MLA/DLA Conference Highlights and Photos 27
MLA/DLA Conference Highlights and Photos  
27
2024 MLA Conference Chair Anita Crawford shares personal and professional highlights from an exciting week at conference. See if you can find yourself in a conference photo in the annual collection.

The Future of Library Digital Lending  
60
The Future of Library Digital Lending, an MLA Conference program co-sponsored by the Future of Libraries Interest Group and the Materials Interest Group, brought together library advocates for fair terms for ebooks and audiobooks.

Computational Thinking: A New Literacy for the 21st Century  
61
Computational thinking (CT) is becoming one among many new literacies of the 21st century and is considered a critical skill for academic and career success. Libraries have increasingly stepped in to provide CT educational programs for urban, rural, and at-risk youth.

Unintentional Accommodations: Supporting Hidden Disabilities with Universal Design  
63
The combined expertise of Hannah Erickson and Ella Alonso in disability advocacy comes mostly from lived experience in adult services for Prince George's County Memorial Library System. Both brought unique perspectives to their MLA/DLA Conference presentation on providing accommodations in the library from an employee’s perspective.

Visiting the Future at the MLA/DLA Conference  
64
At the MLA/DLA Conference, attendees were invited to visit the future!

After stepping through a curtained entrance, people were presented with an immersive scenario of a future world and asked to think about how libraries would respond to that world. Two different scenarios invited participants to think through and prepare for a wide range of possibilities.

Defending Our Collections: “Soft Censorship” Discussion  
66
On Wednesday, April 5, Laura Bandoch, Materials Assistant Director of Harford County Public Library, led the final discussion in a three-part series on Defending Our Collections, sponsored by the Intellectual Freedom Panel (IFP). The topic was “Soft Censorship,” and Laura began with a disturbing thought: “You may have participated in soft censorship without even knowing.”

Lending Unconventional Items at the DIY Center  
67
The Elkridge Branch of Howard County Library System (HCLS) was renovated and reopened in March 2018, and the DIY Education Center opened the same day. The model for DIY lending is based on the tool lending library in Berkeley Public Library in California, which has been part of their system since 1979.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THIS ISSUE</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editor’s Note</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President’s Message</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEWS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA Elections</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA Award Winners</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating the Spring 2023 LATI Graduates</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids Are Customers Too! Spring Conference</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging and Resurging Genres: Ecofiction, Gothic, Hopepunk, and Quozies</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLUMNS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OutRAIGeous Reviews</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future of Libraries Interest Group (FOLIG): Futures Conference</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDI Panel: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Statement</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night Sky Notes</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBRARY PEOPLE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens for Maryland Libraries Award Winners</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Editor's Note

Welcome to a busy summer season! I hope it has been productive and rewarding for all of you. The Maryland Library Association has had an incredible quarter since our spring issue, and the Crab is the perfect venue for sharing all the news and excitement with the MLA community.

So many of you facilitated, participated in, and benefited from the amazing programs at Level Up, the 2023 MLA/DLA Conference. The keynote speakers were inspiring, the breadth of knowledge and information shared was expansive, and the social activities brought everyone together for fun and the chance to catch up with old friends and make new ones. Kelsey Hughes and Anita Crawford kept all this activity flowing seamlessly, with their dedication and hard work making everything look effortless. Anita is your new MLA Conference Chair for 2024, and she has graciously recounted her highlights for this issue, sharing her photos in conjunction with those of Amber Farran, our conference photographer. Amber was fast on her feet, going from room to room to get the best shots for the conference album. I could hear her clicking away in several sessions! If you haven’t had a chance to see it, some great highlights follow Anita’s recap, or please take a look at the full photo album here.

Speaking of conference sessions, several are shared by their presenters for those who couldn’t make it—features on disability accommodations, computational thinking, lending unconventional items for DIY, and the Future Room are among the highlights. We’ve also revived the past Crab concept of “Departments” as “Columns,” and we’re excited to feature several new columns with this issue. In addition to our popular, recurring Night Sky Network and Reader’s Advisory Interest Group (RAIG) columns, we now have quarterly contributions from the Future of Libraries Interest Group (FOLIG) and the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Panel, with hopefully more to come in the fall. The EDI Panel has presented a bold, visionary action statement that I hope everyone will take a moment to read and reflect on.

MLA Award winners, Citizens for Maryland Libraries Award winners, our new MLA officers, and highlights from spring programming from RAIG, the Intellectual Freedom Panel (IFP) and the Children’s Services Division—there’s so much to peruse in this issue! And, speaking of MLA officers, I’d like to thank outgoing MLA President Nay Keppler for her guidance and encouragement in my initial year as Crab editor. I couldn’t have managed many things (particularly captioning photos!) without her help. Thanks also to our copy editors and Bucky Edgett of Lucky Productions, who make everything so easy. Have a wonderful rest of the summer, everyone, and enjoy this issue of the Crab.

Julie Fitzpatrick, MLA Crab Editor
Howard County Library System

Please save the date for the MLA Centennial Carnival at the Busch Library in Annapolis:
Friday, November 3, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Happy summer, everyone! I know we are all getting ready for Summer Reading: decorating the branch, brainstorming ideas, creating initiatives to dump that summer slump. But I humbly request that you take a moment to celebrate the amazing spring we’ve had as a Maryland library community. Nothing could be more evident of this than our incredible MLA/DLA Conference—Level Up. Committee Chair Kelsey Hughes, Co-Chair Anita Crawford, the DLA Team, and our MLA Office and Conference Committee worked tirelessly to pull this off, bringing new energy and ideas to the tried-and-true staples of our programming. They hosted incredible keynote speakers, vendors, the silent auction, social events, the program lineup—this team was truly amazing. With all that said, here is our big conference issue! Keep reading for recaps and photos taken by conference photographer Amber Farran, Marketing Manager at Carroll County Public Library.

The Conference Committee wasn’t the only MLA unit hard at work this spring. The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Panel crafted an EDI action statement for MLA that coincides perfectly with our newly adopted strategic vision and organizational core values. As part of our commitment to EDI, we announced the implementation of the new Affiliate Membership type in March to make membership and participation in MLA much more accessible. This membership type provides library systems the option to pay a fee based on their operating budget, allowing all their organization’s staff to receive the benefits of an individual membership. This was no small feat, and MLA Director Josh Stone has already worked with eight library systems to onboard their Affiliate Memberships. Continue to expect additional offerings and outreach to existing members, new members, and non-members of all library types.

As this is my last President’s Report for the Crab, I want to say bravo to our editor Julie Fitzpatrick, who in her first year has included many new voices and perspectives in this beloved publication. MLA has had a very successful year, and I am so excited that KennethWayne Thompson and the new slate of officers will be leading the organization into its next chapter. Giving up the gavel is never easy, especially when you’ve had the pleasure of working with such an amazing team and accomplished so many important initiatives together, but I am looking forward to continuing to serve this organization as Past President. Thank you all for the best year I could have imagined.
2023 MLA Elections

Josh Stone, MLA Executive Director

I am pleased to announce the results of the recent MLA elections! We had many wonderful candidates. Each one is appreciated for their willingness to run for office and to serve the members of MLA. It is this spirit of cooperation that makes Maryland a wonderful place for libraries!

Thank you once again to all who put forth their names as candidates and congratulations to our newly elected officers!

MLA Vice President/President-Elect:
Tiffany Sutherland

ALA Councilor: Joseph Thompson

MLA Treasurer: Cheryl Nardiello

ACRL Vice President: Alex Dodd

ACRL Secretary: Kate Strain

BCMLA President: Melanie Diggs

BCMLA Vice President/President-Elect: April Wright

BCMLA Secretary: Shirley Mason

Children’s Services Division Vice President: Summer Rosswog

Children’s Services Division Secretary: Karen Earp

Leadership Development Division Vice President: Matthew Lowder

Leadership Development Division Secretary: Kalyn Au

Public Services Division Vice President: Pamela Taylor

Public Services Division Secretary: Tina Pickens

Support Staff Division Vice President: Louis Sica

Support Staff Division Secretary: Traci Montgomery

2023 MLA Award Winners

Catherine Hollerbach, Chief Operating Officer, Anne Arundel County Public Library, MLA Awards Committee Chair

Amy Miller Meyers, Carroll County Public Library, Marketing Committee Chair

Photos courtesy of Amber Farran, Carroll County Public Library, and Catherine Hollerbach

Thank you once again to all who nominated their colleagues and other library supporters for these important awards honoring Maryland library service. The decisions were extremely difficult, as there were so many deserving candidates!

Distinguished Service Award
Simmona Simmons, Anne Arundel County Public Library Vice Chair and retired UMBC Librarian

Simmona has dedicated much of her life to working in and supporting libraries. She has served as a pivotal member of Anne Arundel County Public Library’s Board of Trustees for nearly a quarter century.

Simmona is a former library faculty member at University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) and was adjunct faculty for the iSchool at the University of Maryland College Park. She has trained and encouraged countless students, developing today’s leaders in the field. She has an extensive history of giving back to the library community, including serving as a vice president of the academic and research libraries division and with the membership division of MLA. She has also previously served as a member of the Banneker-Douglass Museum Guild, NAACP, and in leadership roles for the Banneker-Douglass Museum.

Distinguished Service Award winner Simmona Simmons, Anne Arundel County Public Library, and MLA Awards Chair Catherine Hollerbach, Anne Arundel County Public Library.
Black Military History Institute of America and Creative Awareness for Black Women.

Ms. Simmons is the namesake of the University of Maryland Simmona Simmons Best Student Paper Award, a fund that supports an annual award for the best student paper written by a graduate student specializing in the Information and Diverse Populations specialization or a paper focused on an issue of primary concern to the specialization.

Brian Frosh, Maryland Attorney General and Maryland Attorney General Office Team

The Attorney General’s office has shown great support for Maryland libraries and the residents of Maryland. Attorney General Frosh and his staff did an outstanding job defending Maryland’s e-book law from legal challenges brought by the Association of American Publishers. Maryland’s legal team presented a strong case. Although they did not prevail, the hearing brought great attention to the problem nationally and even internationally, leading other states to develop more effective bills for the future.

Honorary Membership

Michael Gannon, Acting Co-Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer for Support Services, Prince George’s County Memorial Library System

Michael has made many significant contributions to MLA and the Maryland library community over the course of his 40+ year career working in Maryland public libraries. As a Library Associate Training Institute (LATI) readers’ advisory trainer, Michael has shaped the future of libraries for over 35 years. He has developed and presented a variety of educational, informative, and entertaining MLA Conference programs over the years, in addition to serving as the MLA Conference Pub Quiz Quizmaster for the past 12 years. Michael currently serves as the chair of the LATI Oversight Committee and the State Library
Resource Center Oversight Commission. He has also served as MLA President, Vice President, PSD President, Awards Committee Chair and Professional Development Officer. He is a previous recipient of the MLA Outstanding Member Award (2004) and the ALA/PLA Allie Beth Martin Award (2003).

**Outstanding Member**

Conni Strittmatter, Youth and Family Engagement Manager, Baltimore County Public Library

Throughout her time with MLA, Connie has been the President of the Children’s Services Division, onboarded the inaugural years of the Future of Libraries Interest Group, and served on the conference planning committee and currently serves as MLA Board Secretary. She led a subcommittee to update the MLA bylaws and to create a new unit type to accommodate the new Black Caucus of MLA. Connie is welcoming to all members and always makes sure to keep everyone on track when working on a project or problem solving.

Ashley Teagle, CEO, Southern Maryland Regional Library Association

Ashley has been instrumental in the improvements of MLA’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) efforts for the last few years. She is currently the co-chair of the MLA EDI Panel and the Library Leadership Training Committee, and a founding member of MLA’s first Black Caucus. In her leadership roles, she is always focused on how to serve everyone in the Maryland community. Ashley is a member of the Library Associate Training Institute (LATI) Oversight Committee, President of the Maryland Association of Public Library Administrators (MAPLA), and a member of the MLA Legislative Panel. She is also a member of PLA’s Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice Committee.
Margaret Carty Emerging Leader Award
Kevin Jayce, Assistant Library Manager, Owings Mills Branch, Baltimore County Public Library

Kevin is recognized for his dedication to leading conversations about library services to teens around the state of Maryland. As co-chair of the MLA Teen Interest Group (TIG), he refreshed the Google site so it was more browsable and established a well-used TIG Discord server for teen librarians to share resources and support each other. Kevin has been a passionate advocate for helping encourage and promote talented librarians from across Maryland to engage them in his quest to get TIG participation from every county in the state. He helped plan the 2021 Teen Connect Conference, helped plan the 2021 and 2022 MLA Conference and served as a tester for the new MLA Connect platform.

Jake Ciarapica, Librarian, Owings Mills Branch, Baltimore County Public Library

Jake has been co-chair of the MLA TIG for the past two years. He is dedicated to supporting experienced and new librarians in their pursuit of teen services. He uses the TIG Discord server to encourage TIGTalks as a way to promote networking and peer support. This has reinvigorated TIG and enhanced the delivery of teen services to Maryland teens. He has served on the Conference Committee and the MLA Executive Board.

President’s Customer Service Award
Stephanie Wiant, Washington County Free Library

Stephanie is a pioneer for Maryland libraries in the space of services to emerging adults (EAs)—those folks ages 18 to 25 who age out of Young Adult library offerings but may not want to participate in adult programming or use adult collections. Stephanie created a unique EA collection for the Washington County Free Library, and an incredible ongoing program series for this age group.
Dedicated EA programming acts as a bridge to keep teens supported and engaged with the library into adulthood. Stephanie’s unending passion for this often-overlooked population has led to collaboration with library workers across the state to share information, ideas, and training resources.

**Outstanding Support Staff Award**

**Teonja Jung**, Circulation Services Manager, Cockeysville Branch, Baltimore County Public Library

Teonja has worked for BCPL for 30+ years in various roles and has been active in MLA for over 20 years. She recently completed her second term as President of the MLA Support Staff Division (SSD) and is now serving as Vice President/President Elect of SSD. She served on the recruitment panel for the new MLA Executive Director and was part of an MLA Conversations event during the pandemic. She has also been actively involved in diversity and inclusion efforts with MLA and BCPL. Teonja is an active member of the BCPL Management Group for Circulation Services Managers, MACO. She was awarded the BCPL Staff Merit Award for Leadership in 2019.

**Outstanding Volunteer Award**

**Jim Meckley**, Friends of the Ocean Pines Library, Worcester County Library

Jim is described as the “heart and soul of the volunteers” of the Ocean Pines Library. He has been a member of the Friends of Ocean Pines Library since 2016. He expanded the annual Friends Booksale, raising over $15,000 to help the branch purchase new technology, acquire new furniture, and offer additional programs for all ages. He also raises over $1000 each month through Amazon book sales and sells books at the local Ocean Pines Farmers Market. Jim shares his talents by hosting trivia programs for the library throughout the year, and recently adopted a kitten.
found outside the branch and named him Stacks!

**Tamea Bowen**, Friends of the Calvert Library Board, Calvert Library

Tamea has served on the Friends of the Calvert Library Board since 1998 and as Treasurer for 23 years. She rarely misses a meeting and always works the Book Sales and Pub Quizzes, the two main fundraisers for the Friends. She also recruits her family and friends to help with the fundraising events. She assists with inventory of the Friends Book Shop and manages the sales tax reporting. In addition to her work with the Friends, Tamea helps library staff with checking book reviews and verifying book selection based on those reviews. Tamea has volunteered over 1,000 hours for Calvert Library!

**Sharon Hafner Yingling**, Carroll County Public Library

Sharon is a staple of the Carroll County community and has served the Carroll County Public Library (CCPL) as an official and unofficial ambassador in various capacities for over a decade. Sharon was one of the first members of the Friends of CCPL and served as the President and Vice President for several terms. She was instrumental in establishing the “I Love My Library” campaign, capturing testimonials from customers as to why they love CCPL. She also helped establish fundraising initiatives to support CCPL’s annual Battle of the Books competition. In 2017, Sharon led the private fundraising campaign to support the construction of CCPL’s Exploration Commons at 50 East. This was the largest fundraising campaign in CCPL’s history. Through her leadership, and the establishment of a strong network of Friends of CCPL, the campaign raised over $1.1 million for the building fund.

**Excellence in Marketing Award**

The MLA Excellence in Marketing Award honors the efforts of communications staff across the state while also
working to validate the importance of library marketing. Judges for this year’s competition were impressed with all 15 entries and chose two for special recognition.

**Brave Voices, Brave Choices Stories Exhibit: Howard County Library System**

Brave Voices, Brave Choices launched in 2021 in response to comments that incidents of racial injustice don’t happen in Howard County. As a result, library leaders were led to encourage empathy toward community members who had been discriminated against by collecting stories of racism and bias and providing racial equity training.

This exhibit, which was presented at the Central Branch in July 2022 and moved to the East Columbia Branch in September 2022, explored why those stories matter, why the library collected them, and how participants could take the next step in combating racial inequity. More than 100,000 people in total have interacted with the exhibit, which included story cubes highlighting individual experiences and postcards inviting residents to share their own stories. In addition, workshops facilitated by Notre Dame of Maryland University’s Art Therapy Department helped people process and creatively respond to the exhibit.

**Our Library Campaign: Western Maryland Regional Library**

Western Maryland Regional Library wanted to remind customers that all libraries in Allegany, Garrett, and Washington counties are vibrant, engaging spaces fully open for business after the pandemic. This campaign included posters, fliers, and billboards that each of the member libraries could use in ways that best fit the needs of their communities. Finally, the regional library helped produce a snappy 30-second video to help customers remember how fun and inclusive the library can be.

Elizabeth Hulett, Director, Western Maryland Regional Library, receiving the MLA Excellence in Marketing Award from Marketing Chair Amy Miller Meyers on behalf of the Western Maryland Regional Library.
Celebrating the Spring 2023 LATI Graduates

All cohort photos courtesy of Geoffrey Baker, Howard County Library System. All candid photos courtesy of Ryan O’Grady, LATI Coordinator.

Did you ever want to make your own minicomic, perform at an open mic night, learn to sew, or attend baby animal story time with a petting farm?

On Wednesday, June 7, 2023, public libraries in Maryland once again celebrated as the latest LATI cohort graduated. Twenty-six library associates from twelve different Maryland counties presented their capstone projects and received their graduation certificates at the Miller Branch of Howard County Library System. Capstone project program ideas included designing in Minecraft from the basics to pro, Disney-themed karaoke, a recipe swap, sensory story times, teen advisory boards, math summer club, painting at the library, celebrating LGBTQ+ authors, STEAM workshops, and creating a positivity box.

What is LATI?

LATI is short for the Library Associate Training Institute, which serves Maryland public libraries through LSTA grant funds awarded by the Maryland State Library Agency. There has been a history of cooperative training for library associates in Maryland since the 1960s. In 1980, The Division of Library Development and Services (now known as the Maryland State Library Agency) began to offer an approved, statewide program to ensure consistent, quality customer service for all 24 public and three regional library systems. LATI’s vision is that Maryland customers receive exceptional service, and its mission is to provide tools, techniques, information, ideas, and practical opportunities for Library Associates (LAs) to enhance and develop their professional competencies.

Spring 2023 LATI

The cohort of LAs spent the spring engaged in instruction from expert trainers across all Maryland public libraries. Highlights included when LAs had the chance to “poke and play” at the Exploration Commons at 50 East, Carroll County Public Library, touring the makerspaces and the teaching kitchen, as well as visit the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, learning about statewide services, and attend the Spring 2023 SLRC Conference on the topic of “Safe Spaces” at the Enoch Pratt Free Central Library, Maryland State Library Resource Center in downtown Baltimore.

Support for LATI

Thanks go to the Maryland State Library Agency for their support of LATI through LSTA grant funds. State Librarian Irene Padilla proudly supports each and every LATI graduate. Michael Gannon, LATI Oversight Committee Chair and Acting Co-Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer for Support Services at Prince George’s County Memorial Library System, emceed the graduation as usual. Seth Hershberger, Executive Director at Wicomico Public Library, gave the keynote address, regaling the audience with awe-inspiring stories, including a few about Wicomico Library staff themselves and the amazing work they accomplish every day! Katie George, Professional Development Instructor for Howard County Library System, and Lisa Kenyon, PhD, Staff Development and Training Coordinator for Enoch Pratt Free Library, presented a “choose-your-own-adventure” program on how LAs can advance their library career after LATI.
LATI Oversight Committee (LOC)

LATI is further supported by the LOC which is made up of LOC Chair Michael Gannon, Prince George’s County Memorial Library System; Tamar Sarnoff, Maryland State Library Agency; Natalie Edington, Baltimore County Public Library; Amy Ford, St. Mary’s County Library; Katie George, Howard County Library System; Lisa Kenyon, Enoch Pratt Free Library; John Jewitt, State Library Resource Center; Beth LaPenotiere, Harford County Public Library; Sheila McDuff, Frederick County Public Libraries; and Ashley Teagle, Southern Maryland Regional Library Association.

Thanks go out especially to all the trainers and supervisors across the state of Maryland who help LATI run so smoothly.
Caroline County Public Library graduate Jessica Collins, with supervisors/guests.

Charles County Public Library graduates Nancy Marquardt and Annie Adams, with supervisors/guests.

Frederick County Public Libraries graduates Noa Koronet and Lori Knapp, with supervisors/guests.

Enoch Pratt Free Library graduate JP Paris-Santana, with supervisors/guests.
Howard County Library System graduates Angela Best, Kelly MacBride-Gill, and Monae Rivers, with supervisors/guests.

Harford County Public Library graduate Dena Gloss, with supervisors/guests.

Prince George’s County Memorial Library System graduate Kennedy Jackson, with supervisors/guests.
Queen Anne’s County Library graduate Katie Lively, with supervisor/guest.

Wicomico Public Library graduate Julia Hughey, with supervisors/guests.

Keynote speaker Seth Hershberger, Executive Director, Wicomico Public Library.
LATI graduates and guests tour the self-sustaining green vegetative rooftop terrace at Howard County Library System’s Miller Branch.

Creating a Positivity Box capstone project.

Painting at the Library capstone project.

Group breakout session at the LATI graduation.
An assortment of props from individual capstone projects.

Many thanks again to all the trainers and supervisors across the state of Maryland who help LATI run so smoothly. And congratulations to all the participants!
“Kids are Customers Too!” 2023 Conference

All photos courtesy of Kristianne Buker, Frederick County Public Libraries.

The MLA Children’s Services Division (CSD) annual conference, Kids Are Customers Too!, took place at Howard County Library System’s Miller Branch on Thursday, March 30. With 113 attendees participating in what outgoing CSD President Summer Rosswog describes as “a great success with a full registration,” the conference brought together library staff from across the state to learn, network, and participate in trainings and sessions. These included Integrating Early Literacy Practices into Story Time, presented by Elaine Sarlo of Queen Anne’s County Library and Jessica Crutchley of Baltimore County Public Library; Serving Deaf Kids and Families in the Library, presented by Kathy MacMillan of Stories By Hand; Creating an Engaging Library Space for Tweens, presented by Marie Condenzio of Baltimore County Public Library; Coding in Early Learning, presented by Karen Earp of Somerset County Library; “E” is for Environment: Connecting Children with Nature, presented by Jeanne Andrews of Baltimore County Public Library; and Period Products, Public Pickup, and Passive Programs for Teen Space, presented by Marissa Burns of Baltimore County Public Library. Presenter documents from their breakout sessions can be viewed at Kids Are Customers.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Jaime Campbell Naidoo, presented “A Rainbow of Inclusive Services & Programs: Welcoming LGBTQ+ Youth & Their Families to Your Library.” Dr. Naidoo, the Interim Director and Foster-EBSCO Endowed Professor at The University of Alabama School of Library and Information Studies, is a Past President of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and the author of numerous publications, including Rainbow Family Collections: Selecting and Using Children’s Books with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Content. He addressed how library staff can best welcome and serve LGBTQIA+ youth of various ages as well as their families. Dr. Naidoo’s presentation was well-received, and attendees found his handout of resources related to LGBTQ+ responsive collections, services, and programs particularly useful. Julie Maguire, children’s instructor and research specialist at Howard County Library System, appreciated what Dr. Naidoo shared about meeting customers where they’re at, noting that some customers may be uncomfortable approaching a staff member or even looking at a display, so “sometimes you may have to help people in a different way”—for example, she mentioned how libraries can “tuck in” diverse books with each and every display. She felt his presentation emphasized “making sure that we are representing a diverse group of people all the time, in all the ways”—not just during a given month. Stacey Freedman,
children’s supervisor at HCLS Miller Branch, added, “It was so helpful to have his shared experience, to take another look at how we approach displays, book lists, and programs, so people feel included in an appropriate, respectful manner.”

Outgoing CSD President Summer Rosswog has the following thanks and acknowledgements to share with Crab readers:

“Thanks goes to the Howard County Library System Miller Branch for giving us the space and support to host the conference there. Thanks goes to the 2023 Kids Are Customers Too! Planning Committee, youth staff from across the state who volunteered to plan and execute the in-person, full-day conference this year. And thanks to the CSD 2023 Blue Crab Young Reader Award Committee that presented this year’s Winner and Honor Books at the conference as is tradition.” (https://sites.google.com/view/mla-csd/maryland-blue-crab-young-reader-award.) She also noted that it was a “huge help” to have a representative from MLA’s LGBTQ+ Interest Group and one from MLA’s Teen Interest Group serving on the KAC Conference committee.

If you would like the opportunity to help plan next year’s conference, please email CSD expressing your interest at mlachildrens@gmail.com. And if you would like to share your knowledge and skills, a call for presenters will go out in early fall.
Emerging and Resurging Genres Explored by RAIG

Monica McAbee, Prince George’s County Memorial Library System

On April 27, the Reader’s Advisory Interest Group (RAIG) presented “Emerging and Resurging Genres: Eco-Fiction, Gothic, Hopepunk, and Quozies.” The history, characteristics, and representative titles of each genre were explored, along with appeal factors.

Appeal factors are elements of books or other creative works that appeal to their fans. They can be types of characters (unreliable narrator, kickass heroine), plots (intricate, straightforward, twisty), tone (creepy, uplifting, elegiac), and so on. Use these terms in reader’s advisory conversations with your customers to determine their interests and preferences.

Monica McAbee presented EcoFiction (environmental fiction or climate fiction), recommending recent titles such as Barkskins by Annie Proulx, The Ministry for the Future by Kim Stanley Robinson, and How Beautiful We Were by Imbolo Mbue. EcoFiction can be dystopian, realistic, or hopeful. Many of its tropes have been used in science fiction and are now migrating to mainstream literature.

Meg Faller gave an update on Gothic fiction, which originated in the 1700s and is experiencing a resurgence. Representative titles of this spooky, dramatic genre include Mexican Gothic by Silvia Moreno-Garcia and Our Wives Under the Sea by Julia Armfield.

Crystal Tracy explored Hopepunk, a literature that looks at life as it is, warts and all, but provides a determined optimism, nevertheless. The term was coined by author Alexandra Rowland as a backlash against nihilistic “grimdark” fiction. Excellent examples of Hopepunk include A Closed and Common Orbit by Becky Chambers and the March graphic novel series by the late Congressman and civil rights activist John Lewis.

Amy Jenkins introduced us to Quozies, which are queer cozy mysteries. The term originated with author Rob Osler, and Amy recommended his debut, The Devil’s Chew Toy, along with Magic, Lies, and Deadly Pies by MiSha Popp, Vera Kelly is not a Mystery by Rosalie Knecht, and other titles. In case “cozy mystery” is a new term to you, these are gentle whodunits where killings take place “offscreen,” the detectives are usually amateur sleuths, and the books are often parts of series with continuing characters. Quozies add queer representation to the mix!

If you enjoy geeking out about books and reading, consider joining RAIG. Contact Meg Faller (meg.faller@calvertlibrary.info) or Amy Jenkins (amy.jenkins@pgcmls.info) to learn more.
CENTENNIAL CARNIVAL

SAVE THE DATE

3 November 2023 | 6:30–9:30 PM
Michael E. Busch Annapolis Library

STEP RIGHT UP AND MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR
AN EVENING OF FUN AND FRIVOLITY. COME ONE,
COME ALL TO CELEBRATE 100 YEARS OF THE
MARYLAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION!
Anita Crawford, 2024 MLA Conference Chair, Baltimore County Public Library

As our favorite, long-haired blonde reader and artist, Rapunzel, once said, “BEST! CONFERENCE! EVER!”

But how exactly did we get here?…

Just before the MLA/DLA Conference in 2022, Kelsey Hughes and Michelle Hamiel reached out to me asking if I would join the conference committee as co-chair for MLA in 2023 and lead the conference committee in 2024. I am grateful to have been asked by two library workers that I respect, so once my system approved me, it was an easy yes.

Over the course of nearly twelve months, Kelsey and I collaborated with the conference team and Delaware Library Association, or DLA. This requires a lot of organizing, maintaining deadlines, reaching out to numerous speakers and other library staff members, creating surveys, and coordinating with the MLA Office and DLA. The day of the conference came quickly, and I had every outfit planned out for the conference which then allowed me to really sink into the efforts required throughout the week. This gave me one less thing to have to decide throughout a busy week. While I was not so mentally or physically prepared, I knew the fits were A+.

Kelsey and I carpooled and rolled up to the conference on Tuesday, May 9. Luckily Tif Sutherland happened to be in the parking lot to help us load in our luggage, COVID tests, Silent Auction items, and masks.

We packed around 100 tote bags with vendor information in the MLA office with the help of Amy Miller Meyers and discussed the needs for the next day with Josh Stone and Kate Monagan. Kelsey and I caught up about library stuff and then got to enjoy one last low-key evening that week singing karaoke with the locals and hearing a lot of country songs (including one about ticks) that I had never heard before, at Blue Ruin in downtown Cambridge.

Kelsey and I were up bright and early on Wednesday morning working with folks at the registration desk, accepting Silent Auction donations alongside Catherine Wimberley, greeting so many familiar faces and many new ones. One of my favorite things I learned this conference was that registration desk veterans have an easy way to help attendees remember what location the rooms are in: if it’s part of the water, it is on the same floor as the registration desk; if it’s a boat, it is above the water, which means it is up the stairs from the registration desk. And speaking of those stairs…

If you spoke to me at all during the conference, I had one thing to tell you before we spoke about anything else. I was very, very, very tired of walking up the carpeted stairs that go from the registration desk to the corridor that leads you to the hotel lobby and MLA office. Luckily, we had the perfect summer temperatures outside, making the view of the bay and various lounging spots around the venue easy to enjoy.

The rest of the conference feels like a blur now, but some of my highlights are:

- Working with Josh Stone and Kate Monagan to put out fires and get people where they needed to go every single day of the conference. Knowing that Leah Sims was holding the fort down throughout the conference in the MLA office and she was always there to help me resolve a problem and take any completed 50/50 raffle tickets I had. A huge thank you to Eric Bodvin who made sure all the AV was working and supported the conference from very early in the morning into the evening with our social events.

- Seeing Justina Ireland and hearing her speak. I could have sat there for at least two more hours hearing from her.

- Watching the newest Vanderpump Rules episode in the evening with Paula Mitchell and Chelsea Shockley.

- Amber Farran absolutely killing it throughout the conference, taking photos and being flexible throughout. She always had a smile on her face and the warmest welcome.
Celebrating every success BCMLA brought to MLA this year and seeing our collective appreciation for Sharon Morris’ dedication and the excitement of ushering in the new leadership for BCMLA for 2023-2024.

Hearing about the history behind “We Need Diverse Books” and Ellen Oh’s family history. She made me laugh and cry. I treasure that I got to be in that room.

Selling 50/50 raffle tickets alongside Tif Sutherland throughout Thursday evening, encouraging folks to help benefit MLA and maybe win a little money too!

Making Travis McElroy laugh and somehow finding the boldness to tell him that he is my favorite MBMBaM brother.

Singing “Lovebug” by the Jonas Brothers alongside Nay Kepper after watching Levi Branson and Rorie Cox-Steib be the best karaoke MCs I have ever seen. They were literally sparkling!

Throughout the conference, knowing that Beth Heltebridle and Shirley Mason were facilitating three successful Ignite Talks.

Watching Nay Kepper hand the gavel to Kenneth Wayne Thompson to usher in his year of MLA presidency.

Seeing Ashley Teagle get her photo of Nay Kepper signed and pose with Nay and her mug with Nay’s face on it.

Sitting at the registration desk for most of the last day of conference: picking the 50/50 raffle winner, helping with the Silent Auction, saying goodbye to so many, and catching up with Jake Ciarapica, Kevin Jayce, and Micah Mincey.

Sharing most of the conference alongside one of the best library workers I know: Kelsey Hughes. She inspires me to be better, be bold, be kind, and be me within this profession. I am deeply grateful for this experience with her.

Finally, to my conference committee folks, we value every ounce of input you gave us and every second of time you took to make things happen. I want to thank every single person on the conference committee and every conference speaker: YOU are what made this conference the best conference ever. The number of programs we were able to have and the rich content we provided to attendees is all thanks to you. THANK YOU!

Those are just some of the bright spots to our Level Up conference for me. As your 2024 MLA Conference Chair, I am looking forward to another amazing conference year collaborating with DLA every step of the way and doing so alongside the Butter to my Gordo (a little Vanderpump Rules reference for ya!): Chelsea Shockley, “It’s all happening.” I can’t wait to start planning with everyone in July 2023.

If you are interested in joining the conference committee this year, reach out to me: acrawford@bcpl.net.
Organized outfits planned to perfection: 2023 Conference Co-chair Anita Crawford, Baltimore County Public Library. Photo courtesy of Anita Crawford.

Tif Sutherland, Calvert Library, lending a helping hand with conference load-in. Photo courtesy of Anita Crawford.
Local karaoke at the Blue Ruin in downtown Cambridge, MD. Photo courtesy of Anita Crawford.

Gorgeous views and sunny vistas at the conference venue, the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay in Cambridge. Photo courtesy of Anita Crawford.
Anita with keynote speaker Justina Ireland and MLA Conference Chair Kelsey Hughes. Photo courtesy of Amber Farran, Carroll County Public Library.

Anita with Thursday evening’s keynote speaker, Travis McElroy. Photo courtesy of Anita Crawford.
Anita with MLA President Nay Keppler and silent auction winner Ashley Teagle, Southern Maryland Regional Library Association. Photo courtesy of Amber Farran.

Anita with karaoke MCs Levi Branson and Rorie Cox-Steib, Frederick County Public Libraries. Photo courtesy of Anita Crawford.
Scenes from the MLA/DLA 2023 Annual Conference

Photos courtesy of Amber Farran, Conference Photographer, Carroll County Public Library.
FEATURES: Scenes from the 2023 Annual Conference
Many ways to be deaf

According to the Digest of Education Statistics, 2018 (USDE):
- 88.3% of students with “hearing impairment” in regular public
  schools spent 80% or more time in regular classrooms;
- 62.4% of students with “hearing impairment” spent 80% or more time in
  regular classrooms;
- Language impact one another and communicate in different ways at different times in
  different contexts.

The Crab • Summer, 2023 • Contents: Features • Contents continued
FEATURES: Scenes from the 2023 Annual Conference
FEATURES: Scenes from the 2023 Annual Conference
FEATURES: Scenes from the 2023 Annual Conference
FEATURES: Scenes from the 2023 Annual Conference
FEATURES: Scenes from the 2023 Annual Conference
The Crab • Summer, 2023 • Contents: Features • Contents: Continued

Conference Program Explores the Future of Library Digital Lending

Tracy Miller, Harford County Public Library

The future of library digital lending, a Maryland Library Association conference program cosponsored by the Future of Libraries Interest Group and the Materials Interest Group, brought together library advocates for fair terms for ebooks and audiobooks. As the demand for digital materials from library customers has grown, publishers have made it increasingly difficult and expensive for libraries to offer these materials to customers. The presenters explained the extent of the problem, gave us concrete examples of how it affects libraries, and proposed a variety of solutions.

Michael Blackwell, Director of St. Mary’s County Library and a frequent speaker on this issue, started by breaking it down in monetary terms. He used the example of “The Cake Doctor’s 25 Best Birthday Cakes” to show that costs for this content have increased exponentially. In 2011, this ebook was available for libraries to purchase and loan to one customer at a time for $4.99, in perpetuity. In 2023, that book costs libraries $65 with that same borrowing model, for a two-year term. After that, if the library wants to continue circulation, they must repurchase it at the going rate. For more information about the publishers’ pricing models for library digital content, check out the Publisher Price Watch on the Readers First Website, https://www.readersfirst.org/publisher-price-watch.

Alan Inouye, American Library Association Interim Associate Executive Director, Public Policy and Advocacy, talked about the “unrealized promise of the digital world” and what ALA and other organizations are doing to address it. These organizations are trying to engage the industry in solving the problem. When industry officials resist, library organizations pursue legislative, regulatory, and judicial remedies. He shared an overview of how those efforts are going, including both successes and failures.

Steve Spohn, Executive Director of Ocean State Libraries in Rhode Island, talked about the challenges of providing content to customers while managing collections and budgets. His organization focuses on curating their digital collection to provide an engaging discovery experience. They work with tools from The Palace Project to elevate less expensive, but still high-quality content to their customers.

Micah May of the Digital Public Library of America and The Palace Project shared data about digital borrowing gathered by Carmi Parker of the Whatcom County Public Library system. Her research suggests that 2/3 of electronic book use is accounted for by “power users” of the library. This category generally makes up less than 20% of total users of libraries. These users also borrow the most expensive types of ebooks, including adult fiction and audiobooks. This means that a small segment of library users consumes the majority of digital resources.

Micah went on to explain The Palace Project, which is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing econtent to libraries. They are working with publishers to secure favorable licensing models for materials. The Palace Collection Manager allows libraries to curate their digital offerings from all sources and to elevate less expensive quality content to customers. The Palace App allows customers to discover, download and read in the app. It also includes selections from the Palace Bookshelf, which is a collection of openly licensed content that is available to library customers for free.

The program finished with a selection exercise that used real terms, prices, and budgets to illustrate the difficulty of managing customer demand and available funds. The presenters stressed that what libraries need most are options: a combination of perpetual use licenses and metered licenses, and a price point that is more in line with the cost of a physical book.

To learn more about libraries and ebook lending, including updates on legislation, visit the Readers First website, https://www.readersfirst.org/. For more information about The Palace Project, visit their website at https://thepalaceproject.org.
Computational Thinking Is the New Literacy of the 21st Century
Are Students Prepared?

Laurie Robinson, College of Information Studies, University of Maryland

COMPUTATIONAL THINKING (CT), the concepts and practices associated with using computers and technology to solve problems, is becoming one among many new literacies of the 21st century and is increasingly considered a critical skill for academic and career success. Urban, rural, and at-risk youth are often in school systems that are least able to provide comprehensive CT education, and they are unlikely to have the resources or support to learn these skills at home despite arguably being the population who could most benefit from them. Libraries have stepped in to provide CT educational programs for these youth.

“In places where technology infrastructure and access to computing is lacking, libraries are playing that role to help youth get CT content,” says University of Maryland College of Information Studies Professor Mega Subramaniam. However, libraries have had little centralized guidance on how to assess if their programs are actually having an impact.

“Library staff really want to assess their programs, but they are stretched thin. There are so many programs that they offer to their community. The challenge is how can library staff assess quickly and learn to make their programs better,” says Subramaniam.

Now that’s possible with an easily accessible, new suite of assessment tools from Subramaniam and the IMPACT Libraries research team. The tool was designed and developed with input from 70 library staff from around the country and assesses CT skills, conceptual learning, dispositions, confidence, preparation for future learning or career, positive experiences, and access and equity.

A Closer Look at CT

CT is a problem-solving technique that involves breaking down complex problems into smaller pieces that a computer can understand. It is a fundamental skill that helps individuals create efficient algorithms, design computer programs, and develop solutions to real-world challenges. At its core, CT involves four main areas—decomposition, pattern recognition, abstraction, and algorithmic design.

Decomposition is the process of breaking down a complex problem into smaller, more manageable pieces that can be tackled one at a time.

Pattern recognition involves looking for patterns and similarities within a set of data. This helps individuals identify common themes and begin to highlight regions in which a solution is required. It also enables individuals to eliminate irrelevant information.

Abstraction involves identifying the essential elements that make up a problem and categorizing them so that they are easier to work with.

Algorithmic design is the process of devising a plan or solution to a problem by breaking it down into a sequence of smaller steps, leading to the development of efficient solutions that can be easily implemented.

CT is critical in today’s digital age. It enables individuals to solve complex problems, identify patterns, focus on essential information, and develop efficient solutions. Learning CT can start at a young age and some concepts can be taught without a computer.

For example, a group of preschoolers might sit cross-legged on a mat with a variety of shapes printed on it. The librarian reads aloud from a book about shapes. When the story is finished, the librarian plays music and encourages the children to dance and jump from one shape on the mat to another and create a pattern. As the children enjoy themselves, they are learning pattern recognition, which contributes to CT literacy.

How the Assessment Tool Works

The suite of assessment tools is easily accessible and is organized by outcomes that
match the goals of CT library programs: CT skills, conceptual learning, dispositions, confidence, preparation for future learning or career, positive experiences, and access and equity. For example, for CT dispositions, library staff can use the dispositions checklist, which is an observational tool that will help identify CT dispositions (perseverance, tolerance to ambiguity, and collaboration) among youth in a given team task. For CT conceptual learning, staff can use a rubric that assesses computational thinking concepts and principles that are captured in any youth-designed project (games, apps, code writing, etc.).

Some outcomes are best assessed using talkback boards—a digital or paper poster or whiteboard with prompts and simple statements designed to obtain quick feedback from youth. Some outcomes are best measured using build-your-own interview protocol, a flexible tool that allows library staff to create and customize a set of questions that they find most useful. The questions will help them gain immediate feedback and insights from the youth that participate in the programs. Additionally, each tool comes with analysis sheets, a facilitator guide, and other documents that can be copied, shared, or printed out.

Most CT assessment tools are designed for schools, but library programs are different. For instance, there are no high-stakes tests to pass or fail.

“Failure is embraced and encouraged. That’s very important when you’re learning CT because you will make a lot of mistakes as you learn,” says Subramaniam. In school, youth aren’t given the same amount of time and space to learn from mistakes; teachers have a lot of material to cover and move through lessons at a brisk pace.

Libraries are often more flexible than schools. Youth might come in for a CT program every week for a few months or do a more intensive course over spring break. Most significantly, library programs are driven by children’s interest, not a particular test they’re meant to prepare for.

Assessment tools designed specifically for libraries help library staff evaluate what’s working and revise their programs. Staff can also use data to demonstrate the impact of their programs to the library’s board of trustees, donors, and supervisors. This enables library staff to justify receiving more funding or consider whether to put resources elsewhere.

“Maybe libraries will use the data in ways we have not imagined,” says Subramaniam.
Unintentional Accommodations: Supporting Hidden Disabilities with Universal Design

Ella Alonso and Hannah Erickson, Prince George’s County Memorial Library System

Hannah Erickson and Ella Alonso work in branches providing adult services for Prince George’s County Memorial Library System. Their combined expertise in disability advocacy comes mostly from lived experience; both brought unique perspectives to their MLA/DLA Conference presentation on providing accommodations in the library from an employee’s perspective.

Hidden disabilities are conditions that are not immediately apparent or visible to others yet can significantly impact a person’s daily life. Common disabilities include chronic pain, mental health disorders, autoimmune diseases, and cognitive impairments. With over 40 million disabled Americans categorizing their disabilities as hidden, most library workers provide services alongside someone who is invisibly disabled. “Unintentional Accommodations: Supporting Hidden Disabilities with Universal Design” focused on how library workers can incorporate universal design principles to support coworkers with hidden disabilities and improve workplace inclusivity.

While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was a landmark piece of legislation that created a strong foundation for accessibility, the application for accommodations model falls short. Before even starting the process, a disproportionate burden of the responsibility for seeking out and requesting accommodations falls on the library worker. Individuals seeking accommodations may face barriers such as a lack of awareness about their rights, fear of stigma or discrimination, complex processes, and limited resources. Overcoming these hurdles requires advocacy, education, and support to ensure equal access; these are things most library workplaces cannot provide.

Universal design is preferable to accommodations because it aims to create environments that are accessible and usable by all individuals, regardless of ability. Developed by Ronald Mace, the principles aim to integrate accessibility from the start rather than retrofitting or providing specific accommodations for individuals. Equitable access, flexibility, simplicity, intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and adequate space for use are all emphasized. As illustrated by the Curb-Cut Effect, the phenomenon of disability-friendly features being appreciated by all, universal design benefits everyone by promoting inclusivity and diversity. Leaning heavily on flexibility, simplicity, and perceptible information, library workers can incorporate universal design by making these changes:

- Make as much information available as possible.
- Make as many choices available as possible.
- Make it clear that accommodations, or even preferences, can be requested.
- Make it easy for people to contact someone for more information.
- Challenge your workplace culture when it conflicts with accommodations or preferences.
- Encourage people to work how they feel comfortable.
- Identify or create a clear, shared language around common pain points.

Community support outside the library is available in many formats and allows library workers to tap into a wealth of pre-existing knowledge and assistance. These resources can provide access to essential services, networking groups, educational programs, and social connections, offering valuable information about disabled groups. Exploring these resources can help non-disabled workers learn the shared language some communities utilize.

Attendees of “Unintentional Accommodations: Supporting Hidden Disabilities with Universal Design” left the presentation with several pages worth of resources for further education. Anyone interested in learning more is encouraged to reach out to either presenter.
Visiting the Future at the MLA/DLA Conference

Tracy Miller, Harford County Public Library
All Future Room photos courtesy of Amber Farran, Carroll County Public Library.

At the MLA/DLA Conference, attendees were invited to visit the future! After stepping through a curtained entrance, people were presented with a scenario of a future world and asked to think about how libraries would respond. On Thursday, that world was a dark one: Google and Amazon have combined and taken over the flow of information. On Friday, the world was much brighter, as a librarian had been elected president and there were unlimited amounts of funds available to libraries. On both days, participants shared their thoughts on services, collections, job titles, and technology.

“Future thinking” is a structured way to reflect on what might happen in the next 10-30 years. Imagining different scenarios can invite participants to think through possibilities and be more prepared for a wider range of eventualities. It can also inspire folks to think about what decisions they can make now to create the type of future that they would like to see. Finally, thinking about a future which seems very unlikely can get people to look past their assumptions and biases and think of new opportunities.

Participants in the Future Room on Thursday thought the scenario seemed eerily familiar and might even already be happening. Services we might provide include anonymous access to information and guidance on how to protect identity. Our collections might include locally-created independent materials and small press resources. Staff might perform “safety scans” for customers where they help show customers where their information is vulnerable. It would be important for libraries to provide customers with access to unbiased information.

Friday’s participants seemed overwhelmed by the options—there was less participation overall, although that might be because Friday was a shorter day. One participant even remarked that the challenge might be the difficulty in making decisions between too many options. Job titles that people proposed include “community listener” and “Space Station Librarian.” People suggested that we might be able to provide multi-level community services in one place. There was a belief that people would still want us to be a place for people to come together. And someone suggested that we could circulate electric cars!

If you’d like to see the results and find out more about Future Thinking, check out our resources list at https://sites.google.com/view/mlafutureroom/home. And if you’d like to learn even more about futures thinking, join us for a Future of Libraries Interest Group!
The Crab • Summer, 2023 • Contents: Features  • Contents: Continued

Group (FOLIG) meeting on the first Monday of the month via Zoom. Information is available on the Maryland Library Association website or contact Tracy Miller at millert@hcpponline.org.

Defending Our Collections: “Soft Censorship” Discussion

Monica McAbee, Prince George’s County Memorial Library System

In the previous issue of the Crab, we summarized the first two “Defending Our Collections” discussions sponsored by the Intellectual Freedom Panel (IFP). Our final discussion took place on Wednesday, April 5, led by Laura Bandoch, Materials Assistant Director of Harford County Public Library. The topic was “Soft Censorship.”

Laura began with the disturbing thought, “You may have participated in soft censorship without even knowing.” For instance, have you ever:

- Excluded a title from a booklist for fear of backlash?
- Assigned a title meant for young readers to an adult collection for fear of complaints from parents?
- Neglected to follow your own procedures regarding the request for review of materials?

These are all examples of soft censorship—also called self-censorship, quiet censorship, or sometimes pre-censorship. It’s important to examine our own biases and fears so that we won’t fall prey to these practices.

A big takeaway from the discussion was the need to maintain staff awareness of intellectual freedom issues. Strategies covered included preparing talking points for all staff/service areas, conducting difficult conversations in staff meetings, and providing a monthly newsletter with an FAQ section. What actions would you suggest for your library system?

For your convenience, here are the resources we listed in our previous article with two new links added at the top.

ABC-CLIO webinar Avoiding Self-Censorship: How to Be a Brave Librarian
Bloomberg article with links to resources: The Fight for the American Public Library
ACLU overview on the issue: Defending Our Right to Learn
ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom: Fight Censorship resource page
ALA Unite Against Book Bans action toolkit.
ALA United for Libraries for support and advocacy
Maryland Commission on LGBTQ Affairs
MLA IFP’s LibGuide on intellectual freedom
PEN America report: Banned in the USA
Selection Policy Toolkit from ALA
South Carolina Center for Community Literacy: Get Ready Stay Ready toolkit

Additionally, here are recent MLA actions defending access to libraries and library materials:

- Released statement condemning nationwide attempts to remove books from schools and libraries
- Released statement opposing proposed Missouri rule 15 CSR 30-200.015
- Signed on as partner organization with Unite Against Book Bans
- Renewed membership with the Freedom to Read Foundation

Because librarians stand up for your right to read.
Lending Unconventional Items at the DIY Center!

Eric Laun, Howard County Library System

THE ELKRIDGE BRANCH OF HOWARD COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM (HCLS) was renovated and reopened in March 2018, and the DIY Education Center opened the same day. The model for DIY lending is based on the tool lending library in Berkeley Public Library in California, which has been part of their system since 1979.

I started as a Library Associate and DIY Instructor at the reopening, so I’ve seen the DIY Center from the beginning. It has been a great success, but not without its challenges. However, it’s important to keep in mind that HCLS, and most other systems, have not lent these sorts of items before.

Broadly, our categories of items include baking, cycling tools, outdoor recreation, crafts, garden/yard maintenance, and home improvement. The most popular items are gardening/yard maintenance tools, which are somewhat seasonal. Sewing machines are also so popular that we cannot keep them on our shelves throughout the year. We also lend so many power tools. It has become increasingly difficult to come into the library and find a miter saw, cordless drill, or a sander on the shelf.

Our collection has grown markedly since 2018 and we’ve been as responsive as possible to customer suggestions (we’re unlikely to get chain saws, sorry). We have experienced record circulation this spring; last spring was also a record. We circulate quite a few items out of a relatively small space. There is no cost to the patron as long as the item is returned on time and in the same condition. We try our best to work with everyone who breaks something. Tools and other items, like books, do wear out, and as long as it does not appear to be negligently broken, the patron will not be charged. Surprisingly, we have some folks who will insist on compensating us for minor damage to items.

Borrowing the things you use infrequently is such a great concept. One can avoid the individual expense of purchasing, maintaining, and storing these items. Moreover, it’s green to reduce consumption, and perhaps most importantly, it’s a shared community resource. Like all Maryland public libraries, anyone who lives, works, or goes to school in Maryland is eligible to borrow. However, they must be 21 years of age and sign a waiver.

The classes we teach are a big part of what we provide at the center. These classes provide customers with an opportunity to learn to use items (e.g., sewing machines, power tools) and build confidence to complete DIY projects. We have great attendance for all our DIY programs. The classes are taught in our DIY studio and are free for adults. Although the staff teaches most of them, we also bring in outside experts to provide specialized knowledge. For example, we rely on the Howard County Master Gardeners for a series of amazing programming, and we’ve partnered with the local bicycle shop to provide bike maintenance and education classes. My personal favorite thing about the classes is that people meet each other in person and come to the library to discuss projects.

The response to this endeavor is very positive. We routinely earn praise regarding the helpfulness of staff on tool and project advisory. We hear...
great anecdotes and see photos of successful projects, and thus we gauge ways in which we have saved community members money and reduced consumption. In other words, we can see “outcomes” frequently.

Our future goals are to add new and different items to the collection and to add new sorts of classes that interest our patrons. Hopefully, our current trend upward in circulation will continue. Finally, we would like to expand our partnerships with retailers of building products, nurseries, and trade folk who would be willing to donate their time and help build our curriculum.

The future for the DIY Education Center is only limited by our capacity and lack of imagination. If you’re in the area or would like to make a special trip, email me (eric.laun@hclibrary.org) and come by and see us! Elkridge Branch and DIY Education Center, 6540 Washington Boulevard, Elkridge, MD 21075

DIY Instructor Eric Laun presents a talk on Lending Unconventional Items at the 2023 MLA/DLA Conference. Photo courtesy of Amber Farran, Carroll County Public Library.

Customers participate in a refinishing class at the DIY Center. Photo courtesy of Geoffrey Baker, Howard County Library System.
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OutRAIGeous Reviews

Books recommended by members of the Reader’s Advisory Interest Group

**Before We Were Trans: A New History of Gender** by Kit Heyam (Seal Press, 2022)

*Review by Chloe Scully*

Today’s narratives about trans people tend to feature individuals with stable gender identities that fit neatly into the categories of male or female. Those stories, while important, fail to account for the complex realities of many trans people’s lives. *Before We Were Trans* illuminates the stories of people across the globe, from antiquity to the present, whose experiences of gender have defied binary categories. Blending historical analysis with sharp cultural criticism, trans historian and activist Kit Heyam offers a new, radically inclusive trans history, chronicling expressions of trans experience that are often overlooked, like gender-nonconforming fashion and wartime stage performance. *Before We Were Trans* transports us from Renaissance Venice to seventeenth-century Angola, from Edo Japan to early America, and looks to the past to uncover new horizons for possible trans futures.

Now, I am not the biggest fan of nonfiction. I find it hard to engage with on a meaningful level, sometimes due to the content presented or the language used. However, *Before We Were Trans* genuinely has changed my view on nonfiction as a stodgy genre. Heyam’s writing is accessible, fun, and makes learning about history a pure joy. About ten pages in, I ended up grabbing my highlighter because there were so many great quotes and pieces that I wanted to remember, and by the end, I am confident that my copy is more highlighted than not. If you enjoy learning about history through an unconventional lens, then I can’t recommend *Before We Were Trans* by Kit Heyam enough.
**The Bandit Queens**, by Parini Shroff (Ballantine Books, 2023)

Review by Rohini Gupta

Enter Parini Shroff with her debut novel, *The Bandit Queens*. A young Indian woman finds the false rumors that she killed her husband surprisingly useful—until other women in the village start asking for her help getting rid of their own husbands! I loved this novel because it offers a rare perspective into Indian women—their entrepreneurship and business acumen as well as their spunk and solidarity—and it does so without minimizing their traditionally burdensome role in society. Parini pulls off this very difficult balancing act with aplomb. Filled with clever criminals, second chances, and wry and witty women, it’s a razor-sharp debut full of humor and heart.
Cassandra in Reverse by Holly Smale (Mira Books, 2023)
Review by Meg Faller

Cassandra Dankworth has recently realized she can travel through time. Although limited in scope (she can only go back four months), it’s somewhat helpful as a tool for repairing what seems to be a never-ending series of social mistakes that culminate in her losing her place in her flatshare, her job, and most worryingly, her boyfriend.

As an avid fan of time-travel stories, I thought I knew what to expect when I first dove into this story, but it turned out to be a lot more than expected, and fairly genre-defying! It’s a time-travel story, but it’s not ABOUT time travel. It’s got dating misadventure in it, but it’s not a romance. Cassandra is a young professional trying to get along at work and make it in the city, but it’s not “chick lit.” What it IS is a story full of emotion from the perspective of a woman who has an extremely hard time expressing emotion, and a story about being accepted when your experience of the world is atypical.

Check out Cassandra in Reverse by Holly Smale, author of Geek Girl.
Librarians Look to the Future at Spring Conference

Tracy Miller, Harford County Public Library

All photos courtesy of the Maryland State Library Agency

The Futures Conference, sponsored by the Maryland State Library Agency, took place on Tuesday, April 18 and Wednesday, April 19. Approximately 140 people from different types of libraries attended to learn more about creating a future-ready library.

The keynote speaker was Peter Bishop, the founder of Teach the Future (https://www.teachthefuture.org). Teach the Future’s mission is to “provide materials and training for teaching about the future to students and educators around the world and to inspire them to influence their futures.” Futures thinking is a vehicle for learning judgment and critical analysis skills. Peter encouraged attendees to join him in bringing future thinking to our communities. A follow up meeting for folks who are interested in this challenge took place on Wednesday, June 7. If you are interested in learning more, contact Nini Beegan at nini.beegan@maryland.gov.

Another highlight of the conference was Dr. Sandjar Kozubaev’s activity “Making Futures in Uncertain Times.” Participants worked in small groups to imagine a library collection or service from the future based on visual prompts provided by Dr. Kozubaev. Several of the participants’ proposals were blown up to poster-size and made available for attendees to review the next day, followed by a panel discussion about the process and the ideas in the posters.

Local celebrity economist Dr. Anirban Basu shared an entertaining and informative forecast on near-future economic conditions, humorously themed around Tom Cruise movies. A main takeaway was that it may be Mission Impossible to avoid an economic slowdown in the next year.

Other sessions included such diverse topics as the metaverse, the environment, the political climate in Maryland, and post-COVID literacy rates. Miguel Figueroa, formerly from the Center for the Future of Libraries and consultant for the statewide blueprint for public libraries, led the group in a conversation about what they learned at the conference and steps forward.

The conference concluded with a presentation from author Ytasha Womack about Afrofuturism. Her informative and inspiring presentation was a great way to wrap up the event. Keep an eye out for more opportunities to learn about futures thinking from MSLA and from the Maryland Library Association’s Future of Libraries Interest Group (FOLIG). If you would like to get involved with FOLIG, contact Tracy Miller at millert@hcplonline.org.

Dr. Peter Bishop, Founder and Executive Director of Teach the Future, speaks to attendees about bringing future thinking to library communities.
Dr. Sandjar Kozubaev, research leader at Mailchimp, worked with participants to imagine library collections and services from the future.

Conference participants gathered to explore ideas and strategies for creating a future-ready library.

Dr. Anirban Basu, Chairman and CEO of Sage Policy Group, Inc., shared an entertaining and informative forecast on near-future economic conditions.

Ytasha L. Womack, author of Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture, wraps up the 2023 Futures Conference with her talk on Afrofuturism.
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Action Statement

Ashley Teagle, Southern Maryland Regional Library Association

MLA’s EDI Statement as recently approved is an adjustment of language developed by the original MLA EDI Task Force under Michelle Hamiel’s leadership. Once the EDI Panel was established and our membership was selected, we made sure to discuss the mission of the Panel as a group. For those who are not familiar with the Panel’s work, this is our mission:

“The Maryland Library Association’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Panel establishes and recommends procedures to the Association to enhance the diversity of the Association. The EDI Panel supports and assists MLA’s Executive Board, units, and other associated bodies in being more welcoming and inclusive for all.”

We quickly realized that creating a more inclusive MLA is a huge task and we developed a two-year strategic plan to help guide our work. Our very first goal was to develop an EDI statement for MLA. A special thank you to Moushumi “Mou” Chakraborty, Salisbury University Libraries, who had the vision to arrange the new statement in a way that moves MLA from acknowledgment to action (which is also the EDI Panel’s goal).

Our goals continue to push us to document best practices for MLA. We hope to have a revised accessibility checklist and event planning norms document ready for the Executive Board soon! Look for information on these and other developments in the EDI Panel’s fall column for the Crab.
Find A Ball of Stars

Linda Shore, Ed.D

FRENCH ASTRONOMER CHARLES MESSIER cataloged over 100 fuzzy spots in the night sky in the 18th century while searching for comets—smudges that didn’t move past the background stars couldn’t be comets. Too faint to be clearly seen using telescopes of the era, these objects were later identified as nebulas, distant galaxies, and star clusters as optics improved. Messier traveled the world to make his observations, assembling the descriptions and locations of all the objects he found in his Catalog of Nebulae and Star Clusters. Messier’s work was critical to astronomers who came after him who relied on his catalog to study these little mysteries in the night sky, and not mistake them for comets.

Most easily spotted from the Southern Hemisphere, this “faint fuzzy” was first cataloged by another French astronomer, Nicholas-Louis de Lacaille, in 1752 from Southern Africa. After searching many years in vain through the atmospheric haze and light pollution of Paris, Charles Messier finally added it to his catalog in July of 1778. Identified as Messier 55 (M55), this large, diffuse object can be hard to distinguish unless it’s well above the horizon and viewed far from city lights.

But July is a great month for getting your own glimpse of M55—especially if you live in the southern half of the US (or south of 39°N latitude). Also known as the “Summer Rose Star,” M55 will reach its highest point in northern hemisphere skies in mid-July. Looking towards the south with a pair of binoculars well after sunset, search for a dim (mag 6.3) cluster of stars below the handle of the “teapot” of the constellation Sagittarius. This loose collection of stars appears around ⅔ as large as the full Moon. A small telescope may resolve the individual stars, but M55 lacks the dense core of stars found in most globular clusters. With binoculars, let your eyes wander the “steam” coming from the teapot-shaped Sagittarius (actually the plane of the Milky Way Galaxy) to find many more nebulas and clusters.

As optics improved, this fuzzy patch was discovered to be a globular cluster of over 100,000 stars that formed more than 12 billion years ago, early in the history of the Universe. Located 20,000 light years from Earth, this ball of ancient stars has a diameter of 100 light years. Recently, NASA released a magnificent image of M55 from above Earth’s atmosphere, this magnificent view resolves many individual stars in this cluster. How many can you count through binoculars or a backyard telescope? Original Image and Credits: NASA, ESA, A. Sarajedini (Florida Atlantic University), and M. Libralato (STScI, ESA, JWST); Smaller image: Digital Sky Survey; Image Processing: Gladys Kober.

The large image shows just the central portion of M55 taken by the Hubble Space Telescope. Above Earth’s atmosphere, this magnificent view resolves many individual stars in this cluster. How many can you count through binoculars or a backyard telescope? Original Image and Credits: NASA, ESA, A. Sarajedini (Florida Atlantic University), and M. Libralato (STScI, ESA, JWST); Smaller image: Digital Sky Survey; Image Processing: Gladys Kober.
the Hubble Space Telescope, revealing just a small portion of the larger cluster. This is an image that Charles Messier could only dream of and would have marveled at! By observing high above the Earth’s atmosphere, Hubble reveals stars inside the cluster impossible to resolve from ground-based telescopes. The spectacular colors in this image correspond to the surface temperatures of the stars; red stars being cooler than the white ones; white stars being cooler than the blue ones. These stars help us learn more about the early Universe. Discover even more: https://www.nasa.gov/feature/goddard/2023/hubble-messier-55

The Hubble Space Telescope has captured magnificent images of most of Messier’s objects. Explore them all: https://www.nasa.gov/content/goddard/hubble-s-messier-catalog/

This article is distributed by NASA’s Night Sky Network (NSN). The NSN program supports astronomy clubs across the USA dedicated to astronomy outreach. Visit nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov to find local clubs, events, and more!

Look to the south in July and August to see the teapot asterism of Sagittarius. Below the handle you’ll see a faint smudge of M55 through binoculars. More “faint fuzzies” can be found in the steam of the Milky Way, appearing to rise up from the kettle. Image created with assistance from Stellarium: stellarium.org.
Citizens for Maryland Libraries 2023 Award Recipients

Marion Satterthwaite Library Advocacy Award
Kathie Smarick
For energy, creativity and enthusiasm in building a strong Friends group, fund raising, strategic planning and generating community support on behalf of the Queen Anne’s County Free Library.

Outstanding Employee Award
Untia Bigelow
Recognizing service to the staff, administration, volunteers and users of the Wicomico Public Library through exceptional energy, leadership, planning skills, creativity and enthusiasm.

Outstanding Employee Award
Suzanne Bonser
Recognizing leadership, training skills, creativity and flexibility that, combined with a focus on customer needs, enhance service to the users of the Ruth Enlow Library of Garrett County.

Outstanding Employee Award
Nalani Devendra
Recognizing exceptional job knowledge, diverse skills, enthusiasm and dedication to customer service which combine to provide an exceptional experience to the users the Montgomery County Public Libraries.

Marion Satterthwaite Library Advocacy Award winner Kathie Smarick, Queen Anne’s County Free Library, with Jim DeArney. Photo courtesy of Amber Farran.
Outstanding Employee Award

The Staff and Management Team of the Dorchester County Public Library

Recognizing extraordinary teamwork, flexibility, dedication and commitment to maintain customer service when faced with exceptional staff turnover and the challenges presented by the COVID pandemic.

Outstanding Employee Award

Catherine Jellison

For demonstrating creativity and innovation to enhance the beauty of the library interior and for using indoor plants in innovative ways to provide new experiences for the Anne Arundel County Public Library.

Outstanding Employee Award

Kate Monagan

For helping to improve customer service to all Maryland library users through extraordinary dedication, efficiency, courtesy and helpfulness in her role with the Maryland Library Association.

Jim DeArney, Interim Executive Director, Citizens for Maryland Libraries, with the Outstanding Employee Award Winners from Citizens for Maryland Libraries. Unita Bigelow, Wicomico Public Library; Suzanne Bonser, Ruth Enlow Library of Garrett County; Nalani Devendra, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Julie Kennedy, representing the staff and management team of the Dorchester County Public Library; and Kate Monagan, Maryland Library Association. Not pictured: Catherine Jellison, Anne Arundel County Public Library. Photo courtesy of Amber Farran, Carroll County Public Library.
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Crab Editors
Julie Fitzpatrick, Editor
Howard County Library System, 410-313-1950
Regina Rose, Copy Editor
Amy L. Miller Meyers, Copy Editor
Carroll County Public Library, 410-386-4490
Robert Miller, Copy Editor
University of Maryland University College Library

Art Director and production staff
Bucky Edgett, Lucky Productions,
Westminster MD 21158; 410-346-6925; luckypro.biz

Copyright © 2023 Maryland Library Association
1401 Hollins Street; Baltimore MD 21223
Voice: 410-947-5090
mla@mdlib.org