS) is on the horizon. The winners of the Newbery, Caldecott, Coretta Scott King Book, and Printz awards, along with a host of others, will be announced on January 22, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. (ET), during [LibLearnX in Baltimore](#). It is official mock election season!

Libraries, schools, and other groups around the globe offer mock election programs, where readers come together to discuss books and pick their winners--just like the actual award committees. And every year the ALSC Blog gathers and shares results on its [Mock YMA Election Results Page](#). And this year, for the first time, we are collecting election results for EVERY book award given out at the YMAS, including American Indian Youth Literature, Asian Pacific/American Award for Literature,

Batchelder, Caldecott, Coretta Scott King, Geisel, Newbery, Printz, Pura Belpré, Schneider, Sibert, Stonewall, AND Sydney Taylor.

If you are hosting a mock election this year for any one of these awards, we want to help you share the exciting results news! To add your results to the blog page, [use this form](#). And don't forget to check in to the [ALSC Blog](#) over the next couple months, to see which 2023 titles are coming away with the accolades.

Reserve Your Spot at the PLA 2024 Conference

The Public Library Association (PLA) invites you to join thousands of public library workers, supporters, and vendors in Columbus, Ohio, April 3–5, to celebrate all things public libraries! The [PLA 2024 Conference](#) offers more than 100 education sessions, including a dozen programs focused on serving youth. Attendees will also enjoy inspiring speakers and authors, engaging networking opportunities, career services, micro-learning moments, and a bustling exhibits hall. [Register today](#) and save with the advanced rate.

NEA Big Read Grants

Applications are open for grants to support NEA Big Read projects between September 2024 and June 2025. An initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in partnership with Arts Midwest, the NEA Big Read supports community reading programs designed around an NEA Big Read book. The goal of the program is to inspire conversations, celebrate local creativity, elevate a wide variety of voices, and build strong connections in communities. The Intent to Apply deadline is January 10, 2024. Visit the [Arts Midwest website](#) for complete grant guidelines and application information.

New Museum Featuring Children's Literature

The Rabbit hOle, an immersive museum dedicated to children's books, opens in March 2024. Located in a renovated warehouse in North Kansas City, Missouri, the museum includes more than 30 exhibits, featuring literary favorites, such as Goodnight Moon and Last Stop on Market Street. The space also offers a bookstore, resource library, maker space, and more. The museum also will offer arts and literature-based programming, professional development workshops for educators, field trips and special events with authors and illustrators from around the country.

To learn more about The Rabbit hOle, [visit their website](#).

Do you have news of national interest to ALSC Matters readers--those working on behalf of youth in libraries, educators, and others interested in youth services in libraries? Please [use this form](#) to submit your news item (non-commercial) to be considered for inclusion in ALSC Matters.

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