

Meet the Candidates for ALA President

Vote in the Election this Spring

The ACRL Board of Directors posed the following questions to the candidates for ALA president, and *C&RL News* is pleased to publish their responses. Each candidate was given 1,500 words to respond to six questions and contribute an optional opening statement. The responses are identified under each question.

Opening Statements

Lindsay Cronk: I'm Lindsay Cronk, Dean of Libraries at Tulane University, research librarian, your ally and partner in knowledge equity work, and candidate for President of the American Library Association 2026. I am also a huge fan and ongoing beneficiary of ACRL's contributions to the profession. I came to ALA by way of state associations and then divisions, and I know the Association well—the good and the bad. Colleagues call me a force of nature, a dynamo, and the “real deal.” I'll take [the endorsements](#), but what you should know is that I'm loud because I'm confident. I believe in you, in the future of our profession, and our ability to meet this moment as a team. **ALA needs a president with the moral courage and expansive vision to help us thrive in an increasingly chaotic environment.** I am ready to serve. In answering your questions, I seek your input and expertise.

Maria McCauley: I am Maria McCauley, and I ask for your vote for President of the American Library Association (ALA). I am an experienced association and library leader, a Past President of the Public Library Association, and I have long excelled at bringing people together to work on important issues facing libraries.

I've enjoyed a career in academic and public libraries including directing libraries for the past 13 years (at the Cambridge Public Library since 2016) and working in academic libraries for 10 years. I've been a member of ALA since I was a Spectrum Scholar, and have worked to support equity and inclusion, access, and intellectual freedom in all of my roles. For example, I served on an ACRL committee that created cultural competencies and an ACRL committee that reviewed travel scholarship support for Spectrum scholars.

In my 25 years as an ALA member, in addition to serving as past president of PLA, I was named a [Spectrum Scholar](#), and served as a two-term ALA councilor, an ALA Executive Board member, a member of the Committee on Legislation, and a member of the Finance and Audit Committee. I am a member of IFLA, all National Organizations of Librarians of Color, the Freedom to Read Foundation, the Massachusetts Library Association, and the New England Library Association.

I earned my BA from Ohio Wesleyan, my MLIS from the University of Pittsburgh, and my PhD from Simmons.

My presidential priorities focus on increasing equity and access, advocating for libraries and intellectual freedom, deepening the ALA member experience, and promoting sustainability. You can read more about my vision and goals at mariaforlibraries.com.

1. As the future ALA president, please share your thoughts about what you would like to accomplish with the divisions during your presidential year.

Cronk: As ALA president, I will prioritize strengthening [the relationships between ALA and its divisions](#), ensuring they remain vibrant, sustainable homes for members while deepening support for workers. Divisions like ACRL are essential experts on critical issues like intellectual freedom, media literacy, and scholarly communication. ALA should rely on ACRL for leadership and advice in these areas, and as President, I would seek out ACRL's advice in those crucial areas during my presidential term. My question to ACRL members—what do you want a president to accomplish? How can the president uplift your work? **How can we co-create the Association we deserve?**

[My pathway through the Association](#) meant I first found a home in the [Library Information Technology](#) (LITA) division and built a new home with colleagues across ALA to establish [Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures](#). I have experienced and harnessed the transformative potential of divisions. I've built mentoring programs, created spaces for professional development, developed awards, and created [weekly Connect posts I called "Happy Friday"](#) to celebrate progress and keep members informed.

As president, my Presidential agenda would focus on sustaining and division communities by addressing financial challenges that impact their success and getting creative about shared solutions. **What are your ideas?**

Andrea Jamison: One of my priority areas include working with internal and external partners in order to ramp up advocacy for pro-library legislation and protections for librarians, particularly in response to our current social/political climate. There's significant misinformation about librarians and the work that we do, especially as it relates to intellectual freedom. Interest groups have labeled librarians as disseminators of obscene materials that "will" indoctrinate and/or corrupt the epistemological values of young people. These arguments have led to the proposal of [anti-library legislation](#) across the nation, some of which seeks to criminalize librarians. Unabated, this type of harmful rhetoric can deter librarians from entering the field or even serve as a catalyst for mass exodus of existing library workers.

In my home state, I've witnessed firsthand the passage of one of the earliest anti-censorship bills, and I was an active advocate for this bill through my work with Congressman Danny K. Davis' advisory committee and my role as a frequent town hall speaker. From that experience, I've started collaborating with a group of stakeholders to ensure that pro-library legislation and protections for librarians gain momentum and success.

One critical area that I plan to address if elected is the need for increased documentation of how censorship, anti-DEI efforts, and anti-library legislation impact librarians and the communities we serve. This will require research and scholarship across the field of librarianship and education to examine both the short- and long-term social, economic, and educational effects of these challenges. I would prioritize enhancing collaboration across ALA divisions, particularly those that can fund research to document these impacts.

Academic and research librarians play a key role in this scholarship. ACRL and LRRT have already demonstrated leadership in funding academic research. By increasing inter-division/

roundtable collaboration, we can enhance the resources available for researchers, enabling them to gather critical data that state organizations can use to advocate for pro-library legislation. Additionally, these research initiatives will enrich ALA's legislative toolkit and provide us with the evidence we need to continue preparing librarians for effective advocacy in their communities and beyond.

Countering misinformation is another priority. Given our current social and political climate, there has been significant misinformation about librarians. Librarians have been accused of providing obscene materials to communities and attempting to indoctrinate individuals through what has been considered a "woke" agenda.

I believe it is essential to shift the current narrative by launching targeted media campaigns that highlight the vital role libraries play in supporting intellectual freedom and fostering the development of critical information and digital literacies. I have cultivated strong relationships and alliances with publishers, authors, educators, and community leaders who are eager to collaborate with ALA leaders and members on this important initiative.

I would advocate for increased support of school librarians. School librarians have been at the forefront of censorship challenges and backlash. As such, part of my goal as a presidential candidate would be to advocate for ALA to increase engagement with school administrators through membership and conference opportunities. While some state library associations offer opportunities to school administrators, I think it's important for the ALA to engage administrators in order to provide a national view of some of the more complex censorship issues. Some school administrators don't have a purview of the importance of school librarians. Separate from academic librarians, whose deans are situated in library work, school librarians are often solo within their respective schools. This type of collaboration could potentially improve working conditions for school librarians by helping administrators develop a more nuanced understanding of first amendment rights in library settings, the importance of diversity in library collections, the value of information literacy, and how to navigate censorship challenges. I'd work with various ALA leadership, divisions, state chapter leaders, and roundtables to ensure that once recruited, we are able to offer targeted information sessions, research, resources, and toolkits to school administrators.

I'd advocate for transparency in ALA Leadership and Budget. ALA is currently searching for a new executive director, which will handle the daily management of the organization. We have recently had a change in leadership and an increase in debt. As a member driven organization, I feel it is important that members have increased opportunities to have a voice in decisions that will impact the longevity of the organization. As a former ALA councilor, I have proactively advocated for more transparency and better channels of communication to membership regarding finances and vetting process for the executive director.

McCauley: Divisions are critical to advancing the goals of the academic library profession and help to support the broader vision of the American Library Association (ALA). As the future ALA president, I will form a working group of all the division presidents to build a strong and productive network between division and executive board leadership. With regular meetings during president-elect and presidential years, I will work to ensure clear communications, to better understand and amplify the priorities of the divisions, to collaborate on ways to attract diverse library workers, and to partner on member engagement.

I will also work with divisions to champion information and policy efforts that support libraries and augment the impact of our work. I will build coalitions and partnerships with

ALA groups, state chapters and offices, and others to raise awareness on key issues, including ACRL's Legislative Agenda.

In addition, I will invite divisions to participate in reintroducing Jim Rettig's Scholarships for a Day. This initiative will engage diverse students in exploring libraries as a career at conference sites. ACRL will be invited to participate—exploring partnerships with area community colleges to encourage entry level academic library workers to participate as well. See section 4 below.

I will advance sustainability in all its dimensions (inclusively, financially, and ecologically). I will support groups such as the Sustainability Round Table, who are helping libraries to plan for sustainability and invite ACRL, ALA-APA, and others to collaborate on building a resilient, sustainable, and supported workforce. I will also support ACRL and academic libraries in their exploration and advancement of open education resources (OER) and sustainability and AI.

2. What opportunities do you see for increasing member recruitment, engagement, and retention in ACRL? What barriers exist?

Cronk: ACRL can grow its membership by leveraging its expanding leadership in scholarly communication, academic freedom, and research equity. I recently met with the ACRL Board, and I am eager to connect in Minneapolis to learn more from members. The division already excels at creating tailored, career-stage-specific programming, and by strengthening mentorship opportunities and perhaps sharing them across other divisions with academic members, we can attract new members while retaining current ones.

However, systemic financial barriers remain a significant challenge. With tightening academic library budgets and lower than acceptable pay for library workers, institutional and individual limits on professional development have led to attrition and burnout. As someone who has worked in diverse library environments, including consortia, public, and private universities, I understand these constraints and would ensure that ACRL has the structural and financial support it needs to remain indispensable to its members. **This includes advocating for equitable pricing models and expanding accessible programming to reach all library workers.**

How can we work directly with college and university libraries to avoid costs falling predominantly on individuals? What are the barriers to providing knowledge equity and how can we address them to arrive at shared sustainability? These are the questions I look forward to asking and answering with ACRL's leaders and members.

Jamison: As an assistant professor of school librarianship and the Professional Development School (PDS) coordinator, I collaborate with school districts to align the interests of Illinois State University and our partner schools, with a particular focus on career pipelines. Many students, particularly those interested in education, are unaware of the diverse career paths available within librarianship.

One initiative I help lead is the annual [Future Teachers Conference](#), where we invite high school seniors to campus to explore various academic programs at the university. This event has drawn as many as 2,500 students in a single year. A similar model could be highly effective in recruiting future librarians. ALA, through partnerships between AASL, ALISE, and ACRL, could develop a School-to-Library Pipeline that introduces students to the field

before they enter college. The PLA could also serve as a partner for this initiative hosting smaller scale events to reach young adults within the community.

A dedicated Future Librarians Conference, virtual event, or career day could serve as an entry point for students to learn about the many professional opportunities in libraries, including academic librarianship. By intentionally directing recruitment efforts toward students as they prepare for college, we can help them see librarianship as a viable, rewarding career path. ACRL in particular could play a critical role by showcasing academic librarianship's impact on research, scholarship, and student success in higher education.

Our current socio-political climate presents significant challenges to recruitment and retention in academic librarianship. Misinformation about libraries and librarians (especially the false narratives that librarians promote harmful materials or engage in ideological indoctrination) can make the profession seem less attractive. The growing trend of proposed legislation that seeks to criminalize librarians for upholding intellectual freedom further exacerbates these concerns. This is why advocating for pro-library legislation and combating misinformation about the profession are central to my presidential platform.

McCauley: Despite some barriers (discussed below), there are multiple opportunities. Let's create clear pathways to engagement. I think that it is important to connect with students and early career ALA members and to emphasize opportunities to grow through divisions. This might involve partnering with the New Members Round Table or National Associations of Librarians of Color, and other groups on issues such as what careers in academic libraries look like and how to get your first academic job. It might also involve virtual networking. Personal touch points are always helpful, so it's critical to ensure that relevant groups and member leaders are creating opportunities for personal communications, both virtually and in person, including at regional meetups and national conferences. One of my goals is to create a peer-member-learning and growing-journey program that would match any interested ALA member with a peer to go through their association journey together. This may be an opportunity to collaborate with ACRL.

In addition to these connection opportunities, I will create pathways for engagement for early and mid-career professionals that provide opportunities for speaking engagements, writing, and presenting. These might include creating and encouraging participation in lightning talks and panels and virtual poster sessions. Other opportunities include continuing to support mentorship opportunities for growth and encouraging and supporting members to embrace increased responsibilities and leadership development opportunities. In this regard, it is important to focus on support for new managers and directors and to offer learning and growth opportunities for all. Continuing education offerings may include digital learning, skills-building, STEM, AI, leadership, management, inclusive practices, and more.

I will be seeking additional opportunities to provide professional development and support to mentor members from multiple sections, such as community colleges and access services, who may have barriers such as less travel funding during uncertain financial times, competition with other groups and associations for membership and time, and uncertainty among academic library workers about where to focus their work and careers. At a time when we see a retraction of support for equity and inclusion, library workers may also feel disillusioned about DEI statements. People may also not see themselves represented in the profession. I am interested in collaborating on strategies to increase membership engagement

and to advance equity and inclusion. Please see below for more of my thoughts on how to address these issues.

3. How can ALA and ACRL support each other to encourage member participation and investment?

Cronk: ALA and ACRL must collaborate to amplify each other's strengths. ALA can elevate ACRL's expertise on issues like open access, research equity, and academic freedom through its national advocacy efforts, ensuring academic perspectives are represented. At the same time, ACRL can contribute to ALA's broader initiatives on cross-cutting issues like censorship, workforce development, and digital transformation.

My experience building Core and launching its extensive professional development offerings has taught me how divisions can foster professional engagement while advancing ALA's goals and, above all, making the profession a healthier and better place. **Ultimately, wage equity is necessary for our members to be able to participate.** As president, I would focus on creating a reciprocal relationship between ALA and its divisions, providing resources to enhance their capacity for impact while streamlining operational processes. In my work with the Association for Research Libraries, I have begun to work with colleagues to consider wage floor guidance for academic library hiring. ACRL could be connected to this effort, and together we could enact systemic change. **How should ACRL be engaged in conversations about library pay levels and working conditions?**

Jamison: Reducing barriers to access is a key strategy for encouraging greater member participation and investment. As an ALA Type 1 member, myself and others face limitations due to limited job funding for travel and professional development. This often forces us to make tough choices about which memberships and conferences we can afford. For me, I must choose between attending the ALA Annual Conference, a division conference, or a state conference. Conference registration is typically paid in full and requires adherence to early registration deadlines to benefit from discounts.

Since ACRL holds its conference biennially, it may be worth exploring options to reduce financial barriers, particularly for Type 1 members who tend to pay the highest fees. For example, ACRL could consider offering a discounted two-year membership rate or a joint membership rate across two divisions, encouraging strategic partnerships among memberships. Additionally, freezing conference prices for Type 1 members beyond the early bird registration period could provide these members with added incentives to attend without the pressure of facing higher registration costs for missing the early deadlines.

McCauley: As both ALA and ACRL work to build and grow a vibrant connected library network, we can work together to highlight the stories of our members and the value they get from the organization. ACRL was fundamental in helping me to establish a budding professional national academic network of peers and mentors. Attending ACRL conferences helped me to build skills and learn about the issues facing academic libraries.

I know there are others at different points in their careers with compelling stories to share. Through peer member learning opportunities, peer leaders can highlight how becoming involved with ACRL and other divisions is helpful and can encourage each other to get involved at the division level. We can also host virtual networking events with ALA members and ACRL members.

As a legacy donor, I also see an opportunity for fundraising, highlighting why donor dollars matter by showcasing different ways people are supporting ALA and divisions, including ACRL.

4. Please share specific ideas you have for partnering with ACRL (and other divisions) to advance equity and inclusion and to grow diversity of our membership.

Cronk: I think there are real opportunities across and between ALA's divisions, and broadly across other membership organizations with research and academic library focuses. Partnering with ACRL and other divisions, we can expand and support initiatives that create leadership pathways for underrepresented professionals and address systemic barriers in the profession, particularly in higher ed. For example, we could create joint recognition programs for academic librarians advancing access work, inspired by Core's LIFT Awards or perhaps in tandem with them.

The ecosystem of libraries broadly and ALA particularly provides so much inspiration and opportunity. In considering what should follow LibLearnX, many members of different divisions have told me they believe their biannual conference could fill the gap. What if all biannual conferences were held in a shared location where individual programming could occur but cross-attendance and pollination were encouraged? Some of my best ideas come from ACRL, Core, and the Public Library Association (PLA). All have popular biannual conferences. There is so much opportunity to build inclusion by building community and finding cost and resource savings.

I also propose collaborative programming across divisions to develop strategies for recruiting and retaining diverse library workers. By aligning ACRL's expertise in higher education with ALA's broader advocacy efforts, we can ensure these initiatives resonate across the profession. **How can we achieve a sustainable, vibrant, and thriving future?**

Jamison: Diversity and inclusion are central to my work at Illinois State University, not only in my research but also in my role as a leader in faculty training on equitable practices. I am a trained ALA Racial Healing Practitioner, a community of practice leader for Diverse BookFinder, and serve as the social justice chair for the Institute of Human Education. If elected as ALA president I'd focus on how America's social and political landscape are impacting library workers and library services today. In this context, I would strategically focus on building coalitions between ALA's roundtables and divisions to increase support for funding that enables librarians to engage in research examining how current anti-DEI sentiments and legislation are affecting the field of librarianship. Library research data is crucial for helping librarians advocate for pro-library legislation and countering misinformation about the work we do.

With this strategic approach, ACRL can leverage its strength as a division of researchers to collaborate with school and children's librarians. Data from this partnership could be used to design professional development programs, equipping librarians with up-to-date trends and insights, and inform policies and practices to ensure libraries remain inclusive, equitable spaces for all. I would also leverage my work with Diverse BookFinder and the Institute of Humane Education to increase diversity and social justice training organization-wide.

McCauley: Let's advance equity and inclusion together. As mentioned above, I'd like to collaborate with ACRL on Scholarships for a Day to introduce diverse students to library conferences. I thank ACRL for their support of ALA Spectrum Scholarships and I'd like to

partner on supporting and inspiring ACRL Spectrum scholars and diverse emerging professionals. I am also happy to share my support for the importance of mentoring diverse new managers and first-time directors. I would welcome the opportunities to partner on panels that highlight diverse and intersectional emerging leaders, to talk about advancing equity and inclusion and to participate in meet-and-greets with diverse academic librarians—perhaps a collaboration with ACRL, Spectrum, and the National Associations of Librarians of Color. I also am interested in partnering with ACRL on encouraging research on advancing equity and inclusion in the field and the positive impact of a diverse library workforce. I will also invite groups including ACRL to join with me in continuing to reach out to LIS programs and iSchools to engage them in ALA, divisions, and other groups.

5. In what specific ways would you seek to support academic library workers, particularly in light of legislation and other efforts that challenge equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts in higher education?

Cronk: Academic library workers are critical advocates for access, yet we face growing challenges from restrictive legislation and institutional pressures. As ALA president, I would prioritize advocacy and resource development to support these workers, including peer mentoring to fight the isolation and low morale that have become pressing barriers to the health and wellbeing of academic libraries. I'm interested in considering how ACRL and ALA's advocacy guides and legislative agendas could be used to create toolkits tailored to academic librarians' needs. These resources would provide practical guidance on responding to harmful policies, advocating for academic freedom, and navigating these challenges.

Recent executive actions closely aligned with the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 document pose serious risks to intellectual freedom, research equity, and higher education. However, the fact [that nearly two-thirds of these actions mirror the proposals outlined in Project 2025](#) also provides us with a strategic advantage. We know what's coming, and we can prepare.

There are foundational issues affecting all library workers, such as wage equity and workplace well-being. With the right preparation and advocacy, we can succeed in countering these challenges while reinforcing the essential role libraries play as knowledge, preservation, learning, and growth infrastructure to communities. Academic library workers are indispensable to providing access and support for communities to research, and I will ensure ALA is fully equipped to express the importance of that work. **What connections can we make to support your success?**

Jamison: I will work with ALA leaders and members to

- increase collaboration across ALA divisions and affiliates to ramp up advocacy efforts aimed at protecting academic library workers and their institutions from harmful legislation;
- advocate for pro-library legislation; and
- enhance collaboration between ACRL, Library Research Round Table(LRRT), and other divisions to fund and support research that will provide valuable data for advocacy efforts. This will also give academic librarians more research opportunities that can lead to increased production of scholarship and tenure opportunities.

McCauley: It is vital to take the time to meet with academic library workers and libraries wherever I go and to provide encouragement and inspiration. I would provide virtual

meet-up opportunities and share with stakeholders and funders the stories of how these diverse academic library workers are making a difference in society. As a person of color, I will share my own story of feeling isolated when I entered into academic libraries—a time when there wasn't much diversity. Meeting other diverse library professionals and mentors who invited me in through ALA, Spectrum, and ACRL were critical, making me feel welcome and buoying my confidence that I could grow in the profession.

I look forward to representing all in the profession including from all backgrounds, abilities, ages, and places. We are enriched by the broad spectrum and experience of the membership.

Closing Statements

Cronk: The Importance of Divisions and Financial Health

Divisions are the backbone of ALA, providing professional homes, fostering collaboration, and advancing advocacy. My professional success is a testament to their transformative potential. They are not just an essential part of ALA; they are why I am so invested in its future.

ALA faces [critical financial challenges](#) that threaten its sustainability. The timing presents a challenge and opportunity with the external threats we are now addressing. However, I believe we can meet this moment with bold leadership, coalition-building, and fiscal responsibility. By strengthening ACRL and other divisions, we will ensure we all thrive.

I hope you'll honor me with the opportunity to serve as your advocate and spokesperson. You can trust me to listen and to communicate effectively, to make friends and allies, and to challenge detractors and misinformation. I will share the truth clearly, confidently, and loudly—when libraries lead, communities succeed. How would you like to work together?

Where do we start?

Tell me at [Cronkthevote.com](https://cronkthevote.com). 🐼