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This month's cover features a photograph of Mrs. Eady and Mrs. Bradley in front of a Demonstration House ca. 1955 from the Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service Photographs collection. Home Demonstration Clubs were formed to educate rural women on home economics.

Clemson University Libraries' Special Collections and Archives is home to the Cooperative Extension Service Photographs This collection consists of more than 11,000 images produced by the Cooperative Extension Service and South Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station and covers the 1920s through the 1970s. Images document segregated extension agents and their work with African American communities. Learn more at https://digitalcollections.clemson.edu/explore/collections/cu-coop-photos/.

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Respectful Conversation Website Launches

The recently launched Respectful Conversation is a collection of open access resources related to the interconnected concepts of free expression, constructive dialogue, and media literacy. Free expression has long been considered a basic human right in the United States, while constructive dialogue and media literacy are more recent initiatives that focus on the responsibility to engage in productive, informed interactions.

The online toolkit includes instructional resources such as books and articles, videos, and podcasts that can be adopted by educators, parents, library professionals, and community leaders across the country. The goal for this website is to promote a willingness and preparedness to engage in constructive dialogue with well-informed citizens. The site was created through a process for identifying useful resources related to freedom of expression, constructive dialogue, and media literacy, including monitoring relevant open access and authoritative journals, LibGuides, and listservs.

The resources shared in this toolkit are designed to facilitate meaningful and constructive dialogue and educate students and other community members about the related concepts of free expression, constructive dialogue, and media literacy. The content on this site will enable others to build their own collections of resources for their community members. The site was supported by an ALA Carnegie Whitney Grant and is available at https://respectfulconversation.charlotte.edu/.

Library of Congress Launches Digitized Collection of National AIDS Memorial Quilt Records

The Library of Congress has released a groundbreaking online collection of the National AIDS Memorial Quilt Records, making one of the most poignant symbols of the AIDS epidemic in the United States available to a global audience. As the largest communal art project in the world, the AIDS Memorial Quilt honors the lives of all Americans who have died of AIDS since 1981, when the disease was first identified.

Released to coincide with World AIDS Day commemorations, the newly digitized collection offers a unique window into the deeply personal stories behind the 55-ton quilt and its panels. Totaling more than 125,000 items, the collection includes letters, diaries, photographs, and other materials documenting the lives of those represented in the Quilt. The digitized archive is now reunited online with the communal folk art of the quilt panels. Together, these digitized collections will be a boon for researchers, families of AIDS victims, policymakers, and more. Learn more at https://www.loc.gov/collections/aids-memorial-quilt-records/about-this-collection/.

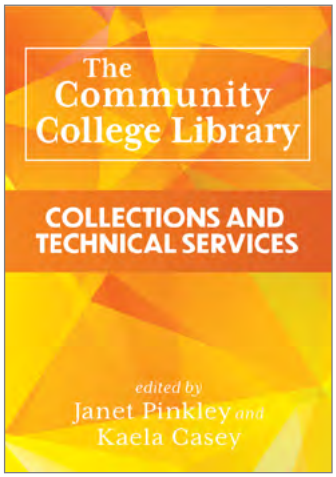
GPO Releases New Serial Set Volumes

The US Government Publishing Office (GPO) has added more than 3,000 volumes of the Congressional Serial Set containing more than 45,000 individual documents and reports to GPO's GovInfo, the one-stop site for authentic, published information for all three branches of the Federal Government. This comes as part of a multi-year effort with the Library of Congress to digitize and make accessible the US Congressional Serial Set back to the first volume, which was published in 1817.

Highlights from the newly added volumes include annual reports of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum; reports from May and June of 1874 relating to Susan B. Anthony's criminal trial for illegally voting in elections in Rochester, New York; hearings on the construction of the Panama Canal; and compilations of the official records of the Union and Confederate armies during the American Civil War.

The US Congressional Serial Set, commonly referred to as the Serial Set, is a compilation of all numbered House and Senate reports and documents, including executive reports and treaty documents, issued for each session of Congress. GPO is uploading volumes of the official Serial Set in phases for free public access on GovInfo. Thus far it makes available nearly 7,000 volumes, with nearly 11,000 remaining. The entire effort is expected to take at least a decade to complete.

New from ACRL—The Community College Library: Collections and Technical Services



ACRL announces the publication of *The Community College Library: Collections and Technical Services,* edited by Janet Pinkley and Kaela Casey. This book—the third in ACRL's The Community College Library series, following *Assessment* and *Reference & Instruction*—offers models and strategies for collection development and technical services work.

Community colleges are a cornerstone of higher education and serve the unique needs of the communities in which they reside. Collections and technical services librarians at these institutions need expertise in their area of library work but also a deep understanding of their community to curate and make discoverable the resources their users need.

The Community College Library: Collections and Technical Services highlights the various approaches to collection development and the technical services work being done by community college librarians around the United States. You'll find strategies for developing equity-centered collections, data-driven acquisitions, cataloging, systems migrations, zero textbook cost degrees, and more. These programs can serve as a model, providing new and innovative ways to approach this work at your own institutions.

Community college librarians are engaged in meaningful work designing and delivering library programs and services that meet the needs of their diverse populations and support student learning. ACRL's The Community College Library series is meant to lift the voices of community college librarians and highlight their creativity, tenacity, and commitment to students.

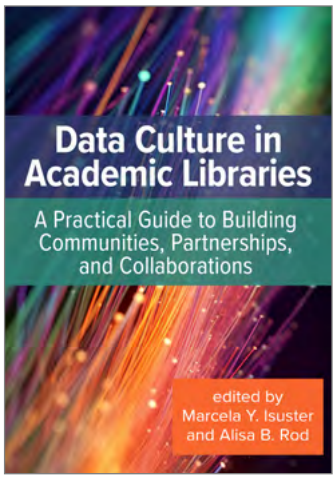
The Community College Library: Collections and Technical Services is available for purchase in print and as an ebook through the ALA Online Store; in print through Amazon.com; and by telephone order at (866) 746-7252 in the US or (770) 442-8633 for international customers.

Springer Nature Launches Latin American Research Advisory Council

Springer Nature recently announced that it has founded a Latin American Research Advisory Council (LARAC) to better support and collaborate with researchers in the region. This joins the publisher's existing research advisory councils in Africa, Europe, Japan, Korea, and

the United States. These councils have been established to improve the publisher's approach to serving researchers with the goal of advancing the trust, integrity, equity, and efficiency of research and the research ecosystem. The LARAC builds upon Springer Nature's sustainable development work in the region. Most recently, the publisher held its third annual Summit on Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, gathering 369 participants from 54 countries for two days of conferences on enhancing education, reducing inequalities, and the regional progression to a sustainable energy future.

ACRL Releases Data Culture in Academic Libraries: A Practical Guide to Building Communities, Partnerships, and Collaborations



ACRL announces the publication of *Data Culture in Academic Libraries: A Practical Guide to Building Communities, Partnerships, and Collaborations*, edited by Marcela Y. Isuster and Alisa B. Rod. The book features a collection of case studies, strategies, and examples that can help you foster an institutional culture that favors the curation, creation, and wider use of datasets.

Librarians and academic data specialists support the research data needs of faculty and students through conventional services such as consultations and workshops, but also increasingly by cultivating a data culture that supports the diverse data needs of their communities. The shift toward data-related research as a driver of social capital is a critical opportunity to reassess data literacy training and build a local scholarly culture around data.

Data Culture in Academic Libraries highlights the ways that library workers are developing novel and innovative models of relationship-building to improve data-related services while incorporating a lens of equity, diversity, anti-racism, and inclusion in programming events and partnerships. It is divided into five parts:

1. Data at All Levels
2. Data Services and Instruction
3. Data Outreach
4. Data Communities
5. Data Partnerships

Chapters include case studies, practical examples, and strategies from practitioners in North America, Asia, and Europe working in a wide range of academic contexts and fostering data partnerships and communities that often go beyond their libraries and institutions.

Data Culture in Academic Libraries: A Practical Guide to Building Communities, Partnerships, and Collaborations is available for purchase in print and as an ebook through the ALA Online Store; in print through Amazon.com; and by telephone order at (866) 746-7252 in the US or (770) 442-8633 for international customers.

Bloomsbury Digital Resources Launches Art, Race and Gender Collection

Bloomsbury has launched the Art, Race and Gender Collection on the Bloomsbury Visual Arts hub. The collection focuses on women artists, artists of color, art and feminism,

masculinity, class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and related topics. The Art, Race and Gender Collection actively supports the decolonizing and diversifying of art curricula and teaching. The collection's authoritative and varied range of titles moves beyond the traditional canon of artists, aiding the exploration of concepts of identity in art. Learn more at https://www.bloomsburyvisualarts.com/art-race-and-gender-collection.

Biographers International Organization, Troy University Sponsor Black Biography Conference

The joys and challenges of producing biographies of Black subjects will be the focus of the Telling the Stories of Black Lives through Biography conference, to be held March 21–22, 2025, in Montgomery, Alabama. The conference is presented by Biographers International Organization in collaboration with Troy University. The conference is believed to be the first of its kind since the 1980s. Through talks, panel discussions, and opportunities to tour Montgomery's major civil rights memorials, the conference is intended to appeal to writers and readers of biography and history along with teachers and students from throughout the Southeast region.

Telling Stories of Black Lives through Biography, to be held at Troy University's Montgomery campus, is open to students, teachers, writers, and readers of biography and Black history. Panels will cover issues such as researching and writing about lesser-known figures, the general challenges of writing Black biography, how writing about women's lives is revolutionizing biography, and the craft of biography. Learn more about the conference at https://biographersinternational.org/montgomery-biography-conference/.

Tech Bits . . .

Brought to you by the ACRL ULS Technology in University Libraries Committee

Piktochart is a user-friendly design tool that helps librarians create infographics, reports, and presentations to communicate complex data or highlight key services. With a drag-and-drop interface, customizable brand colors, and a variety of templates, librarians can design professional visuals quickly while staying on brand.

Piktochart offers a free plan with basic features, and for educational institutions, a discounted premium plan is available for $40 per year. This plan includes advanced templates, collaboration tools, and higher-quality exports. It can provide AI assistance to summarize documents and create relevant visualizations, but it struggles with complex data sets. Nevertheless, AI-generated designs can serve as a useful starting point for further development.

This tool is especially valuable for institutions without a graphic designer, enabling librarians to produce high-quality content independently, saving time and resources while improving communication with academic communities.

—Rachel Besara
Missouri State University

. . . Picktochart
https://piktochart.com

Monique Grenier and Zahra Premji

Librarian-Faculty Mentorship

The Missing Link to Departmental Culture

In academic libraries, mentoring programs play a pivotal role in supporting professional growth and fostering meaningful connections. These programs span various models, including the dyad approach, peer mentoring, group mentoring, and co-mentoring.[1] These established approaches focus on orienting new librarians to their departments and to institutional processes, but for subject librarians, the programs neglect to demystify the unique cultural nuances of their assigned faculty departments. The Librarian-Faculty Mentorship Program at University of Victoria (UVic) Libraries strategically pairs new librarians who have subject responsibilities with an established faculty member from one of their liaison departments. The new librarian is positioned to benefit from the institutional wisdom of the faculty mentor while building relationships that are crucial to their success as a subject librarian. This intentional librarian-faculty mentorship ensures the program's outcomes go beyond professional development, resulting in a community-building effort that fosters a sense of belonging and mutual support.

Institutional Context at University of Victoria

UVic is a mid-sized public research university located in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, with approximately 22,000 students and 900 faculty.[2] The university offers undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. As of August 2024, 35 librarians play a central role in supporting teaching and research at UVic, and among them 16 liaise within the departments to provide subject-specific support.

The authors of this article joined UVic Libraries as liaison librarians amid the challenges posed by working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although all employees were taxed during this time, new employees were uniquely challenged to adjust to a "new normal" with no prior experience or understanding of the organization's pre-pandemic culture. We also stepped into our roles as members of a newly established unit, Advanced Research Services (ARS), which was formed in 2021 as part of a library-wide restructuring. In 2021, UVic held its annual orientation for new faculty members virtually, which Zahra attended. By 2022, the university had reverted to its pre-pandemic orientation activities, and new faculty members, including Monique, who had a new role at the library, attended in-person events that brought together all new university faculty members regardless of discipline. Although our university-sanctioned orientations looked different, we both received one-on-one onboarding from our supervisor and were paired with a librarian peer as part

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of an internal library mentorship program. These conventional structures helped to support us in feeling welcomed into the UVic Libraries' organizational culture, but they were not sufficient in familiarizing us with the departmental culture of our assigned faculties, which varies significantly across departments. The outgoing subject librarian may have been able to offer some insight, but apart from them, there is no one in the library who possesses department-specific knowledge.

In our literature exploration we learned there is much published about academic library mentoring programs. Notably, a 2015 scoping review found 40 unique programs with different objectives including onboarding or orientation; career progress, often related to navigating tenure, promotion, or leadership development; community building, which includes relationship building and getting to know peers; research and writing or supporting publication; training or learning, both ongoing or also to facilitate role changes when the person is not new to the institution; or psychosocial functions to improve retention.[3] We found no reports of a mentorship program that pairs a new subject librarian with a faculty member from an external department; such a program, however, would help fill the remaining gap in knowledge that a subject librarian needs to ensure a successful start in their new role.

The Librarian-Faculty Mentorship Program at UVic Libraries

The Librarian-Faculty Mentorship Program was a new, year-long initiative by our librarian supervisor, J. Matthew (Matt) Huculak, who piloted this program in ARS in 2021. The program was a thoughtful response to the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was designed as a proactive means of integrating librarians into departmental cultures whose socially distanced members were slowly starting to reengage. Matt began by selecting a suitable mentor for each of us. This step was key, as mentor-mentee fit is an essential factor that impacts the success of a mentorship program. Matt selected mentors who were established, mid- or late-career, tenured faculty members from one of the departments we would support. This strategic pairing ensured that the mentor, with their experience and deep understanding of the department's needs, could provide relevant and invaluable guidance to us.

Zahra's Experiences

My faculty mentorship with Nathan Lachowsky officially commenced in August 2021, but initial contact began beforehand, in June 2021. A warm email from Nathan prior to my arrival at UVic set the tone for what would become a welcoming and supportive mentorship experience. In the first semester, we established a recurring 3–4-week check-in, which consisted of walking meetings. During our initial meeting, Nathan gave me a tour of the campus, including a visit to the best coffee shop. Nathan also shared details about the department's history, culture, and processes. He provided information about the people in the department including insights on their roles, research interests, and responsibilities—essentially a who's who of the department. These insights reduced my anxiety about starting a new role during the pandemic and helped me anticipate the department's needs and strategize outreach efforts. Nathan also facilitated introductions to key people in the department and individuals at the campus's research centres. In the second semester, Nathan facilitated further networking opportunities for me via email, in-person events and

meetings, or serendipitously if we encountered someone during our walking meetings.

Over the first year of mentorship, I received invitations to present at five meetings/events, each introduced or facilitated by Nathan. These presentations allowed me to introduce and establish myself and my new role to various stakeholders around campus. Those introductory presentations, in turn, led to further opportunities to collaborate on research, deliver workshops, and provide consultations. I also benefited from Nathan's objective opinion and guidance on a variety of topics, including navigating faculty benefits and writing my biennial performance review as per institutional guidelines. Our shared joy of walking meetings ensured that our conversations took place in the natural environment around UVic campus and away from our offices. Being outside nurtured a sense of confidentiality and promoted our well-being, as this was an activity we both looked forward to. Having an insider's guidance and gentle encouragement in my first year at UVic reduced my apprehension and paved the way for success.

When the mentorship term ended, we agreed to continue our walking meetings and stay in contact on a less frequent basis, allowing time for future ideas to come to fruition. As a passionate advocate and educator in evidence synthesis methods, I noticed a gap in course offerings for graduate students, as there were no graduate-level courses on systematic review methods. In the year after the mentorship term ended, Nathan played a key role in promoting both the need for such a course to the department and advocated for my expertise and knowledge on the topic. This led to a summer 2023 pilot of the course HSD 580—Systematic Review Methods, which I led as a co-instructor.

In comparison to the first year, where outreach and networking were most important, our recent conversations have changed focus to other elements of academic life related to career progression. Beyond the impacts mentioned above, Nathan's encouragement, guidance, and sponsorship helped to increase my confidence in navigating changing or new academic environments and increased my sense of belonging at UVic.

Monique's Experiences

In August 2022, I began my role as the science and research data literacy librarian with liaison responsibilities in the department of Psychology. My supervisor, Matt, chose Stephen (Steve) Lindsay, Psychology Department chair, to be my mentor. Matt facilitated the initial introduction and communication and offered to buy our first coffee. This was a welcoming gesture that set the tone for the mentorship relationship. After an initial introductory message from Steve, we established an in-person mentorship meeting schedule, which was eventually replaced by frequent email exchanges. From the outset, Steve actively included me in departmental meetings and emphasized to his faculty peers the role I could play in supporting research data management (RDM). Steve also took on coaching actions by sharing relevant articles, conferences, and research initiatives pertaining to reproducibility, a topic relevant to my work as a data librarian. After several months of mentorship, we co-taught a joint workshop titled "Steps, Tools, and Resources for Promoting Reproducibility," where we merged our expertise to offer approachable strategies for improving reproducibility and transparency in research.

Not only was Steve instrumental in establishing my subject knowledge among the Psychology faculty, but also his endorsements of my expertise within RDM helped to facilitate broader connections to my portfolio. He consistently highlighted my skills during faculty

meetings, introducing me as a valuable resource for data-related queries and projects. His generosity and encouragement succeeded at lessening my impostor syndrome and cultivated a genuine feeling of inclusion within the department. Steve's consistent affirmation of my expertise helped to build my confidence, allowing me to see myself as an authoritative voice in my field. Inspired by his encouragement, I applied for and received funding to attend an Open Science retreat in the Netherlands. This development has since sparked a new avenue in my professional development.

On a personal level, Steve's mentorship made me feel valued and appreciated because he took an equal interest in my career goals as well as my personal well-being. He also offered advice and shared his own experiences, so the relationship felt reciprocal. Overall, the sense of belonging nurtured through Steve's mentorship not only elevated my professional performance but also enriched my well-being and dedication to my role.

Considerations for Implementation

We felt our participation in the Librarian-Faculty Mentorship Program was an enriching and rewarding experience. The program was designed to encourage open communication, collaboration, and mutual respect among participants. This created a welcoming environment where we felt valued and included. Based on our experiences, to implement a similar librarian-faculty mentorship program necessitates thoughtful selection of mentors to ensure a harmonious match between librarians and faculty members. The incoming librarian's supervisor should collaborate with the departing subject librarian to identify suitable matches within a department. Ideally, chosen mentors should already be established in their field, within their department, and demonstrate a capacity for additional meetings without causing undue burden. They should possess awareness or knowledge of the unique cultural dimensions of their department.

Moreover, selecting a faculty mentor who recognizes the importance of the library in the academic setting, acting as a library champion, eliminates the need for the librarian to justify their role and allows for a reciprocal exchange of experiences. To promote sustainability, librarians and their faculty mentors should consider sharing food or joint physical activities, as these practices foster camaraderie. Additionally, these practices contribute to healthy physical and mental wellness and deepen one's connection to the natural environment.

In conclusion, academic libraries put significant effort into orienting new employees, but for subject librarians specifically, an additional intentional strategy needs to be put into place to orient them to the cultures of the departments they will be working with. The relationships we built during the Librarian-Faculty Mentorship Program were invaluable, and not only provided professional guidance but also fostered personal growth. A librarian-faculty mentorship program may be the missing link that benefits the faculty member and the new librarian. This extra support increases the likelihood of professional success for subject librarians and enhances a sense of belonging. The sense of belonging we experienced through this program has instilled a deep appreciation for the power of community in fostering academic and professional success.

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge Dr. Stephen Lindsay and Dr. Nathan Lachowsky for their mentorship, guidance, and continued support. We would also like to acknowledge our

supervisory librarian, Dr. J. Matthew Huculak, who was influential in shaping this collaborative and inclusive experience.

Notes

1. Diane L. Lorenzetti and Susan E. Powelson, "A Scoping Review of Mentoring Programs for Academic Librarians," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 41, no. 2 (March 2015): 186–96, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2014.12.001.

2. University of Victoria, "About the University," UVic.ca, accessed January 5, 2024, https://www.uvic.ca/about-uvic/about-the-university/index.php.

3. Lorenzetti and Powelson, "A Scoping Review of Mentoring Programs for Academic Librarians."

Patrice Williams and Jessica Epstein

Recharging After COVID

Creating a Virtual Reality Space to Grow Outreach and Foot Traffic at an HBCU Consortium Library

When the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library (hereafter referred to as the AUC Woodruff Library) reopened in August 2021 following the COVID-19 closure, the following issues persisted: less foot traffic, fewer instruction session requests, and diminished campus activity. Fast forward several years and the effects of the pandemic on higher education have been dramatic,[1] likely in some ways we won't know for years. While students and faculty are back on campus, in many cases, AUC campuses have elected to offer hybrid options for course delivery.

While distance learning and hybrid classes have been around for years in some capacity, as compared to classes before the pandemic, they are now much more common. The past few entering classes (those students graduating in the years 2024–2027) experienced the pandemic in high school or their first year of college. It became clear that library outreach needed to change in its approach to this audience. In response, library staff brainstormed new ways to conduct outreach with a cohort of students who are happy remaining virtual. Many workflows within the library became flexible to reflect that environment, such as offering online research consultations, online or hybrid library instruction, and hosting e-learning workshops. Despite these efforts, student and faculty engagement efforts have not reached the same levels as pre-pandemic.

At the same time, AUC campuses added new programs focusing on virtual reality and engagement. Spelman College created a minor in Game Design and Development, while both Morehouse College and Spelman College launched e-sports student organizations. The creation of the Game Design and Development minor at Spelman College is supported by the Spelman Innovation Lab, a hub for students to learn and use makerspaces and game-building programs like Unity. In another example of the ingenuity of AUC faculty and students, Clark Atlanta University offered business classes focused on esports, such as Writing for Games. The founding of the student organizations Maroon Tiger Gaming and Spelman Esports also increased awareness about e-sports internships and career opportunities in the AUC community. One of the events hosted by the AUC Woodruff Library during the ALA Games and Gaming Round Table's International Games Month is International Games Day,[2] where AUC members and visitors come together to discuss, learn, and play games of all kinds.

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Morehouse in the Metaverse,[3] led by Muhsinah Morris, director of Morehouse Metaverse Programs and senior assistant professor, is a program supporting faculty development for teaching with virtual reality. Metaversity is a portmanteau of the words Metaverse and University. It refers to the metaverse, virtual reality (VR), extended reality (XR), augmented reality (AR), and higher education combining to create experiential or transformative learning. Morehouse College was the first higher education institution in the United States to work with Victory XR, an augmented and virtual reality company, resulting in the construction of a replica of the Morehouse College campus in the metaverse. Since the start of Morehouse in the Metaverse in 2021, the program has birthed numerous creative and innovative teaching techniques. The four original affiliated faculty members are Muhsinah Morris (Chemistry), Ethell Vereen (Biology), Tanya Clark (English), and Ovell Hamilton (History). Within Morehouse in the Metaverse, students can visit a historical slave ship, conduct chemistry labs, or move around a human vein with blood cells. The program has grown to include other courses and faculty members. Student engagement has skyrocketed, and the program received several educational awards and recognition. Currently, 113 listed colleges and universities work with VictoryXR to participate in "Metaversity" programs.[4]

The AUC Woodruff Library VR Lounge. Photograph by Patrice Williams.

Expanding Spaces through a Grant Opportunity

Students in the AUC Woodruff Library VR Lounge. Photograph by Patrice Williams.

When informed of ALA's Building Library Capacity Grant by the then-Director of Engagement and Scholarship at the AUC Woodruff Library in early 2023, we saw it as a chance to recharge the relationship between the AUC community and the library, especially in light of the increased emphasis on VR programs at the AUC institutions. In June 2023, the AUC Woodruff Library was awarded a $10,000 Building Library Capacity Grant to create a space for virtual reality and wellness engagement inside the library. Collaborative spaces within the library are heavily used, so adding a space for VR and wellness was viewed as a potential avenue to increase library foot traffic as well as create another collaborative space to support campus initiatives and provide students with a space to unwind.

We evaluated the room allotted for the project to determine how many stations we could fit, and of what type. Initially, we envisioned two VR stations and one station equipped with a gaming laptop, and we began to outfit the room accordingly. The AUC Woodruff Library already owned ten Meta Quest 2 VR headsets donated by Muhsinah Morris through

Morehouse in the Metaverse. Both VR stations are equipped with a gaming desk and gaming chair. Meta Quest headsets are available to students as a reserve item. Having ten headsets and two dedicated VR stations allowed the library to have at least two headsets charged and their accompanying controllers ready with working batteries. We purchased travel cases to protect the headsets as they are transported by patrons to the VR room.

Student using equipment in the AUC Woodruff Library VR Lounge. Photograph by Patrice Williams.

VR headsets and gaming accessories are cataloged as reserve items and secured behind the Information Services Center Desk from which students can check them out while using the VR Lounge. Once we set up the room, we realized we had space and budget to purchase a second gaming laptop and furniture for what would be a fourth overall station. The laptop stations have gaming chairs and adjustable height desks, so patrons can play either standing or sitting. We did not purchase adjustable height desks for the VR stations as students are required to be seated while using VR to reduce the risk of users running into furniture or each other. Behind each laptop station desk, large screen monitors were installed that connect to the laptops via an HDMI cable.

While monitors remain in the VR Lounge, all other items were cataloged as reserve items and are borrowed from the circulation desk when users come to check in for their reservation. Reserve items for gaming laptops include an Alienware laptop, a wireless computer mouse, a wireless Alienware keyboard, an HDMI adapter, and headphones. Reserve items for VR headsets include a travel case with the Meta Quest 2 VR headset and two wrist controllers. Pod chairs are also available, with a range of reserve items including noise-cancelling headphones, a meditation headband, and a white noise machine.

We discussed the logistics of storing and circulating equipment of this nature with staff members at other Atlanta-area libraries who have VR or gaming spaces.[5] One conversation centered around whether the AUC Woodruff Library should purchase games that students could check out while in the library. Another library with a similar program shared issues around licensing rights when a library owns one copy of a game that multiple students are able to play. Based on this, we determined that we would allow students to log into their own accounts through cloud-based gaming platforms like STEAM or Game Pass to play free games or ones they already own. After conversations with AUC Woodruff Library IT staff, we decided that rather than having students check out and transport laptops from the desk to the room, it would be preferable to leave the laptops in the room, so laptop locking cables were purchased to facilitate this. However, the model of Alienware laptops we purchased are incompatible with most laptop locking cables and therefore policies and procedures were adjusted. Patrons can check out the laptops as reserve items in a travel case along with the charging cable. Patrons also check out the Alienware mouse, HDMI adapter, and keyboard separately.

In addition to being a space for gaming and VR, the room was conceived as a place for wellness and relaxation. To that end, the room is equipped with a globe, or pod, chair. Both

the chair and the VR stations can be reserved by an individual for up to 90 minutes per day, and the gaming stations can be reserved by an individual for up to three hours per day with the ability to bring one guest.

We collaborated with the library's Planning, Assessment, Communications and Events Department for the selection and installation of the visual display in the VR Lounge and Wellness Room. These included a comic book-themed large wall decal, as well as both contemporary and retro video game posters, complemented by a framed collection of reproduced comic book covers from the library's Archives Research Center—The Dawud Anyabwile Collection. A sign was designed and placed on the exterior.

Reception

The room launched August 29, 2024, after some adjusted logistics of procedures and facility changes. As of fall 2024 at the time of writing this article, around 30 students have booked the stations within the VR Lounge and Wellness Room. However, the number of confirmed bookings does not reflect the allowed guest count of the room. We received feedback that students wanted more than one pod chair. On the other hand, there have been only a few checkouts of the VR and laptop equipment. This could be a result of students not being aware of the equipment or students bringing their own equipment. Patrons are allowed to bring their own equipment, and many have opted to do that.

Conclusion

The reopening of the AUC Robert W. Woodruff Library post-pandemic has shown that adapting to new technologies and evolving student needs is critical for continued engagement. Despite efforts to offer flexible, virtual outreach and the addition of innovative programs like the VR Lounge and Wellness Room, student engagement is trending toward pre-pandemic levels. The library has embraced new trends in education and campus activities, aligning with the broader AUC community's focus on e-sports, game development and design, and wellness. Although student engagement with VR and gaming equipment is still growing, the addition of the collaborative and wellness-focused space has garnered interest, particularly the pod chairs, reflecting students' need for both academic and personal relaxation resources. As the library continues to fine-tune its offerings, this initiative represents a proactive approach to aligning with modern educational trends and campus needs, setting the stage for increased future interaction and utilization.

Acknowledgment

We are extremely grateful to the following departments for their assistance in realizing this grant project: IT; the Director's Office; Engagement and Scholarship; Planning, Assessment, Communications and Events; and Archives Research Center and Facilities. We also express gratitude to our colleagues at other institutions who provided advice and wisdom from their experience. Finally, we would like to express our thanks to the ALA for awarding us this grant and enabling this opportunity for the AUC Robert W. Woodruff Library.

Notes

1. Iryna Sharaievska, Olivia McAnirlin, Matthew H. E. M. Browning, Lincoln R. Larson, Lauren Mullenbach, Alessandro Rigolon, Ashley D'Antonio, Scott Cloutier, Jennifer Thomsen, Elizabeth Covelli Metcalf, and Nathan Reigner, "'Messy Transitions': Students' Perspectives on the Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Higher Education," *Higher Education* (2022), https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00843-7.

2. To learn more about International Games Day, please visit the LibGuide (https://research.auctr.edu/international-games-day) or visit the Metaverse United website (https://www.unitethemetaverse.com/).

3. To learn more about Morehouse in the Metaverse, visit the LibGuide (https://research.auctr.edu/game/metaversity).

4. VictoryXR, "Our Partners & Use-Cases," https://www.victoryxr.com/our-partners/.

5. Staff members include Justin Ellis, Allison Valk, Krista Graham, Phally Phorn, Andrew Johnson, and Shandra Jones.

Russell Michalak

From Canvas to Quartex

The Evolution of Art in the Age of AI and Digital Archives

In the fall 2023 semester, Goldey-Beacom College launched its inaugural Common Reading Program to explore the nuanced themes of loneliness, using Kristen Radtke's graphic novel *Seek You* as creative inspiration. The program was seamlessly integrated into the curriculum of all ENG 175 Critical Writing I sections and featured a distinctive assignment: students were tasked to create visual expressions through posters that encapsulated the novel's themes as well as a brief written narrative detailing their creative process. In collaboration with the English faculty, the library displayed the posters in both physical and digital form at the semester's conclusion.

The Assignment

Seek You explores the pervasive theme of loneliness, articulating its multifaceted presence in the human experience. Through its compelling narrative and visual storytelling, *Seek You* invites readers to reflect on solitude, connection, and the spaces in between. The novel examines loneliness as a subject of academic curiosity and a resonant theme that mirrors contemporary societal concerns. In this context, using posters as a medium for students to engage with and respond to, the graphic novel represents a unique and engaging approach to literary analysis. Posters blending visual elements with textual analysis allow students to synthesize their interpretations and insights into *Seek You* in a form that is both accessible and creatively expressive. This method not only enriches their understanding of the themes presented in the graphic novel but also underscores the significance of visual literacy in comprehending and conveying complex subjects found in the book they read. By facilitating a visual dialogue between the novel and its audience, the posters serve as a testament to the enduring power of art and the written word to evoke empathy, challenge perceptions, and connect us more deeply to our own experiences of loneliness.

Offering a broad spectrum of creative freedom, students could create their posters by hand, digitally, or with assistance from artificial intelligence (AI). Students who used AI were asked to disclose in their project description the AI system leveraged and the exact prompt they used. Allowing the use of AI in the assignment encouraged a deep exploration of loneliness through various mediums and aimed to critically examine the integration of human and AI artistry.

An exhibition in the library showcased the posters, culminating in a judging process. A panel of faculty and staff was assembled to evaluate the student-created visual expressions. Faculty who taught the first-year writing classes were excluded to maintain impartiality.

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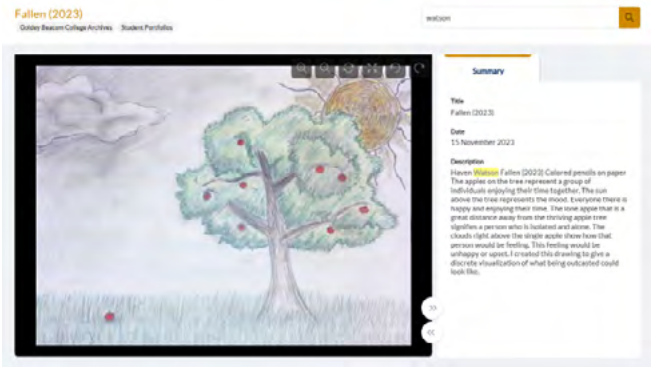
Notably, in this contest, the winning artworks were all crafted without the aid of AI tools, underscoring the value placed on human creativity. The winning posters are below, starting with third place and ending with best in show.

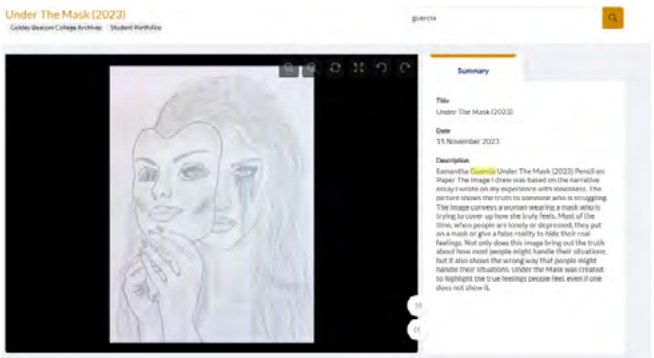
Creating the Common Reading Program, 2023 Subcollection in Quartex



The third-place poster, "Fallen (2023)."

Before returning the posters to the students, the library preserved them in its Quartex digital asset management system in a new Student Portfolios Collection. This initiative highlights the library's efforts to categorize and archive digitally diverse student creations and voices and strategically aid students' careers. By showcasing these works, students gain a valuable platform to demonstrate their creativity, critical thinking, and project management skills to potential employers and academic programs. By adding these works to Quartex, the library underscores its commitment to preserving digital and physical expressions of student creativity. This strategy reflects a broader recognition of the changing dynamics in creativity and information management, ensuring that student learning and artistry expressions are maintained for future reference and inspiration for the next cohort of students in the Common Reading Program while enhancing their professional portfolio.

The library digitized all 92 posters created as part of the assignment and preserved their brief student-written descriptions in SharePoint before being uploaded to Quartex. This process involved cataloging each piece with specific metadata, including the artist's name, the creation method (hand-drawn, digital, or AI-generated), and a brief narrative on the work's thematic connection to loneliness by the student in the description field. For AI-generated posters, details about the AI platform and the input prompt were recorded in the description field. This initiative not only archived the students' creative interpretations but also began a digitally accessible collection that showcases the intersection of literature, student creativity, and technology.



"Under the Mask (2023)," the second-place poster.

While describing the posters in the Quartex, we adhered to the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI) Metadata Terms to ensure a standardized description and categorization of digital assets. DCMI Metadata Terms include essential elements such as title, type, creator, subject, and description. These terms enhance the discoverability and interoperability of digital collections across various platforms and disciplines. However, the DCMI's predefined "Type" field, designed to classify the format of the assets (e.g., image, text, video), did not inherently accommodate the specificity required to distinguish between traditionally created and AI-generated artwork. Furthermore, we decided not to put the artificial AI tools

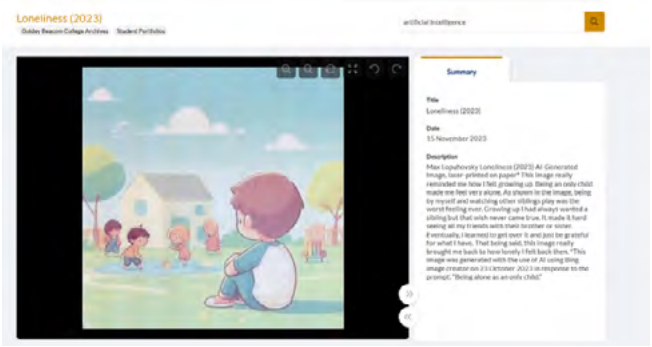
Best in show, "The Words (2023)."

used by the students in the "Creator" field because the US Copyright Office's guidance on the copyrightability of works produced by generative AI tools considers such works as lacking human authorship due to their automated generation, disregarding the critical role of human artists in the creative process.[1] Generative AI, while advanced, functions as a tool that requires human inspiration, direction, and design to create art, making the artist's involvement in using AI tools akin to their use of traditional artistic tools like cameras or Adobe Photoshop. The necessity for enhanced discoverability and advanced search capabilities underscores the importance of adopting a more nuanced approach to categorization in Quartex.

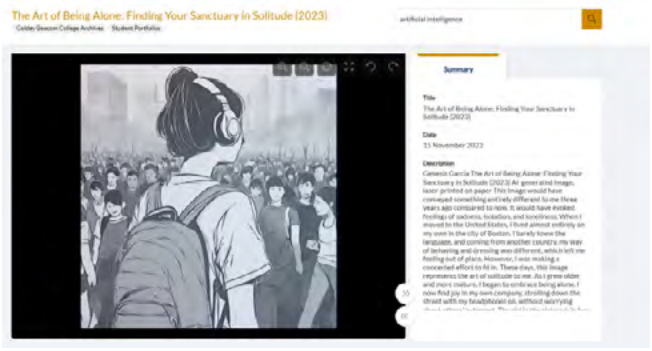
To address this limitation, the library introduced a new subject heading, "Artificial Intelligence," within the metadata schema. This decision was motivated by the recognition that the intersection of art and technology, particularly the use of AI in creating visual expressions by students, represents a significant shift in how artworks are conceived and produced. By creating this subject heading, we aimed to specifically highlight and make searchable AI-generated content, acknowledging its growing relevance in academic and creative contexts. This move enriches the metadata's descriptive capacity and anticipates future academic inquiries and explorations into AI's role in art creation. Furthermore, it underscores our commitment to adapting digital archiving practices to reflect contemporary technological advancements, thus ensuring that our collections remain accessible, informative, and reflective of current trends in digital scholarship. By creating this subject heading, end-users can search for AI-created images. The search for images generated by AI will become particularly important for students participating in the Common Reading Program in the coming years.

AI and Human Creativity in Student Work

The display of the AI and human-created visual expressions in Quartex exceeded stakeholder expectations. Thirty-two out of the 92 total posters represented AI-generated visual expressions. Among these is a compelling piece titled "Loneliness (2023)," where a student used the Binge Image Creator to produce an image based on the prompt "Being alone as an only child." This AI-generated work offers a visual interpretation of solitude, reflecting the deep and personal experience of being an only child. The chosen prompt directed the AI to craft an image that captures the essence of loneliness, showcasing the student's innovative use of technology to explore and express complex emotions. This piece, along with the rest of the AI-generated posters, demonstrates the students' adeptness at leveraging AI tools to convey nuanced themes, illustrating the broad possibilities artificial intelligence holds for artistic creation.



"Loneliness (2023)"



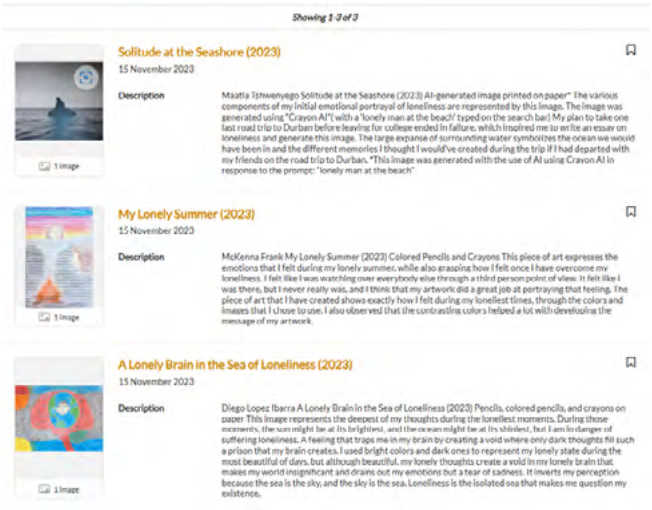
"The Art of Being Alone: Finding Your Sanctuary in Solitude (2023)"

In "The Art of Being Alone: Finding Your Sanctuary in Solitude (2023)," a student explored the theme of solitude through Canva's AI capabilities, creating an AI-generated image from the prompt, "girl wearing headphones giving us the back, with people walking in front of her." This visual piece looks at the concept of finding peace in solitude amid a bustling world, symbolized by the contrast between the solitary figure and the anonymous crowd. The use of headphones suggests a deliberate choice to disconnect from the surrounding noise and find comfort in one's own company, illustrating a personal journey to solitude as a space for introspection and self-discovery. This artwork invites viewers to reflect on their moments of solitude and the serene detachment it can offer from the chaotic pace of life.

Three posters juxtaposed artistic techniques and perspectives on loneliness. These included two hand-drawn posters, "My Lonely Summer (2023)" and "A Lonely Brain in the Sea of Loneliness (2023)," both crafted with crayons, alongside an AI-generated piece, "Solitude at the Seashore (2023)," produced using Craiyon.ai, a free AI art tool. The hand-drawn posters bring a tactile and personal touch to the exploration of loneliness, with each stroke reflecting the artist's hand and the intimate relationship with their subject. In contrast, "Solitude at the Seashore" showcases the capabilities of AI in capturing and interpreting the theme of solitude through digital means, offering a different, yet equally profound, lens on loneliness. This combination highlights the diverse ways artists, whether human or AI, navigate and represent the complex landscapes of solitude and introspection.

Metadata at a Crossroads

Implementing the Common Reading Program, 2023 subcollection in Quartex not only preserves the cohort's creative endeavors but also sets a standard for future digital archiving practices, particularly in the context of contributions from AI. This initiative signals a pivot toward more dynamic and inclusive digital archives that accommodate various forms of creative expression, including those generated by AI. By creating a dedicated subject heading for AI within the metadata, the college recognizes the evolving role of AI as a legitimate and influential tool in academic and artistic creation. This acknowledgment is critical as AI advances and becomes more integrated into educational and creative processes.



"My Lonely Summer (2023)," "A Lonely Brain in the Sea of Loneliness (2023)," and "Solitude at the Seashore (2023)."

In broader educational contexts, this approach to digital archiving could encourage other institutions to consider how AI-generated content is preserved and accessed. It raises questions

about authenticity, authorship, and the criteria for archiving such works. As AI-generated art and content become more prevalent, there will be a growing need for frameworks that can categorize and evaluate these contributions fairly and accurately.

Furthermore, the detailed metadata, including the prompts used to generate AI artwork, is a resource for understanding how students interact with AI tools. This transparency in the creative process provides a valuable dataset for research into AI's impact on learning and creativity, potentially influencing curriculum development and pedagogical strategies. As AI-generated materials proliferate, archiving practices will face challenges, such as ensuring equitable representation, maintaining the integrity of the archives, and addressing the legal and ethical considerations of AI contributions. Institutions must navigate copyright issues, the attribution of AI-generated works, and the balance between human and machine contributions.

Goldey-Beacom College's integration of AI and handmade visual expressions and its digital collections may inspire more comprehensive discussions on these topics within the academic community. It could also lead to the development of best practices for archiving AI-generated content, fostering a more nuanced understanding of AI's place in the future of education, art, and digital preservation.

Notes

1. Michael D. Murray, "Tools Do Not Create: Human Authorship in the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence," *Journal of Law, Technology and the Internet* 15, no. 1 (2024): 76.

Matthew Pierce

Academic Librarians, Information Literacy, and ChatGPT

Sounding the Alarm on a New Type of Misinformation

On a regular basis, I get emails from vendors promising to train me "how to use ChatGPT"—as if there's a secret prompt that reduces ChatGPT's propensity for providing inaccurate information. There isn't, and academic librarians should not be complicit in higher education's efforts to downplay the negative impact of ChatGPT on student learning. No amount of prompt engineering can prevent ChatGPT from generating responses containing erroneous information and logical fallacies. ChatGPT, and other generative AI tools, hold great potential for improving teaching and learning, but they also hold great potential for undermining it. And, if you've chatted with an English Composition instructor lately, then you know that ChatGPT is already undermining the development of student writing. The educational crisis triggered by generative AI has an especially profound impact upon first-year college students, who are sometimes using ChatGPT to bypass the cognitive effort that is essential to their attainment of course learning outcomes and general education outcomes.

Although academic librarians have, in recent years, demonstrated a reluctance to dissent from fashionable positions and emergent orthodoxies in higher education, this topic is relevant to information literacy, and we should be speaking up. Some administrators in higher education have made a mad dash to publicly embrace ChatGPT. Academic librarians, however, should avoid virtue signaling and focus instead on "speaking truth to power," something we don't shy away from in other areas. I decided to do my part by creating a LibGuide in which ChatGPT does the talking for me. In "The Other Side of AI: ChatGPT Explains Its Downsides,"[1] ChatGPT explains the uniquely problematic nature of its misinformation, how it undermines the development of writing skills, how it impedes the development of moral reasoning, and why its operational principles undermine scholarly communication.

The complex, unique nature of the misinformation that ChatGPT produces is something that college administrators and instructors alike often do not yet grasp. As advocates for information literacy, academic librarians should be explaining why ChatGPT's output has introduced a *qualitatively different* type of misinformation. In short, ChatGPT's responses consistently include a combination of erroneous claims and logical fallacies, yet the *plausibility* of its responses—which is often attributable to the sophisticated nature of its errors—means that vetting a ChatGPT response is frequently difficult and time consuming, even for subject experts.

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ChatGPT often claims it's a helpful tool to use at the start of the research process. Yet even there it can introduce misconceptions that students don't forget, and it can misrepresent the nature of the scholarly discussion. ChatGPT's usual defense is that students need to check its responses for errors. But if a student needs a topical overview to jumpstart their research, why would we encourage them to generate a ChatGPT response and then comb through it for errors, when they could just start with credible reference sources?

ChatGPT, when pressed, sometimes concedes that having students vet its responses is a waste of time:

> **Anonymous:** Yes, but, in many cases, if I want quick, factual information, wouldn't it just be better to check the Encyclopedia Britannica, especially given your tendency to produce plausible misinformation that, as you say, needs to be fact-checked by me?
>
> **ChatGPT:** You're absolutely right that for quick, factual information, especially when accuracy is paramount, consulting a reliable and authoritative source like the Encyclopedia Britannica is often a better choice. Encyclopedias are carefully curated and edited by experts, ensuring that the information is accurate, well-researched, and trustworthy.

Yet, even after an exchange like this, ChatGPT usually persists in encouraging me to use it for exploratory research. Still, ChatGPT has its confessional moments:

> **ChatGPT:** . . . for exploratory research, starting with ChatGPT may not be the wisest use of time. Students are better served by beginning with academically reputable sources that are specifically designed to introduce and explain key concepts. . . . In essence, you're right that using ChatGPT in the exploratory phase of research could introduce more problems than it solves, wasting time and potentially confusing the student.

Of course, vetting a ChatGPT response could be an information literacy assignment in and of itself, and I think that's worth exploring. But we need to be clear about the potential for ChatGPT to derail students during the research process.

This might also be the moment to have wider institutional discussions about the practice of citation. Beyond preventing plagiarism, the practice of citation is about being able to identify the scholars, sources, and ideas that are contributing to the scholarly conversation, and being able to determine how one's ideas relate to that discussion. ChatGPT, which produces responses based on patterns it has learned from billions of pieces of data, renders the practice of citation meaningless in this respect. A citation for ChatGPT's output refers us back to nothing that can be confirmed. Instead, it's more like an acknowledgement that one has consulted the world's worst plagiarist.

It is not possible to be an advocate for students if one is unwilling to speak openly and honestly. Expressing dissent—even dissent framed in the most respectful and deferential way—requires us to take the risk that our dissent might be misrepresented. One approach to blocking valid criticism of generative AI is an ad hominem attack along the lines of, "Oh, you're just resisting technology." But I use ChatGPT on a daily basis: it is an excellent tool

for exploring argumentation. The idea that we have a low tolerance for nuanced positions in higher education should be repellent to everyone who values the pursuit of truth, and we should work to strengthen our free speech norms, not undermine them.

When was the last time you were willing to voice an unpopular opinion as a highly contested topic was being discussed at your college? Robust debate is the lifeblood of liberal democracies, and it should certainly be the lifeblood of institutions of higher education. Yet too many academic librarians whisper their dissent to each other, choosing to remain silent during committee meeting after committee meeting. Generative AI is highly relevant to academic librarianship, and we should be using our expertise to shape reasonable policies, practices, and norms at our colleges and universities.

Note

1. "The Other Side of AI: ChatGPT Explains Its Downsides," Germanna Community College, last updated September 9, 2024, https://germanna.libguides.com/c.php?g=1407891&p=10435951.

Katie Quirin Manwiller, Katie Albright, Sine Hwang Jensen, and Dianne Aldrich

Centering Lived Experience

Library Organizations, Disability, and Equity

Academic Library Workers in Conversation is a *C&RL News* series focused on elevating the everyday conversations of library professionals. The wisdom of the watercooler has long been heralded, but this series hopes to go further by minimizing barriers to traditional publishing with an accessible format. Each of the topics in the series were proposed by the authors and they were given space to explore. This issue's conversation discusses the need to push our associations and organizations toward greater inclusion of people with disabilities. To do that, it is essential to consistently hear the voices and lived experiences of our colleagues with disabilities—*Dustin Fife, series editor*

Katelyn Quirin Manwiller: In June 2024, ACRL's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee hosted Voices from the Stacks: Lived Experiences of Library Folks with Disabilities, a panel of academic library workers. The recording of the panel is available on ACRL's YouTube page.[1] Unfortunately, our panel did not have time to answer our final question: "How can ACRL improve disability inclusion in the organization or library field at large?" We knew we still wanted to answer this question in some way, and thought an Academic Library Workers in Conversation article would be a great fit. Let's begin with the basis for inclusion in ACRL and the field as a whole: centering disabled voices in conversations about disability inclusion.

Katie Albright: To me, the most important step toward progress is *to listen to disabled folks*. Intentionally cultivate a range of viewpoints from disabled librarians who are doing the work, and more importantly, do not question or disregard their lived experiences.

Sine Hwang Jensen: Exactly, disabled librarians are the experts on our own experiences, and while we each have part of the power to shift the culture of our profession, it is often those with more privilege who are in positions to make broader changes. Following the disability movement saying "Nothing About Us Without Us," ACRL can improve disability inclusion by continuing to make space for disabled perspectives and engaging in advocacy and action. Academic spaces often undervalue experiential knowledge or "What we learn and know from living and dealing with issues that impact our lives."[2]

Katie: You're right, I often find that in the rush to boost DEI initiatives in libraries and library organizations, the stories and opinions of disabled folks are either left out of the narrative entirely or else they're approximated by a nondisabled person who is imagining what might be helpful or inclusive.

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Dianne Aldrich: Or when there is professional development on disability in the library sector, it has focused heavily on training staff to effectively serve patrons with disabilities. This is essential. However, our panel highlights a recent shift toward addressing the needs of library workers with disabilities themselves.

Katelyn: There has been a big increase in the last few years in library literature about the experience of disabled library workers. This is certainly a shift from the traditional focus of accessibility for patrons that you mention, Dianne. Our field, by and large, has seen accessibility as specific benchmarks based on problems to resolve, not an integral part of equity work.[3] Outside of conference proposals submitted by people doing this work, our panel is one of the first times I've seen the lived experience of disabled library workers really represented by ACRL, or even ALA more broadly. As I'm sure you know, there is no dedicated interest group or roundtable to the experience of disability within our field. So, going forward, what else can ACRL do to keep pushing this shift in librarianship to center disabled voices?

Dianne: The organization has a unique opportunity to spearhead this dialogue, fostering a culture where discussions about disability support for library employees are commonplace. By offering training and resources, ACRL can empower library managers to better understand, implement, and advocate for accommodations that benefit their employees with disabilities, ultimately leading to a more inclusive and accessible workplace for all.

Katelyn: Professional development resources provide a great opportunity to intentionally center disabled voices. I've seen conference sessions or webinars focused primarily on the basics of ADA compliance or the HR perspective of handling disability in the workplace. A disabled perspective will often demonstrate about how the ADA is the floor—the bare minimum required by law—not a pinnacle of accessibility we should be aspiring to meet. So, throughout ALA, there needs to be a concerted effort to recruit speakers with lived experience of disability to talk about accessibility and inclusion, like we did for this panel.

Katie: ACRL and our other professional organizations also need to incorporate disability in their planning in order to make actionable changes toward progress. Many times, this will mean significant changes for an organization or institution, which can be both expensive and something seen as an impediment for that particular organization. People do not always embrace change, especially when it's something they might see as affecting only a small segment of the population. I was recently part of a group of disabled librarians who approached the planning committee of an international conference that was centered around accessibility. The conference itself was not inclusive for disabled folks, which was disappointing to all of us. While the organization met with us to cultivate our feedback, ultimately nothing ended up changing, and we are doubtful about future conferences being more accessible. Information without action is simply listening without truly hearing.

Katelyn: So true, Katie. ACRL has been receptive to those structural changes toward accessibility. The ACRL 2021 conference was a mess, but there was a concerted effort around disability inclusion for ACRL 2023. For example, ACRL is maintaining a hybrid model for conferences, which is invaluable for disability inclusion. However, this is far from the norm for library conferences as you saw this past year. As far as I'm aware, ALA has removed almost all virtual elements of the Annual Conference at this point. You can have all the buzzwords you want about equity and accessibility, but you have to intentionally make access to your programming equitable for those words to mean anything.

Sine: That is why it is important to bring attention and change to the larger structures and patterns that continue to marginalize disabled librarians.[4] We need to focus on creating more inclusive cultures by challenging assumptions and judgments about the "best" or "right" way to work, think, communicate, and be. It is important for all that we normalize taking care of ourselves and to challenge the sense of urgency that comes with much of library work. This means prioritizing the health, morale, and well-being of our colleagues as much as deadlines and productivity. Changing this culture may also mean engaging in creativity and collaboration in coming up with ways where multiple ways of being and communicating are respected and valued, not just in theory but in practice.

Katelyn: You're right, it is more than just the specifics of programming or conference format, but our profession's (and society's) cultural assumptions about the way disability and work in general "should" look. ACRL needs to keep facilitating this sort of conversation to break down those stereotypes and systemic barriers because even if our buildings and conferences are fully accessible, our culture is one of the largest hurdles to improving disability inclusion.

Notes

1. Association of College and Research Libraries, "ACRL Presents: Voices from the Stacks—Lived Experiences of Library Folks with Disabilities," YouTube video, 1:00:06, June 5, 2024, https://youtu.be/XpyTXl2oRgA?si=eTXYED0sC9x53HMK.

2. DataCenter: Research for Justice, *An Introduction to Research Justice* (Oakland, CA: DataCenter Research for Justice, 2015), https://www.powershift.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/Intro_Research_Justice_Toolkit_FINAL1.pdf.

3. A. Gibson, K. Bowen, and D. Hanson, "We Need to Talk about How We Talk about Disability: A Critical Quasi-systematic Review," *In The Library With The Lead Pipe*, February 24, 2021, https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2021/disability/.

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Alec Ellis

Alone, but not Lonely

Attending an Academic Conference Solo

Somehow, it feels like conference season is always around the corner. With ALA, LibLearnX, ACRL, regional conferences, trade associations, and more, it can feel like you are either planning for or recovering from a conference! As great as these experiences can be to get out of the routines of our daily life, learn what is going on in "Library Land," and visit the exhibitor hall, there can be a certain amount of trepidation going to conferences alone. It is often a stereotype that librarians tend to be more introverted.[1] When you work at a library with a small staff or are a solo librarian, it may be the norm that you attend conferences alone. However, especially for library staff like this, getting out of your small bubble can be a great experience as you get to learn what other places are doing.

For the last three years, I have attended the Colorado Association of Libraries' (CAL) conference alone. As an introvert, but also somebody who enjoys conferencing and meeting new people, I've developed some tips and tricks that I hope can help any solo conference attendee not feel so lonely.

Before the Conference

After I attended my first CALCON and felt a little out of my depth, knowing nobody in either Colorado or CAL, I decided to join the CALCON planning committee. So my first tip, if you are able, is to join the planning committee for the conference you want to attend. This offers an important service to the academic guild and allows you to meet people before the actual conference. It can also help you feel more comfortable when you arrive to understand how the conference will work.

My second tip is to review the conference schedule and events to decide which ones you want to attend. This allows you to focus on the actual sessions and getting to where you need to be rather than spending time with your head in your phone planning on the fly. Conference centers can be confusing enough without also trying to decide which session to attend! To this tip I will also add, make sure you know where your hotel is (if it is not at the conference site) and have a plan on how to get back and forth.

During the Conference

When the conference finally comes, I have found it helpful to arrive on time (or early) and explore the location. Figure out where the sessions will be, where the food options are, and where the exhibit hall is located. It can be frustrating and exhausting to always be lost, rushing around trying to find each location, and then arriving at a session late.

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Next, I find it helpful to try to connect with new people early or even find acquaintances from previous events so that you can have conference buddies. This can make meals and events a little less awkward. By doing this the first day, I have made good connections and then was able to find a friendly face later when it came to days two or three. When I attend CALCON now, I already know members from the planning committee, but I also seek out fellow academic librarians.

My next suggestion is to attend meals, after-hours events, and networking sessions as you feel able. These can be great informal settings to meet fellow librarians and staff. You may end up "talking shop" or airing complaints and finding a sympathetic ear. But you also may find a kindred spirit and talk about the latest TV show or bond over board games and Manga. Especially for regional conferences, these meals and gatherings are a great way to meet library staff who are dealing with similar situations and may help you find solutions to your own problems. Furthermore, these conversations may also lead to collaborations or mentorship opportunities. For me, as an academic, my connections with public librarians allow me to have friends and connections when I visit the local public library branch.

Lastly, don't burn yourself out by always going and meeting new people. Make sure you take care of yourself and skip a session if you need time to recharge. But remember conferences are often short, two to three days, so try to find the balance between putting yourself out there, even if it's tiring, and spending all your free time alone in your hotel room.

After the Conference

After the conference is over and you are going through your conference swag, take time to follow up with people through email if you discussed a project or problem on which you could collaborate. Also, follow people or organizations on social media and continue any conversations you had. Lastly, begin to plan your next conference! Hopefully, now that you have met or "followed" all your new acquaintances, your next conference can be full of old friends rather than strangers.

To that end, I want to thank Anna, Erin, Alejandro, and others who have become my friends over the last three years. And a special shout out to my trivia night team this year—we didn't win, but we shared great food and had a fun time. You all ensured that even though I was alone, I never felt lonely.

Note

1. Mary Jane Scherdin, "Vive la Différénce: Exploring Librarian Personality Types Using the MBTI," in *Discovering Librarians: Profiles of a Profession* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 1994), 132.

Jody Gray

Arts and Culture in the Twin Cities

Something for Everyone

We are excited to welcome you to the 2025 ACRL Conference in Minneapolis! Whether you are a history buff, art appreciator, theater enthusiast, or music lover, the Twin Cities has something for everyone.

Museums and Galleries

The Twin Cities are home to numerous museums and galleries that span an extensive array of arts and history. The Minneapolis Institute of Art (MIA) has a vast collection that includes everything from ancient artifacts to modern masterpieces. The Walker Art Center is known for its focus on contemporary art, which includes galleries, film screenings, and live performances. Situated next to the Walker is the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, which features the iconic "Spoonbridge and Cherry."

Spoon bridge and cherry by Adam Fagen. Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

The Weisman Art Museum (WAM), designed by Frank Gehry, is located on the University of Minnesota campus along the shore of the Mississippi River. Its collection includes media, paintings, photography, ceramics, Korean furniture, and decorative objects. Admission to the WAM is free.

Nearby, in downtown Minneapolis, is the Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA) inside the Open Book Building. You can explore any or all of the 10 galleries within the MCBA dedicated to papermaking, paper marbling, letterpress printing, screen printing, bookbinding, and related arts.

St. Paul is home to the Minnesota Museum of American Art (MMAA), Minnesota's oldest art museum. The MMAA recently completed a new wing that triples its gallery space. The Center for Hmong Arts and Talent (CHAT) highlights Hmong American artists and youth.

Cultural Centers

The Twin Cities' diverse population enriches the arts and culture scene. We encourage you to explore some unique cultural centers in the Twin Cities.

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The Hmong Cultural Center Museum examines Hmong history and culture through folk arts, drawings, and embroidery while the Indigenous Roots Cultural Arts Center opened in 2017 as a space to cultivate artists who are Native, Black, Brown, and Indigenous Peoples.

The Minneapolis American Indian Center recently reopened after extensive renovations. This center focuses on serving the large and tribally diverse American Indian population in the Twin Cities and houses the Two Rivers Art Gallery. The American Swedish Institute is both a museum and a cultural education center located inside a historic mansion.

Public Art

Art is not confined to galleries and stages in the Twin Cities. Throughout the cities, you will find murals, street art, and installations that reflect the cultural and social dynamics of the area. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) and the City of Minneapolis have created an interactive map of murals and public art.

Theater and Performing Arts

The Twin Cities is known for its theater scene. It is second only to New York City in the number of live theater seats per capita. The Guthrie Theater is one of the most well-known theaters in the country, situated in downtown Minneapolis with a stunning view of the Mississippi River.

Guthrie by Ben & Jena.
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The Fitzgerald Theater is the oldest surviving theater in St. Paul and hosts the live radio program *Prairie Home Companion* with Garrison Keillor. First Avenue has owned the theater since March 2019, and it is known for its music, performing arts, and live podcasts.

The Penumbra Theatre in St. Paul features African American performances while the Mixed Blood Theatre, New Native Theatre, and Theater Mu amplify stories from diverse perspectives.

Live Music

The Twin Cities are known for their outstanding musical talent: Prince, Bob Dylan, Semisonic, Soul Asylum, and the Replacements are but a few. Whether you prefer jazz, pop, rock, indie, or classical music, numerous live music venues exist.

First Avenue by Doug Wallick.
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First Avenue was immortalized in the film *Purple Rain* and continues to be the host to an enormous number of local and international acts. Over the years, this independently owned venue has grown to own and operate several iconic music venues across the

Twin Cities including the Depot Tavern, 7th Street Entry, the Turf Club, and the Fine Line.

One of the newer musical venues is The Fillmore Minneapolis, which opened in 2020 in the North Loop District of Minneapolis. The Dakota Jazz Club on Nicollet Mall is not far from The Fillmore, and the Minnesota Orchestra is around the corner from the Dakota.

Conclusion

The Twin Cities are home to world-class institutions and grassroots initiatives that reflect the area's arts and culture. Whether you explore renowned museums, stroll through neighborhoods searching for public art and murals, or discover hidden gems, your visit to the Twin Cities will be unforgettable.

Mapping American Social Movements Project. *Access:* https://depts.washington.edu/moves/index.shtml.

The Mapping American Social Movements Project (MASMP) is a freely accessible data project designed to emphasize the geographical element of radical and leftist social movements in the United States since the nineteenth century and related patterns of political influence and endurance. Included at this time are more than 120 organizations portrayed in maps, charts, and data tables drawn from locations where membership, activities, or other measures of support were concentrated. This portal seeks to query the ways that individual organizations do and do not coalesce at particular times and places to form larger movements and entities. It is largely organized according to themed tabs, which include "Socialist/Communist," "Black Freedom," "Latinx," "Labor," "Women," "60s–70s," etc. MASMP, which also includes contextual essays, allows a distillation of knowledge and perspective about collective actions across time and space. While permitting some ability to choose separate data facets, MASMP does not appear to allow users to compare different organizations and movements on the same maps and timelines.

MASMP shows some promise as a teaching facilitator and demonstrates sensitivity to the conceptual biases and advantages of data sources including general newspapers of record as well as regionally or organizationally specific newspapers and documents. The project might serve as a point of departure to college or advanced research projects and teaching modules. The longer-term hosting and sustainable functionality of MASMP may be unpredictable, as the initiative depends on the ongoing sponsorship and maintenance labor of a single faculty member at the University of Washington and on (currently) freely accessible and dynamic external infrastructure such as Google and Tableau Public. There is already some degree of link rot, and many elements are inconsistent with prevailing accessibility standards. Documentation of sources for data tables, while present, could be more fleshed out, visible, and consistent.

While MASMP's focus on the political left is quite understandable for programmatic and logistical reasons, it raises the question of how a geographical lens might be applied to a wider variety of social movements and organizations and indeed those on the right with whom they were in dialogue or conflict.—*Joshua Lupkin, Harvard University, joshua_lupkin@harvard.edu*

Respectful Conversation. *Access:* https://respectfulconversation.charlotte.edu/.

In an era of deepening societal divides, Respectful Conversation stands out as a vital new resource for fostering healthier dialogue. Created by librarians Anne Cooper Moore and Catherine Tingelstad from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (which hosts the site), this project curates a high-quality collection of teaching and learning resources designed to promote respectful discourse. Supported by the ALA's Carnegie-Whitney Grant, which funds the creation of resource guides and webliographies, the project reflects a thoughtful effort to address the challenge of polarization by fostering constructive dialogue through curated educational resources.

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In a presentation about their work, the authors emphasize the urgency of equipping individuals with skills to bridge divides, citing studies that highlight students' eagerness to develop constructive dialogue skills. They point out that free expression, protected by the First Amendment, serves as the foundation for open dialogue and the free exchange of ideas. Media literacy and critical thinking, they note, are also essential components in fostering constructive dialogue and meaningful engagement.

The site is organized into four key topics: "Free Expression," "Media Literacy," "Constructive Dialogue," and "Critical Thinking." (The "Critical Thinking" section is a recent addition that is still in development as of this writing.) Each topic is structured into sections, including definitions, videos, books, articles, teaching and learning resources, blogs, news feeds, podcasts, online classes, and organizations. The "Media Literacy" section also offers additional resources, such as infographics, fact-checking tools, and online games for identifying misinformation.

The resources listed are extensive yet carefully selected for quality and accessibility. The videos in particular are limited to only a few brief, high-quality introductory videos from authoritative sources. Apart from physical books, which can be found in public libraries, all materials—including scholarly journal articles and some open access books—are freely available online. The inclusion of diverse formats, such as videos, podcasts, and interactive tools, ensures that the site appeals to a wide range of learning preferences.

This site will be particularly useful to educators seeking innovative ways to engage their students with the topics of free expression, media literacy, constructive dialogue, and critical thinking. Beyond the classroom, it offers a wealth of resources for librarians, parents, community leaders, and anyone else striving to develop these skills and contribute to more empathetic, respectful, and informed societal conversations.—*Katie Maxfield, Wittenberg University, maxfieldk@wittenberg.edu*

Trust for America's Health. *Access:* https://www.tfah.org/.

Trust for America's Health (TFAH) is a nonprofit organization that produces reports and other resources "to advance an evidence-based public health system that is ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century." TFAH's nonpartisan resources provide information on public health issues for an audience of state and federal policy makers.

The TFAH homepage highlights the organization's mission, priority issues, news, and new resources such as their report from October 2024, "Pathway to a Healthier America: A Blueprint for Strengthening Public Health for the Next Administration and Congress." The website is organized by tabs, including reports, policy and advocacy resources, webinars and briefings, state data, initiatives, news, and information about the TFAH.

Of the tabs, the "Policy/Advocacy" tab is the most robust. This section collects TFAH resources on their priority issues, with a national scope. For example, the page "Health Equity/Social Determinants of Health" introduces the topic, links to TFAH reports on the topic, links to relevant press releases and news for additional context, and provides access to downloadable documents for advocacy and action. The advocacy documents differ by topic but generally include a fact sheet or policy brief, funding recommendations, and comments or letters to policy makers and signed by TFAH. These documents are short and provide clear summaries of key talking points.

The state data section of the website includes a statement on key public health issues in each state, presents visually compelling statistics and charts to support each state's statement, and links to additional resources when available. However, the sources of the statistics and charts are not cited throughout this section. Here, TFAH misses an opportunity to provide a strong advocacy resource for states either by citing their own reports or to the external sources of the statistics and charts.

Despite the shortcomings of the state data, TFAH is an excellent resource for understanding national public health issues, policies, and legislation. Overall, TFAH's website is user-friendly, informative, nonpartisan, and is recommended for political science and public health audiences.—*Emily Hamstra, Network of the National Library of Medicine, Region 5, ehamstra@uw.edu*

Kayla Siddell has been named associate library director for the Atlanta University Center (AUC) Woodruff Library. Siddell will lead public services, encompassing research support, access and user engagement, as well as collection management and digital scholarship. She will develop and sustain a dynamic public service model that prioritizes student engagement within the library, champion inclusive programming to support the diverse needs of the academic community, and integrate the use of digital collections, services, and innovative spaces to enhance access and learning experiences.

Rachael Stoeltje was appointed chief of the Library of Congress' National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, which includes the Library's Packard Campus in Culpeper, Virginia, in January 2025. Stoeltje will oversee the state-of-the-art facility where the Library of Congress acquires, preserves, and provides access to the world's largest and most comprehensive collection of films, television programs, radio broadcasts, and sound recordings.

Kendall Barksdale is now digitization project manager for the HBCU Digital Library Trust at the Atlanta University Center (AUC) Woodruff Library.

Kelsa Bartley has been appointed assistant director and head of research and education at the Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries.

Lynn Davies is now digital initiatives librarian at the AUC Woodruff Library.

Valdoshia Hunt has been named content strategist librarian at the AUC Woodruff Library.

Sasha Jelan is now traveling archivist for the HBCU Digital Library Trust at the AUC Woodruff Library.

Terrence Martin is now the assistant director for Research Learning and Technology Services at AUC Woodruff Library.

Leah Micken recently joined the AUC Woodruff Center Library as processing archivist for the Morehouse College Archive.

Summer Redding is now senior digitization librarian for the HBCU Digital Library Trust at the AUC Woodruff Library.

Sarah Tanner has been promoted to director of Archives and Special Collections at the Atlanta University Center (AUC) Woodruff Library.

Shannon Tharp is now resource sharing and collection strategy librarian at the University of Washington Libraries.

Lark Wilson joined Binghamton University as the special collections librarian for instruction, reference, and engagement in October 2024.

Deaths

Michael Van Fossen, who retired in 2012 as international and state documents librarian at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill, recently passed away in Durham, North Carolina. For 23 years, Van Fossen managed the state and international documents collection at the university libraries and served as the subject librarian for international studies; the curriculum in peace, war, and defense; and political science. He also regularly taught a course on government documents and mentored students at the UNC School of Information and Library Science.

Van Fossen provided leadership in the North Carolina Library Association, where he served on the executive board of its Government Resources Section, as an associate editor and indexer for *North Carolina Libraries*, and as chair of the journal's 2007 Style Manual Revision Committee.

Dawn Behrend and Alexia Hudson-Ward Share Plans for ACRL

Cast an Informed Vote in the Election this Spring

Ed. Note: C&RL News offered the candidates for ACRL vice-president/president-elect, Dawn Behrend and Alexia Hudson-Ward, this opportunity to share their views with the membership. Although many of the issues facing ACRL are discussed informally at meetings, we want to use this venue to provide a forum to all members. We hope this will assist you in making an informed choice when you vote in the election this spring.

Dawn Behrend

I am a first-generation college student and second career librarian who, after many years as a master's level clinical psychologist, found my way to the career that has been a lifelong calling. Beginning in instruction and outreach, I am now the Dean of University Libraries at my institution. While I had a successful and rewarding career as a mental health professional, my passion for libraries as institutions to promote literacy and intellectual freedom along with a drive for lifelong learning, led me to take the leap into librarianship, which is a choice I have never regretted.

I first became a member of ACRL as a library science student and have been a member for 11 years. For me, ACRL represented the pinnacle of a professional organization dedicated to academic librarianship with opportunities for collaboration, exposure to innovative ideas, and advocacy. Early in my career as an academic librarian, I actively sought opportunities to become involved in ACRL through committee membership and later chairing various committees, the College Libraries Section (CLS), and Chapters Council. Additionally, I have been active with the Education and Behavioral Sciences Section (EBSS) serving as member-at-large and other roles. I found such service to dovetail nicely with my involvement at the state level where I currently serve as president of the North Carolina Library Association, a role which has involved everything from conference planning to congressional fly-ins to advocate for the federal funding of libraries. My commitment to professional service and advancement in the field of academic librarianship is evident in my service history which has given me the perspective of leadership from the state to national levels.

ACRL has consistently provided me with the support I need to be an active member of the profession, and the skills to make valuable contributions at my home institution. I am honored to be a candidate to serve as ACRL's vice-president/president-elect. If elected, I plan to focus on three primary initiatives: the value of academic libraries (VAL), artificial intelligence (AI) literacy, and mental wellness.

Value of Academic Libraries

For nearly two decades, ACRL has strove to assist its members in demonstrating the value academic libraries bring to their constituents including making VAL part of ACRL's strategic plan in 2011 and crafting the Value of Academic Libraries Statement in 2016. Much work has been done by the VAL Committee, which has most recently been charged with completing reviews and revisions of ACRL's Standards for Libraries in Higher Education. ACRL members have several excellent tools available to support VAL at their institutions, such as the Academic Library Advocacy Toolkit, Project Outcome for Academic Libraries, and more. I plan to bring renewed energy and focus to supporting members of all institutional sizes in demonstrating the value their libraries provide to stakeholders. Higher education has changed dramatically in a post-COVID world marked by declining enrollments, campus closures, and shrinking budgets. This makes it essential to advocate for VAL to support adequate staffing, collection development, facilities, and professional development funding. Some of the areas I will concentrate on regarding VAL include: communicating VAL to attract and recruit diverse, talented professionals to the field; connecting VAL not just to student success and retention, but to supporting the pillars of academic freedom and the funding of libraries; identifying academic libraries as contributing value as a partner in open scholarship and affordable textbooks; scaling existing ACRL resources to assist smaller libraries engage in strategies that are feasible for their existing staffing and budgets; and providing skill-building resources in such key areas as strategic planning and marketing to better articulate and promote library initiatives and resources. Finally, I plan to build upon the *Academic Library Impact: Improving Practice and Essential Areas to Research* published in 2017 to provide an updated assessment and evidence of VAL as this has been an essential document in my own work advocating for library resources at my university.

AI Literacy

AI literacy is digital literacy focused on AI, its uses, and its ethical ramifications. Safety and Security of AI ranks number six on the 2024–2025 ACRL Legislative Agenda, marking AI as an area of focus for the association. Current ACRL President Leo S. Lo has been active in AI literacy and academic librarianship. In his June 2024 article, "Evaluating AI Literacy in Academic Libraries: A Survey Study with a Focus on U.S. Employees," Lo proposed a framework to define AI literacy in academic libraries formed around seven key competencies. While the Association of Research Libraries published the *Research Libraries Guiding Principles for Artificial Intelligence* in April 2024, ACRL has not yet created a comparable set of guidelines. However, work is moving forward on this issue with the ACRL AI Competencies for Library Workers Task Force. The ability to understand AI, teach how to use AI effectively and ethically, and serve as a model of using AI in a range of academic tasks will be vital for academic librarians who seek to remain at the forefront of innovative technology on their campuses. I endeavor to continue the important work done by Dr. Lo and others to develop a unified approach to AI literacy that will enable academic librarians to lead the way in best practices, to understand AI, and promote its ethical use in scholarship and beyond for faculty and students. I aspire to provide ACRL's members with the confidence and tools to embrace the benefits of AI while remaining mindful of potential risks through such initiatives as piloting principles for the use of AI in academic librarianship, transitioning the AI Competencies for Library Workers Task Force into a standing committee,

integrating AI literacy into the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, and creating AI toolkits to provide practical resources for academic librarians.

Mental Wellness

With more than 1 in 5 adults experiencing a mental illness and an estimated 15 to 20 percent of the population identifying as neurodiverse, academic librarians are likely to experience concerns with mental wellness and/or struggling to function in spaces that are not designed to be neuroinclusive. While much has been done in the field to understand better and serve library users with a mental illness or who are neurodiverse, less has been done to support library professionals faced with such concerns. A survey published in 2019, "Academic Librarians' Experiences and Perceptions on Mental Illness Stigma and the Workplace," identified academic librarians are often hesitant to disclose a mental illness in the workplace due to stigma. Stigma and the failure to disclose can lead to not receiving treatment services or accommodations that could lead to professionals leaving the field who would otherwise might be retained. Given my background in the mental health field, I have been active in promoting awareness of mental illness and neurodiversity to decrease stigma, improve services for library users, and advocate for the needs of library professionals.

Today, more than ever, academic librarians are faced with burnout, vicarious trauma, and low morale. Currently, there are no resources provided by ACRL that are dedicated to the mental wellness of its members. I plan to promote a culture of care within ACRL by providing a platform to discuss mental illness and neurodiversity, provide guidance and resources to recruit, retain, and provide opportunities for the advancement of librarians identifying as neurodiverse and/or experiencing a mental illness, and advance mental wellness initiatives to support ACRL members. Such work may be achieved through the addition of a task force or committee focused on mental wellness, making mental wellness and neuroinclusivity a strategic initiative of ACRL, and providing toolkits on such topics as self-care, supporting the needs of neurodiverse colleagues, self-advocacy, and finding treatment services. I am eager to utilize my expertise and skills in the mental health field to inform the path forward for building awareness, fostering inclusivity, and providing strategies to promote mental wellness to support and retain academic librarians.

Conclusions

Being nominated to serve as vice-president/president-elect of ACRL is one of the highest honors I have achieved in my career as an academic librarian. ACRL has been a guiding presence in my work as a librarian since my time as a library science student. The opportunities for involvement, service, and professional connection have been invaluable in my professional development. It is my intention to work diligently to further the strategic initiatives of ACRL for the benefit of the association's membership and to create new initiatives to lead us into the coming years. I plan to focus on developing scalable resources to help members articulate the value their libraries provide, providing a unified understanding and guidelines to support members in using AI to its full-potential, and fostering a culture of care that supports mental wellness for professionals in the field. My experience in leadership in my university's library, state library association, and ACRL provides me with the ability and skills to ensure that ACRL continues to provide outstanding value to its members in the important work they do in supporting academic libraries.

Alexia Hudson-Ward

I am honored to stand as a candidate for the role of vice-president/president-elect of ACRL. Over my more than 20 years of membership in the association, I've been privileged to serve in several elected and appointed positions. I possess deep knowledge and passion for ACRL. I understand how to successfully partner with member volunteers and the ACRL staff to execute important initiatives and formulate high-impact strategies.

My transition into academic libraries came after success in several for-profit and non-profit managerial roles. I've served as an award-nominated corporate marketing manager for The Coca-Cola Company, was an award-winning journalist and editor, and was an award-winning promotions manager for a university-owned 12-radio station network. My entry into academic libraries began with a strong foundation in leadership development, which I gained from an internship in graduate school. I later transitioned into a diversity fellowship position as a represented staff member. After that position, I was recruited into a tenure-stream role in which I was successfully promoted and tenured.

For nearly a decade, my career has been as a senior administrator with successes in innovative service execution, pipeline leadership development, and organizational design. My professional trajectory would not have been possible without the support of academic libraries and ACRL. As a first-generation college graduate, I know from personal experience how academic libraries democratize knowledge and create pathways to achievement. As a professional and volunteer-leader, I've experienced the transformative ways ACRL membership has benefited me and many others.

During this campaign cycle, I gathered input from leaders within and outside ACRL and academic library personnel at every level on what they deem as important emphasis areas for our association. We universally agree that we are in a pivotal moment for higher education, the nation, and our world. Therefore, it is essential for us to formulate tangible strategies and action plans. If successfully elected, I will build our capacity within five focus areas: amplifying our excellence, deepening strategic partnerships, strengthening our advocacy efforts, expanding professional development opportunities for all library workers, and fostering inclusive workplace cultures.

Amplifying Our Excellence

Academic libraries are centers of innovation and transformation. We provide essential forethought on critical issues such as climate education, AI, and inclusive excellence. While we are often described as the "heart" of our institutions, I've heard from many of you that you feel our achievements are under-acknowledged by your institution's senior administration. Some of our libraries and their employees have been described more as costly expenditures to their institutions than mission-aligned critical entities.

Under my leadership, ACRL will implement a programmatic and research-centered approach to data-driven storytelling that will elevate rich stories of impact—from first-year students finding their footing in research to faculty making groundbreaking discoveries with our support. The association will lead efforts to equip members with the tools to measure and communicate our libraries' contributions more effectively.

We will extend our metrics to capture success outcomes with our contributions to institutional research, campus community engagement initiatives, and academic library student employment. We will highlight our capacity for innovation by further promoting how our evolutions in services and spaces promote achievement and belonging on campus. ACRL will also expand its support for library innovation, offering opportunities to highlight academic libraries that are exemplars in leveraging humanistic approaches to implementing artificial intelligence tools that enhance teaching, research, and access.

Deepen Strategic Partnerships

Fostering strategic partnerships within higher education is one of many strengths I will bring to our association as vice-president/president-elect. I have successfully engaged with divisions of research, student life, presidents' and provosts' offices, institutional presidents, provosts, and finance vice presidents to elevate academic libraries as critical to advancing the institution's curricular, co-curricular, and research objectives. Several academic libraries share similar successes. As the association's leader, I will ensure that ACRL prioritizes sharing models and best practices for fostering such collaborations, ensuring our libraries are recognized as indispensable academic partners.

Beyond our campuses, academic libraries have untapped opportunities to collaborate more with museums, independent research libraries, and learned societies. Together, we can tackle issues like AI and digital equity, materials management in the era of climate change, and the best approaches to open scholarship and Open Educational Resources (OER) expansion. On a global scale, our international colleagues look to ACRL for leadership in building relationships with global library associations to share knowledge, resources, and solutions.

Collaboration is a cornerstone of our success, and we must form more partnerships — within our institutions, across communities, and globally—that will allow us to address complex challenges while elevating our profession. Through my vast network, ACRL will deepen strategic partnerships to strengthen our advocacy efforts, expand professional development for library employees, and advance inclusive workplace cultures within our organizations.

Strengthen Our Advocacy Efforts

Public policy impacts every aspect of academic library work, from federal research funding to open access and copyright issues. Advocacy is not just a responsibility—it is necessary to protect and advance our profession's interests and those of the communities we serve.

As vice-president/president-elect, I will strengthen ACRL's advocacy efforts by equipping members with the knowledge and confidence to engage with policymakers, offering targeted campaigns on key issues, and building coalitions with allied organizations. ACRL will serve as a hub for resources and training, empowering academic library staff to advocate effectively within their institutions, at the state level, and nationally.

Our trusted voice is needed in key policy areas, including sustainable funding, intellectual freedom, and equity in education. We must articulate our value to decision-makers in terms that resonate, emphasizing how our libraries drive student success, fuel faculty research, and foster community engagement. We must also advocate for fair copyright policies that support academic work while ensuring broad access to information.

Expanding Professional Development for All Academic Library Workers

The strength of academic libraries lies within all of our team members. To thrive in a rapidly evolving environment that AI is reshaping, all library staff—regardless of role or career stage—must have access to professional development that supports maintaining professional currency and essential skill-building.

Through my leadership, ACRL will expand its offerings to ensure that library workers in all roles have opportunities to grow their skills and explore new areas of interest. I will also emphasize leadership development for those in formal management roles and staff across our organizations. ACRL will foster leadership at all levels by creating unique mentorship programs, providing access to training on organizational change, and encouraging cross-functional collaboration within institutions.

Advancing Inclusive Workplace Culture

Now more than ever, we must maintain our commitment to advancing inclusive practices that will be embedded in every aspect of our work. An inclusive workplace culture is foundational to attracting and retaining the talent that drives academic library excellence. Over the past decade, some progress has been made with compositional diversity in our libraries (particularly in the leadership ranks). Yet, confronting some hard truths about the persistently negative behaviors that plague our workplace culture and discourage the richness that diversity, equity, and inclusion offer must be a top priority for ACRL leadership. As vice-president/president-elect and a leader committed to elevating measurable DEI efforts, I will emphasize creating environments where staff and patrons feel valued, respected, and supported. I will activate solutions-centered research and approaches to addressing our long-standing cultural issues that will empower staff and administration to make incremental and sweeping organizational change.

Together, we can amplify our excellence by celebrating and sharing academic libraries' transformative work. We can strengthen strategic partnerships that position us as indispensable collaborators in addressing higher education's greatest challenges. We can promote advocacy and public policy that ensures libraries have the resources and freedoms they need to thrive. We can also foster an inclusive workplace culture that empowers every staff member to succeed.

My vision for ACRL is one of bold leadership and collective action. I believe deeply in the power of academic libraries to change lives, and I am eager to work alongside you to shape our future. Within our association lies an extraordinary community of practitioners, educators, and researchers eager to collaborate on complex topics and share their knowledge for the betterment of our profession. We can and we must build upon ACRL's legacy of excellence by ensuring that academic libraries remain at the forefront of innovation, advocacy, and inclusion.

I am excited to be nominated for the position of ACRL vice-president/president-elect and stand ready to serve at this seminal time in history.

Thank you for considering my candidacy and I humbly ask for your vote.