From the President of RUSA

Ready. Reset. Rejuvenate
Prioritizing Wellness for a Successful Semester

Shannon D. Jones

I am honored to serve as the 2025–26 President of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA). As we begin this new academic semester, I am reminded that August and September carry a natural energy of renewal. Whether you work in an academic, public, special, or other information setting, this is a time to set intentions for the months ahead. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged many of us to reconsider our relationship with work and the sacrifices we are willing to make for our jobs. For me, it raised a critical question: What sacrifices am I willing to make for my job, and at what cost?

After self-reflection, I realized I am not willing to risk it all for the job. I am not willing to sacrifice my life, breath, or being for work. I began listening to my body more, taking small steps toward balance, and embracing the truth that wellness and well-being look different for each of us. Most importantly, I recognized that I have the agency to shape a wellness approach that supports my needs, allowing me to bring the best version of myself to my work and to those I serve.

Why Wellness Matters for Library Professionals

We are living in stressful and troubling times. Libraries continue to face challenges such as book bans, legislative attacks, budget shortfalls, reductions in force or layoffs, and reorganizations. These pressures compound the already demanding work of serving the communities in which our libraries are situated. Taken together, these challenges can lead to burnout. In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) redefined burnout as a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed and is characterized by three dimensions:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
- reduced professional efficacy (World Health Organization, 2019, para. 4)

Research in our own field supports the idea that many library workers face emotional labor, compassion fatigue, and stress (Kendrick 2017; Kendrick 2019; Kendrick 2023). Kendrick's studies on low morale among academic and public librarians highlight the lasting adverse effects of toxic workplace cultures on employee well-being. In "Academic Librarian Burnout: Causes and Responses," editors Christina Holm, Ana Guimaraes, and Nashieli Marcano (2022) share insights addressing the unique challenges of burnout within the academic library environment and

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provide preventative interventions and mitigation strategies. Moreover, Ettarh's (2018) concept of "vocational awe" examines how idealized narratives of librarianship can normalize burnout and undermine personal boundaries.

Without intentional strategies to refresh and rejuvenate ourselves, the demands of the profession can take a toll on both our well-being and professional effectiveness.

Four Strategies to Help You Ready, Reset, and Rejuvenate

There are numerous actions you can take to prioritize your well-being, many of which can be integrated into your workday. While it's important to focus on wellness outside of work, the strategies I'm highlighting here are simple, intentional actions you can practice during your day. These are not grand or time-consuming activities; instead, they are small efforts that can help refresh you, allowing you to maintain your focus, energy, and composure, even when the pace is fast and the demands are high. You do not have to wait until you get home or go on vacation to reset; you can do it in real time, right in your workspace.

1. Center Yourself in Everything You Do

When challenges arise, such as a frustrated patron, a last-minute request, or a tense meeting, pause before reacting. Pausing gives you space to be thoughtful in your response rather than reactionary. This brief moment of mindfulness is not avoidance but preparation, helping you manage your emotions and choose your words or actions with intention. Mindfulness practices, even in short bursts, have been shown to interrupt stress responses and promote clearer thinking and emotional regulation (Druley 2024).

2. Build Micro-Moments into Your Day

You do not need an hour to reset. Sometimes 60 seconds will do. Incorporate short, deliberate breaks into your routine to sustain your energy. A micro-moment might be just what you need to re-center yourself at any given time during a busy day. This could be as simple as getting up from my desk and walking around the library or stepping outside to walk around campus. The latter is an excellent way to get some daily vitamin D and refresh my perspective.

Cooke (2025) offers example micro-moments that can help you protect your mental health at work, including saying thank you out loud and often, recognizing effort and not just outcomes, and giving permission to step away. These brief yet intentional actions can create meaningful shifts in your day and help you stay grounded even when demands are high.

3. Create Your Wellness Toolkit

Keep tools, such as a calming playlist, mindfulness app, or refillable water bottle, close at hand so you can use them when you need them most. Your wellness toolkit can be both physical and digital, and it should be customized to fit your needs and lifestyle. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) notes that

 "… each person's 'healthiest self' is different. We have different bodies, minds, living situations, and people influencing our lives. Each area can impact your overall health. This means we each have a unique set of health needs. Use our wellness toolkits to find ways to improve your well-being in any area you would like" (National Institutes of Health, n.d., para. 1).

This perspective reinforces that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to wellness and that your toolkit should reflect the strategies, resources, and supports that help you thrive.

My fifth-grade teacher taught me a phrase that has stayed with me: "Proper planning prevents poor preparation." This means having a plan that outlines your wellness activities for the week. That plan might include walking 5,000 steps per day, drinking more water, going to bed earlier, scheduling an appointment with a healthcare provider, or having lunch with a colleague or friend. Whatever your activities are, you must be intentional about doing them and schedule them into your day in the same way you would schedule a consultation with a library patron.

4. Set Boundaries and Honor Them

Boundaries are guardrails that protect your well-being. This might mean being intentional about taking breaks from your desk, not responding to emails after hours or on the weekends, and using vacation days to reset or sick leave when you are not feeling well. For example, I do not like meetings during the noon hour. One way I keep this time free is by blocking it on my calendar so that I can eat lunch, which is especially important for me as someone living with type II diabetes. As Cooke (2025) notes, people cannot protect their mental health if they are afraid to protect their time. Leaders play a vital role in modeling and normalizing healthy boundaries by encouraging time off, avoiding after-hours emails, and praising smart prioritization over constant availability.

As we step into this new semester, I hope that you will carry these strategies with you as tools for sustaining your well-being. The work you do matters, and the people you serve are better for the care, expertise, and commitment you bring to your work every day. I wish each of you the very best for the months ahead. May this be a semester where you feel both productive and balanced, challenged yet supported, and inspired in the work that lies before you.

Please do not hesitate to connect with me this year. I welcome your ideas, your feedback, and your stories about the ways you are finding balance and building resilience in your professional life. Together we can continue to make RUSA a place where members feel both professionally enriched and personally supported. Thank you for your continued service, dedication, and leadership within RUSA. I am grateful for all that you do, and I look forward to working alongside you to make this a year of growth, wellness, and purpose.

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For Your Enrichment
Barry Trott, Col. Ed.

Exploring New York City's Shelves
The Musings of the Informed Library Patron

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For Your Enrichment is an occasional column that offers a platform for pieces that are of relevance to the work of librarians but that might not otherwise fit in one of the traditional RUSQ column areas. When I was approached about this piece, I was intrigued by the opportunity to share the perspective of a library user on the work that we do to support research and assist those new to using libraries. It is a view we rarely hear about.— Editor

I am not a librarian. I'm not a library expert or even a library student. I am a library patron. I don't have either a formal education in information science or even an experiential understanding of how libraries operate. Throughout my life, I would go to libraries to learn, yet I never gave a second thought to finding out more about how these very spaces I was in continued to exist. That is, until recently, when a research project of personal interest changed my perception entirely. I have set out to document my experience and what I have learned, hoping that it would give library staff a patron's perspective on their work and the vast resources housed in libraries. I also hoped that it could give my fellow library patrons a glimpse of what they can expect to find in these spaces. Most importantly, I hope it will be a *thank you* to everyone who keeps the libraries running.

Uninformed

Stained glass, wooden tables lit warmly by nearby lamps, and the click-clack of groups of students eagerly typing away—only the average weeknight at the Vassar College library. On any given Monday through Thursday, weekends included during finals season, this place served as the push to finally try that brainstorming session that had proved altogether frustrating, or grit out that paper that you had been putting off. My graduation from Vassar owes a lot to this space, where I completed so many assignments that would have been impossible in a cramped dorm room or a crowded and noisy cafeteria.

A few years removed from school, my desire to learn and write still leaves me with questions. And while having a 9-to-5 job does make that a bit more difficult than a 10:30-to-11:45 class, if college leaves you with anything, it is an expanded idea of what subjects are out there to discover and become engrossed in. I was always interested in music but wanted to explore its more atypical, overlooked forms and their history.

Enter Cabaret.

And so, I did what everyone does when they want to gain more knowledge about something: Googled it and went to the first link—*Wikipedia*. As I clicked through more and more pages, I became further invested in this topic as something to pursue for research purposes. Eventually, I landed on examining the performances of one cabaret artist, Judith Ren-Lay.[1] I wanted to study someone local and recent, whose work would be relatively accessible to me. Now retired, Ren-Lay was a New York–based cabaret artist and singer, with most of her concerts recorded in the 1980s, which provided the perfect subject for my interests.

I have now successfully found an artist to focus all of my research energy on. However, looking back, I wondered: Was I too late to the party? Would I be able to feasibly and thoroughly complete this project given the learning resources available to me?

Through four years of college, I entirely underutilized our academic library. Vassar College's Thompson Memorial Library provided students with an excellent opportunity to dive into subjects of their choosing. Emphasis on *opportunity*. While I absolutely loved the space as one where hours of studying could be accomplished with relative ease compared to other numerous, distraction-filled spaces on campus, I rarely took the time to explore the shelves that surrounded me as I worked, let alone its massive "virtual" shelves.

In all honesty, I saw the library as a workspace, a big coffee shop minus the drinks and snacks. I say this not because I am proud of this standpoint, but because I regret this view and hope that no one else adopts it. After my four years were finished, I found myself without this space for the first time as a fully formed adult. While this in itself was alarming, I would slowly come to learn all the various ways in which I benefited from the library, physical or otherwise, that had largely gone over my head. So many books, journals, reference sources, and archival collections were provided for me simply by attending my school. I had previously accessed these resources with such ease that I got used to taking them completely for granted, much like the physical space of the library. Now, these online resources remained locked behind paywalls; the building was an hour-and-a-half drive away; and it seemed to me that my ability to research had vanished. Unlike in many other aspects, which made me feel that I did truly get the most out of college, I was disappointed that I had not tried to use my library more often.

Adjusting My Sights

Six months after I graduated from college, I moved out of my house in the suburbs and into New York. This would give me a way to be closer to work and friends and to be in a place where getting around was car-free and easy. However, I had not accounted for one of the best parts about moving into New York—and what would serve as the solution to my worries—The New York Public Library. While it may have been an aspect that I had grossly underestimated, in due time, it would grow to become a staple of my experience living here.

There are dozens of NYPL locations across the city, each neighborhood having its own branch and programming catered to the local needs. I knew that first-hand through my job's affiliation with the Brooklyn Public Library (BPL). Here I was, a resident of New York who worked directly with library projects and programming. Clearly, I would seem like someone who understood the potential that libraries held. And yet, months into my move, I was again running the risk of severely underutilizing an excellent resource freely available to me at (most) times of the week. With multiple branches within a fifteen-minute walk of both my new apartment and my work, my solution was staring me

in the face, quite literally, on a daily basis. I could absolutely use the library as my post-Vassar resource. Finally, on a sunny day in May, I decided to take the trip to one of the branches, the Library for the Performing Arts, to see what exactly I may have been missing out on. If there is one thing I have learned, it is not to underestimate a library.

Smarter

On that day, it took me a few turns to find it, but eventually I did arrive at my library. As I decided to peer up, rather than down at my phone for a change, I saw the two parallel red banners that read "NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY." This time, before I left the house, I actually did some planning and explored what resources this space had to offer—a small but time-saving task that I never did at Vassar. As I looked through newspaper archives, music journals, or other video recordings available on-site, I was reminded of the fun in writing, specifically, in the simple pleasures of finding a source that perfectly covers the topic you had been looking for. Not since my college thesis had I tried to do a project of this magnitude, only this time, within the constraints that I had set for myself. It became evident with time that the NYPL encouraged its patrons to explore in this independent, personalized way.

According to the NYPL Online Archives, this was the place where I would be able to access information about Judith Ren-Lay.[2] As I honed my search further and further, I was able to pinpoint various works that would be useful in my project and where I could access them. Some were journal articles regarding the history of the genre of cabaret available to me through online databases like JSTOR or Taylor & Francis. Some were magazine reviews that I could access on-site in the physical collections of music publications sorted by year. What was particularly intriguing, however, was the availability and ease with which I could also view the video recordings of Ren-Lay's live performances. Of course, the goal in original research is to utilize primary sources as much as possible, and through the NYPL, these were readily available. Due to her locality, much of Ren-Lay's work is freely viewable at the NYPL, mostly at the Library for the Performing Arts.

As I walked in, I first saw a staff member in charge of bag check, sitting in front of groups of tables. This branch, one of the biggest in the system, boasted four floors, each with different specializations. In order to view the video recordings that I had highlighted prior to coming here, I needed to get to the Dance and Recorded Sound Division on the third floor. As I walked up the stairs and turned into the division, I saw a sea of forty or so older, bulky 2010s-era PC desktops behind the walls of glass and signage alerting me to drop off my bag. No bags in the recorded sound division and no water bottles either. Now, armed with just my laptop, I entered this new space.

This floor was organized in such a way that library staff sat at the front of a large room, at a big circular desk where they could interact with a few patrons at

Figure 1. New York Library for the Performing Arts

once. Adjacent to the desk, there were the rows of desktop computers, and I walked up to the staff at the front desk to begin the process of research. Because I had already done my preplanning and created my NYPL Special Collections account, all I had to do was merge this account with my newly minted NYPL card, and I was set to go. The library team members assisted me throughout this entire procedure. It was particularly heartwarming to see the staff so devoted to helping a "customer" at a "business" driven by curiosity, not profit.

Each step in this process, from entering the floor to viewing the resource, seemed particularly routinized and specialized to each staff member. First, the person at the front desk would check your card and ensure that you were eligible to view resources from the NYPL. The front desk staff let me know that the process of locating and viewing these recordings was quite simple now: provide the call number of the video I wished to view, and they would check their in-house computer databases to ensure that it was available at the location. According to library staff, these recordings existed in DVD format in archival rooms devoted solely to keeping video resources, and locating a recording for a patron was as easy as a simple search on a computer.

After it was ensured that the recording was available, the person at the front desk would notify the video technician in the archival room to set it up. I was then walked to my desk at the very back of the rows of desktops and told that once the technician had set it up, I was ready to begin viewing. In the case of looking at a book or other written resource, I would fill out a paper slip with the call number, title, and year of the resource I wanted to check out and hand it to a different staff member, who sat to the side of the front desk and specialized in locating print resources.

Researching in a Library... Again

After confirming that my video recording—a live performance in multiple acts by Judith Ren-Lay called "Cassandra's Quilt"—was, in fact, available to be viewed, I was directed to one of the desktops. Each desktop setup was equipped with two monitors, one set of headphones, and a device to control volume. The library attendant informed me that in a few minutes, one of the monitors would begin playing my requested video, with the other serving as a command center through which I could pause, fast forward, or communicate with the video's technician from the archival room. When I pressed for more information about this process, the staff explained that each video recording was stored in a large archival

Figure 2. Video recording playback setup on monitor. By the author.

room downstairs, and most of them were in DVD format. The process of finding a recording by call number used to be done physically by a staff member looking through the systematically organized stacks in order to find the desired recording. Nowadays, however, staff joked, it was doubtful if current employees were even aware of what this collection organization system was.
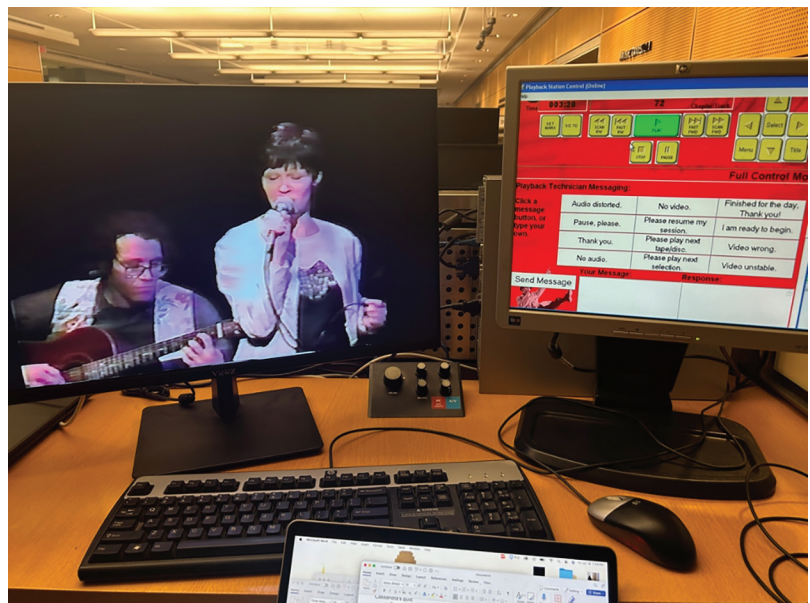
Once located, the technician downstairs would play the disc and cast it to the upstairs desktop for me for as long as I needed to watch the video, take notes, and so on. That was the purpose of the first monitor, while the second was used to control the playback and communicate with the technician. Because this process was assisted by a real person as opposed to a computer, the library did not want its patrons to finish their work and leave without informing the staff who were in the archival room. Therefore, this second monitor came with the option to contact the technician with preset messages like "I am done for the day" or "Thank you," or you can create your own custom message.

The process of watching the video and taking notes was as seamless as could be, and I was given as much time as needed to play, replay, and rewind in order to take sufficient notes for my piece. Working with this kind of equipment was a novel experience for me, one that was particularly informative given the technologies it was utilizing. In a world where the rapid growth of technology can be frightening, to say the least, it created some sense of grounding to know that the important task of learning could still be accomplished with devices such as these.

Because the required materials were viewable only on-site, and at this specific library branch no less, I had to make several trips from my apartment in Flatbush all the way on the B Train to the Upper West Side. The Library for the Performing Arts proved to be an excellent "work-from-home" location.

One of my follow-up visits fell on the day of the World Microsoft CrowdStrike outage, in which a cybersecurity software error brought down associated IT systems throughout the world, and the NYPL was no different.[3] The network outage impacted the library's resource-locating processes. While under normal circumstances, staff members could check to see if a given resource was available through a search on a computer database, now this task would need to be done the old-fashioned way: a person would need to go down to the archival room to ensure that the item was on file. It showed that even while using DVDs and decade-old desktops, modern software and technology systems played a key role in their functioning, and any technology glitch could make them vulnerable.

Figure 3. Playback controls on monitor. By the author.

A New Lease on Libraries

At the time of this writing, I have completed the first draft of my research piece on Judith Ren-Lay. This would have simply not been possible without the NYPL and everything that this system encompasses. My project also sent me to the NYPL Central Branch—the Steven A. Schwarzman Building—as well as numerous others, either for the task of checking out site-specific resources or simply as new places to gather with friends and get the work done.[4]
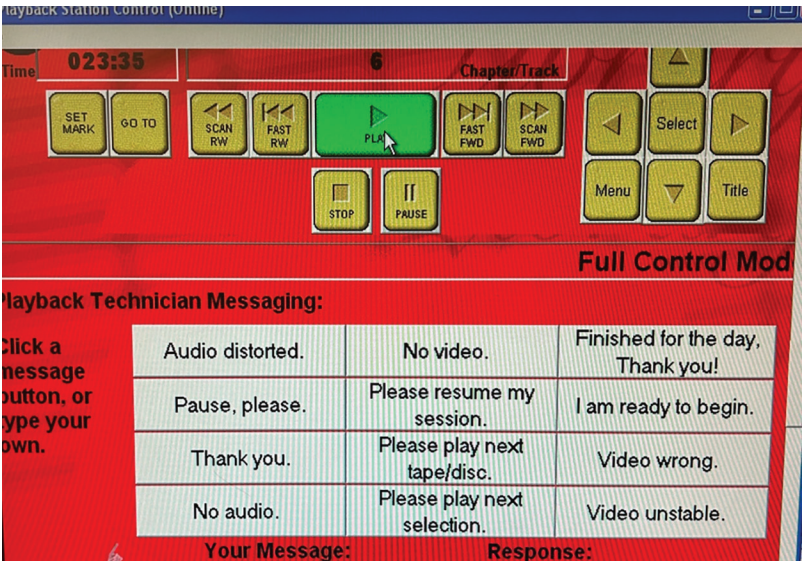
Accessing all of my various video recordings, text publications, or journal articles was seamless, and they could always be requested with the help of staff. Because I, as a new library patron, was unaware of even how to view a resource at a library, having staff so well trained and knowledgeable of the organizational system and procedures for locating and distributing resources was very comforting. I was able to sit for hours at my desktop setup, watching video recordings and sending an occasional message to the technician there to ensure I was not overstaying my welcome. I was always met with grace and encouragement.

One of my sources was a magazine article from 1990, and with the help of available staff, I was able to check it out within minutes of my arrival at the branch, this time requesting help from a different group of the library team than those who had handled my video requests. This too was done with the same efficiency and care.

The abundance of resources available to us is only as good as the library staff who facilitate and enable interactions and services to view these resources, which would be rendered useless without this human element. This is something that is understood very well throughout the NYPL system. At each branch, I was met with not only plenty of computers, workstations, and spaces in which to do work but also, and most importantly, the friendly and knowledgeable staff. Although I started out by wanting to highlight the physical aspects of the library that may go unnoticed, I quickly realized that my biggest discovery was the wonderful *people* who worked in libraries—both at Vassar and at the NYPL. I never had to wait to have a question answered or for a seat to become available. Even in the midst of the global Microsoft outage, I did not have to wait to have my resource checked for and located. All of my many visits to the library showed me the consistent desire to show us, the patrons, exactly what we were looking for and maybe even a few things we did not expect to find.

Dear Library Staff

There is not much that I would say I'd change from my experiences visiting and utilizing public libraries for my research projects. It allowed me to learn so much more about not only the topic that I was interested in, but also about the process of gathering information and bringing together knowledge from different sources. Further, it also taught me the extent to which staff play a key role in doing so.

I definitely do not want to speak for all library patrons; however, from my perspective, I had not fully grasped the role of library staff prior to embarking on this project. I ensured to have all my sources found and ready to go before arriving so that I could make the job of the staff as *easy* as possible to locate them. However, upon interaction, it was clear to me that the mindset of the staff was not to prioritize getting people in and out quickly. Rather, it was to genuinely aid in my research. When inquiring about potential sources for my piece, I was often directed to similar possible articles, essays, videos, or reviews. I felt compelled to discuss my story with them and what I was seeking to understand through my research.

I think that emphasizing the idea of a library staff member as a guide and collaborator would greatly improve how the public conceives of and uses library spaces. Likewise, I believe that understanding libraries in all their richness would greatly enhance patrons' research. For my future research projects, I intend to place less emphasis on solitary searching for sources; instead, I hope to engage in the process in a much more collaborative fashion with library staff.

The visits to library branches have also given me a much better sense of what motivates library staff and what goals they have in mind. They are driven by the ideals and ethics that anyone

could and should have, not only in research work but also in navigating learning in life in general. My experience has prompted me to look into the "Core Values of Librarianship," which serve to guide their work.[5] These included such professional values as "access" or "public good." However, I didn't need to look at the website to see that this was the case. I am still extremely grateful for the openness and empathy of library staff, and for how their actions and attitudes made me feel empowered to continue on a project when finding resources proved difficult. At one point in my search, I needed help locating a New York dance magazine article, and the staff brought me a book that contained thousands of reviews and encouraged me to look through all of the sections to see what could be useful beyond one specific review that I had in mind for my piece. In another case that I described earlier, when technology was down due to the CrowdStrike outage, staff personally talked me through the research process and explained what the issue was. They also helped me remain optimistic and reassured me that my research could go on, even when technology malfunctions, and that I would get the resources I needed, even if it was much more challenging for them to navigate their vast repository. In doing so, they went much further in their efforts than what their daily tasks entailed. Last but definitely not least, they treated me with genuine kindness and understanding, which was demonstrated each and every time.

I can say with certainty that my piece would not have been possible without the help of library staff. Throughout my experience, they went above and beyond what their "responsibilities" might have been in their job description because this line of work is so much more than that. All efforts in cataloging, collection management, and public service are there in pursuit of a simple but altogether humanistic belief that anyone can learn and should have the tools and the skills to do so. The library doesn't make more money if more people use it, nor do library staff get raises if their service is excellent rather than just good. At the end of the day, they are here for people like me, or you, or anyone. I know that they can and will serve as guides, collaborators, information providers, and educators for anyone who has a desire to learn and grow. And if this desire is all you need to have access to such wonderful, professional people and a wealth of knowledge, who could say no?

A Library Map

Through my outings to the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, I became incredibly motivated to check out more branches of the city's library system and to explore other parts of Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn. Although these spaces did not have the archival works that the Library for the Performing Arts did, they served as excellent working spaces, with the same kind of devoted and dedicated staff and the ever-present commitment to encouraging learning, of course. There are more than 200 total branches of the NYPL, BPL, and QPL. This speaks volumes about the communal nature of these spaces, with each physical location tailored to fit its specific group of patrons, its community. In a city whose population outnumbers many countries, it is this kind of thought and care that makes each branch feel so special.

Some branches meld the modern with the historic, undergoing renovations to maintain the traditional feel of the space while upgrading certain elements to meet current needs. Located in the West Village, Jefferson Market Library's (NYPL) gothic, cathedral-like feel was not undone by recent reconstructions to increase the space.[6] Other libraries lean more into the contemporary aesthetic, with high ceilings and long glass windows, like the Stavros Niarchos Library in Midtown.[7] And some may be less aesthetically adventurous, choosing to do what mid-sized branches do: provide a safe space for their local community, be it giving access to Wi-Fi, after-school programming for kids, or classes in which adults could learn new languages; they all carry the same significance to those who

visit. As of this writing, I have compiled a map of every NYPL branch in the city, with a mission to visit as many as I can. So far, I have gone to 20, with the hope of many, many more to come.

Final Musings

As I am working to complete my research, I now have a few distinct conclusions that I have come away with. First, the libraries provide, for free, an incomparable store of information, and, unfortunately, people may not understand the *extent* to which libraries support and nurture their communities. Second, and perhaps more importantly, in libraries, you can meet some of the kindest, most genuine people you can find.

Libraries in New York serve a distinctively crucial purpose. Whereas libraries on a college campus stand as spaces of research or hangouts, for public libraries to exist within a population of more than eight million people, where each person has varying expectations of a library space, takes an unbelievable amount of planning on a macro level, to ensure that diverse needs are met, and an immense amount of care and dedication on a micro level too.

My goal with my research project was to explore a new topic of interest to me. However, taking a step back to examine the way I was going about it allowed me to discover so much more than I would have otherwise. I learned, first, how much I *didn't* know about libraries prior to this project. However, I turned what may have always remained unknown into something that I could write about and present to other people. I hope that through my journey of becoming informed about the full and true potential of a library, I help other patrons to realize the potential of these spaces.

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7. New York Public Library (NYPL). "Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library." https://www.nypl.org/locations/snfl.

Alert Collector

Matthew Galloway, Col. Ed.

Thinking About Genre

Matthew Galloway

I work in a non-Dewey library that essentially uses a combination of BISAC and simplified language to organize our shelves to create an easily browsable collection. While my area of selection is adult fiction and probably the least different from Dewey libraries, traditional genres can still be a conundrum.

It's not that I don't know genre conventions—I have fifteen years of library experience, have volunteered for numerous genre award committees, and even write reviews for *Library Journal*. The puzzle arises from the conflict between publisher, public, and library views on genre. We can probably add vendor ideas as well, not to mention the numerous public figures who have their thoughts on how genre ought to be divvied up.

Take a novel like *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt. I think most libraries would agree this lives most comfortably on a general fiction shelf. It has an octopus that narrates chapters and is certainly human-like in his intelligence and thought patterns, but he isn't magical, and there isn't special technology that allows him to communicate with anyone in the book. It's a delightful conceit.

There are numerous reviews from the public that label this a mystery, and, indeed, the publisher includes "FICTION / Mystery & Detective / Cozy / Animals" as one of the BISAC subject headings. Though I haven't seen those same reviews use FICTION / Magical Realism or FICTION / Fantasy / Humorous to describe the book, marketers chose to add those alongside categories I feel are more useful for readers' advisory: FICTION / Animals, FICTION / Friendship, FICTION / Family Life / General.

Since our vendors translate BISAC into our categories, the order they're listed in determines whether the book finds a home on our fantasy, mystery, or general fiction shelves. While there is a level of arbitrariness to most genre boundaries, we know that some readers will never look at genres they've already decided they don't enjoy. Someone who, perhaps, thinks fantasy must be epic with swords and elves and balrogs is unlikely to browse for this story of family and friendship there. At the same time, will the die-hard mystery reader feel satisfied if they pick up a novel where there is a disappearance but no focus on investigation?

This can get even more complicated with BISAC categories that don't match a single genre but may be the first listed. One vendor's entry for Jesse Q. Sutanto's *Dial A For Aunties* starts with FICTION / Asian American & Pacific Islander before mentioning humor, mystery, or romance. I think we can all agree that Asian American & Pacific Islander is not a genre.

Aside from more specialized BISAC library issues, there's still the question of whose definitions matter more. If many members of the public do think *Remarkably Bright Creatures* is a great

mystery, do we do them a disservice by not putting it with other mystery novels? Particularly as this impression and the novel's success have increased the use of "mystery" to market books. Marketers and the public may be expanding the scope of the mystery genre.

On the other hand, do we risk making genre less useful for readers who use a more traditional definition? Will they feel tricked or betrayed if they pick up a book that isn't "mystery enough" for them and so trust our categories less? And, where do we place the line between mystery and relationship fiction in this case?

A similar recent example might be the delightful *Pony Confidential* by Christina Lynch. This is heavily marketed as a mystery, mostly has mystery-related BISAC categories—with FICTION / Women being the odd one out—and most professional reviewers mention its mystery nature. However, the public reviews that aren't as positive cite the sparseness of the mystery, and the *Library Journal* review doesn't mention mystery at all.

Personally, I would argue it is closer to *Remarkably Bright Creatures* and its focus on relationships than it is to Sherlock Holmes, whose hat adorns the cover. It's a kind of on-the-cusp case. Its reviews are overall incredibly positive—it's a truly gripping novel—but I wonder if they would be even more positive if it were marketed as a book that contains a mystery rather than *being* a mystery? It's an adult *Charlotte's Web* that takes to the road first for revenge, then for forgiveness, that intersects with an old murder case the protagonist pony ambles through while exploring many problems of modern US society. Doesn't that allow for excellent placement in so many sections of the library, in addition to mystery?

There won't be any perfect way to decide how to choose each book's essential genre category— especially in today's world, where genre blends are steadily increasing. There are certainly many libraries that forego genre shelves altogether (as a library user, I tend to prefer this—after all, one thing that sets libraries apart from bookstores is that I can try everything without cost, so getting intrigued by something outside my normal reading tastes comes with no risk). Still, I do think it's important to consider how people use genre across a book's lifetime. Where are publishers telling readers to find a book? How are readers talking about books to each other? And how do we translate readers' genre language to discoverability in our buildings? Do we trust them to be able to use our language, or do we need to have shelves for cozy horror or mythological retellings or romantasy or any other terms gaining popularity?

Amplify Your Impact
Yvonne Dooley, Col. Ed.

Placement of the Library at the Heart of GenAI

Marketing Opportunities For Us All

Rose Melonis

A successful marketing campaign begins with strong relationships, a visible presence on campus or in the community, and a strategic approach.

Generative artificial intelligence (abbreviated as "gen AI" or just "AI" in this column) presents librarians with new opportunities to consider, discuss, and adapt. While our core values remain unchanged, our services, support, and access to information are now shaped by the ways our patrons engage with this rapidly evolving technology. The need for digital AI literacy is pressing, alongside the ethical and responsible use of gen AI, and the ability to assess the information it provides. Branding the library as the AI learning destination is leaning into what we already know and do. Libraries are unique; they are patron-centered, most are freely accessible, and they act as a central meeting place for campuses and communities. Libraries house the "heart" of learning, as places of inquiry. Librarians provide ethical, balanced, fair, and accurate information for patrons.

This column explores how libraries can market themselves as AI learning hubs, while exploring different perspectives on what success looks like, and being aware of potential challenges ahead.

Case Study at Creighton University

Creighton University is an R2, Jesuit institution with a central campus in Omaha, Nebraska, and a health sciences campus in Phoenix, Arizona. There are more than 8,000 students enrolled, with roughly an even split between undergraduate and graduate students.

In the spring of 2025, Creighton University Libraries (CUL) began a pilot project via a Google grant that secured access to three new gen AI tools. The tools being trialed include Scopus AI, Scite, and Keenious. The CUL's challenge has been to learn how these tools work, who would benefit the most from using them, and how best to teach and market them to patrons. A trial inherently provides a great marketing opportunity. There is a real need for AI instruction, and this has provided CUL a chance to let patrons know what we are offering, to brand the library, and to engage our audience. A trial is time-bound, with a chance to collect data or an assessment that can provide valuable insights. The upfront work is learning about the tools, taking part in any related teachings or workshops that might be associated with them. The librarians at CUL have continued to learn about

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gen AI by reading, discussing, attending webinars and conferences, and producing content for faculty on campus. This remains an investment of CUL and a focal point in our most recent three-year strategic plan.

Since the fall of 2024, the research and instruction team at CUL has worked to understand how students have been feeling about gen AI. Through quick in-class polling, we gathered some initial data, which has helped us tailor our approach. Preliminary research on how gen AI could be used in your community is especially helpful before embarking on an AI project. In addition, through one-on-one meetings and informal talks, we received feedback regarding how other stakeholders on campus are feeling regarding AI. We realized that feelings were mixed, and there is a need to provide what we have called "library-centric gen AI." Knowing where the patron base is coming from has been a useful place to start.

A central concern has been how to teach these tools, as gen AI is a completely new technology for our users. We have been tasked with marketing to a group of students who have primarily learned about AI through ChatGPT or similar large language models (LLMs). A major challenge in this pilot has been promoting the distinction between ChatGPT and the library-centric tools we are providing. Our patron base is new to gen AI. No previous knowledge or AI literacy had been introduced when we began the pilot. There is a fine but distinct line between a tool like Scite or Keenious and a tool like ChatGPT. One of the goals of marketing is to increase awareness of the differences between tools with a controlled corpus (e.g., Scopus AI) versus OpenAI. For example, Scopus AI allows users to quickly read a summary of main insights from a curated database of scholarly literature, ensuring accuracy and traceable sources. This is critical for academic integrity, and the quality of the sources is vastly superior. There are ethical implications of OpenAI that we want our patrons to understand. Ethical implications of tools that rely on OpenAI include hallucinations, bias, privacy concerns, and source attribution. To answer the question, "What is an ethical use of gen AI" begins with marketing. The trick is to make the distinction known to our patrons and market it as such.

We initially began marketing and developing a hands-on virtual workshop geared toward faculty, since we knew getting them on board and comfortable with the technology would be critical. The workshop was well-received, and knowledge of the tools has been spreading across campus. It continues to be discussed, as the workshop lives in our virtual learning platform for faculty to access at any time.

To reach students, we are still hashing out the specifics. We know we will have to take a multiprong approach to have the broadest impact, incorporating both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities and resources. Initially, we thought setting up focus groups for our pilot project would work best for us. This would allow us to get more granular data on how students are feeling about these tools, ease of use, and the positive and negative aspects of using the tools. Ideally, there would have been a monetary incentive to participate. As the fall and spring semesters 2025–26 are underway, we will continue to gather more data on gen AI and include it in our instruction sessions (or "one-shots") that we do. We will be connecting it with the services we already provide on information literacy, as AI literacy becomes an evolution of what we already teach.

Partnerships

A good marketing campaign is enhanced by strategic partnerships. In CUL's case, we partnered with the Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE) to help promote our workshops and send out marketing materials to faculty. Generally, workshops are advertised in daily newsletters that are delivered directly to faculty and staff inboxes. We also had a flyer campaign with QR codes to sign up.

Higher-level discussions were held between the director of the library and campus stakeholders. Strategic partnering can help get the message out more quickly and "share the marketing load" with another.

Time Devoted to Marketing

In addition to strategic partnering, a key component of any successful marketing campaign is the amount of time one's staff can devote to it. It can be helpful to have one person, or a small group made up of committed and creative workers, to work on library marketing. On busy campuses, for example, it can be hard to get one's message out. There are always many events going on, and how to engage patrons is a central concern. This can be where partnering makes all the difference. Newsletters, flyers, and email campaigns can all work to further a marketing message. We utilized all the above for our pilot project.

Assessing and Measuring Success

For CUL, "marketing success" means that when patrons start thinking about learning more about gen AI, the library is part of that conversation. A humorous article in Library Journal puts it well: market the library like Hellmann's markets mayonnaise—market everywhere and make your brand the first thing people associate with meeting an information need[1]—or, if you're positioning as an AI hub, with AI itself. Promote your services widely and in diverse ways. Let it percolate in someone's mind, consciously or not, that the library is there when the moment of need arises. While a library cannot be everything to everyone, a strong branding campaign can assist in forging the connections that need to be made, depending on your goals.

Each library will define success differently. For academic libraries, it can look like increased awareness and engagement. Beyond hard numbers, this can be hard to measure; hence, where the "market like mayo" concept comes in. Reaching assessment goals and utilizing exit surveys can also help. For many of us, our goals remain to be full campus partners and educators; marketing can help our education efforts by placing librarians as collaborators. At CUL, we aim to get invited into classrooms as guest lecturers, for example. An increase in that can be a marker of success. In addition, an increase in AI instruction and digital literacy can also indicate the success of a gen AI marketing campaign.

Challenges and Concerns

If libraries are to be marketed as AI learning hubs, there are challenges and implications in doing so.

With AI tools and services becoming separate add-ons or new products (such as in the case of Scopus AI), there is a monetary concern. Not everyone can afford "library-centric" gen AI. It's not like a book or journal article that a library can ILL to someone. It leads to the question: If some institutions have availability, but others don't, what edge do those places have? With budgets ever dwindling and with the lack of federal support in libraries, I wonder how budgets can stretch to accommodate new technologies, learning, and personnel support.

A further concern is the loss of an increasingly unique role libraries play in *how* we offer services. Libraries generally provide a human-centered reference transaction, where a patron can speak to a (live!) human to get their questions answered. We provide a personalized approach, and librarians and library staff get to know their patrons, and vice versa. This has been modified with chat reference, which is still largely human centered. If AI were to replace (some or all) of this,

we risk leaving behind a differentiating aspect of what we provide. I would be hesitant to market tools that could disconnect me from the patron and potentially from the work I do. How to market the library as a hub for gen AI, without marketing the librarian out of the equation? While some research suggests AI chatbots, for example, can "liberate librarians from laborious and repeated work," I am not entirely convinced of that argument.[2] Librarians provide context and nuance as well as personalized guidance depending on learning needs and different learning styles. Librarians understand how a user is feeling (e.g., if a patron is getting frustrated or confused); AI cannot, by nature, be emotionally intelligent. We need to be thoughtful in what tools we offer to patrons, how we are marketing them, and to whom. Ideally, literacy and education remain at the heart of it, and the library as a space for human connection remains paramount.

Conclusion

Finally, as we navigate the evolving landscape of gen AI and libraries, it's essential to keep the library's mission at the heart of what we do. Libraries remain vital centers of learning and connection, and marketing these changes reinforces our relevance and encourages innovation for both us as librarians and for our patrons. We will continue to learn and respond to the possibilities of gen AI.

Notes

1. Ned Potter, "Marketing Libraries Is Like Marketing Mayonnaise," *Library Journal*, April 18, 2013. https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/marketing-libraries-is-like-marketing-mayonnaise.

2. Vivek Kaushal and Ritu Yadav, "The Role of Chatbots in Academic Libraries: An Experience-Based Perspective," *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association* 71, no. 3 (2022): 215–32.

Readers' Advisory
Craig Clark, Col. Ed.

A Look Back at ALA Annual 2025

Craig Clark

Library conferences are a great way to discover new resources, further continuing education, network, and develop lasting friendships in the library world. I attended the ALA Annual 2025 Conference and Exhibition in Philadelphia this year, and I was continually amazed and invigorated by the excitement and enthusiasm of the attendees, speakers, and presenters. In today's political environment, it is easy to get bogged down with threats to the library world, including censorship and budget cuts, but being among friends and colleagues can reinvigorate professional optimism toward this very noble and important field of librarianship in all its forms. As a Readers' Advisory (RA) librarian, I focused on programs and vendors that promoted RA services, but I also took some time to explore groups that worked for librarians and the public to battle the increasing number of organized book-banning groups accosting our right to read. The following is an overview of popular programs and exhibits that caught my interest.

PROGRAMS for the RA Librarian

Library Love Fest – The HarperCollins Library Marketing Team
The undisputed champion of book talks is the group at HarperCollins. Their events are entertaining and sometimes raucous, and their video presentations online are brilliant. Check out their website for access to e-galleys, previews of forthcoming titles, and hilarious videos. Kudos to Virginia Stanley, Lainey Mays, and Grace Caternolo for their dedicated work.

Library Reads – Multiple Programs
Nonfiction You Can't Put Down – This United for Libraries author panel, moderated by Rebecca Vnuk of Library Reads, was informative and entertaining. Authors spoke a bit about their books and were available for a book signing after the panel. The authors included Char Adams (*Black-Owned*, Penguin Random House), Irin Carmon (*Unbearable*, Simon & Schuster), Elizabeth R. Hyman (*The Girl Bandits of the Warsaw Ghetto*, HarperCollins), and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (*The Trafficker Next Door*, W. W. Norton & Co.).

ALMA/LibraryReads Speculative Fiction Adult Author Panel – Authors included Alix E. Harrow, *The Everlasting* (Tor Books); Kirsten Miller, *The Women of Wild Hill* (William Morrow); K. X. Song, *The Dragon Wakes with Thunder* (Ace); Becky Siegel Spratford, *Why I Love Horror: Essays on Horror Literature* (Saga Press); and Andrew Joseph White, *You Weren't Meant to Be Human* (Saga Press).

LibraryReads is a great resource for librarians and staff to read about current popular titles. From their website: Rather than picking "the best" of anything, LibraryReads represents collective favorites—the books library staff loved reading and cannot wait to share. There are no judges or juries. (See our infographic!) Participation is open to everyone who works in a public library, whether

senior staff or new arrivals, in any area of the library. LibraryReads is designed to be inclusive and diverse, representing a broad range of reading tastes and showcasing a variety of new titles, including buzzed-about debuts, genre favorites, bestselling authors, and lesser-known midlist titles that public library staff are raving about.

Booklist Magazine – Read n' Rave
Most, if not all, librarians are familiar with _Booklist Magazine_. Their Read n' Rave program, moderated by Susan McGuire, rivals Library Love Fest for entertainment value. A panel of librarians presents a rapid-fire look at their favorite titles from the exhibit floor. A link to all the titles mentioned is available from the Read n' Rave link above.

United for Libraries – Author Panels at ALA Annual
In addition to the nonfiction panel, United for Libraries presented several other panels, including First Novels, Love Stories, and Thrills and Chills. These panels offer not only a look at forthcoming titles, but they also allow librarians to listen to the authors' motivations and back stories.

Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence in Fiction and Nonfiction
Selected each year by a panel of librarians, bookstore owners, and ALA staff, the Carnegie Medal represents the best in literary fiction and nonfiction. ALA's website lists the winners, finalists, and longlist, a great resource for RA librarians for the literary-minded reader. The combination of the Carnegie Medal, RUSA/CODES Notable Books Council, and the Reading List, librarians have access to highly curated adult reading lists representing literary and genre titles. (Disclaimer: I am a member of this year's Reading List committee, and I believe this and Notables are underutilized and under-marketed resources for librarians.)

Literary Luminaries: Celebrating the Best Reading of the Year

Sponsored by Ingram Library Services, this is another program that allows librarians access to authors in a fun setting. "What could be better than books and baked pastries? Maybe signed books and baked pastries? Join your fellow readers and book lovers and listen to some of the year's best authors from RUSA book and media award winners and Best of Lists Authors as they discuss their works and the craft of writing as well as sign books" (from the conference description).

Authors included:

Anne Byrn, author of _Baking in the American South: 200 Recipes and Their Untold Stories_

Ari Fliakos, narrator of _I'm Starting to Worry about this Black Box of Doom_

Chris Health, author of _Improbable Escape from the Nazis and the Tangled Way We Tell the Story of the Holocaust_

Helen Laser, narrator of _All This and More_

Diane McKinney-Whetstone, author of _Family Spirit_

Yume Kitasei, author of _The Stardust Grail_

Penguin Random House Gala Author Tea sponsored by Overdrive

This is a very popular long-running event at ALA. Enjoy tea and treats while hearing from bestselling writers about their forthcoming titles during this annual United for Libraries event. Featured authors will include Mary Roach (*Replaceable You*), Lily King (*Heart the Lover*), Sarah Penner (*The Amalfi Curse*), Catherine Newman (*Wreck*), and Sam Sussman (*Boy from the North Country*). Attendees will receive advance copies and have the opportunity to have them signed by authors (signed books and advance copies are subject to availability). Moderated by *Booklist's* Donna Seaman (from the conference description).

A Few RA-related Booths

The exhibition floor offers a great opportunity for librarians to discover resources for their RA toolbox. It is also a space for introductions and networking for those who aspire to write reviews, contribute articles, and learn about current offerings from database companies and publishers. Below is a sampling of the booths I visited. I make a point to visit the publishers' booths not for the free books and swag (so much swag), but to ask them which titles they are excited about for the fall. An exhibitor list is available here. It includes links to individual companies.

I currently write reviews for *Booklist*, and I subscribe to *Library Journal* for their RA content. I also try to browse *Publishers Weekly* and *Kirkus Reviews* (for the stars and snarky final lines). I did not include them in the following description because of the assumption that readers will be familiar with them. However, take some time to browse their sites for read-alikes, feature articles, and curated lists. A good readers' advisor is always building on their knowledge base and making connections to expand their ability to connect readers to their books.

BookPage Magazine

For more than 30 years, *BookPage* has been a trusted source for book reviews, recommendations, and author interviews. Our monthly book review and recommendation guide, available in both print and digital editions, reaches a nationwide audience of more than **400,000 avid readers** through our **3,500 subscribing public libraries and bookstores**. BookPage highlights intriguing new voices as well as anticipated bestsellers, pointing readers to the best new releases across all genres, including historical fiction, literary fiction, popular fiction, mysteries and thrillers, nonfiction, biography and memoir, romance, cozies, audiobooks, lifestyles, children's, young adult, and more (from their website).

BookBrowse: Your Guide to Exceptional Books

BookBrowse is your guide to exceptional books, providing you with all you need to know about the books that matter. For more than two decades, BookBrowse has provided a curated resource of the best in contemporary fiction and nonfiction, with an emphasis on books that not only engage and entertain but also deepen our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. We offer free and premium content, with subscription options for individuals and libraries (so that all patrons and staff can access the content). Because there are far too many books published for you to read *about* all of them, let alone read them all, we seek out and recommend only the best of the best. Then, we give you all the information you need to decide which books are just right for you. BookBrowse provides in-depth reviews and "beyond the book" articles; hand-selected read-alike recommendations for thousands of books and authors; the ability to browse by genre, time period, setting, and a wide range of themes; previews of notable books to be published soon; and extensive resources for book clubs. We also publish four free newsletters (*BookBrowse Highlights*,

Publishing This Week, *Book Club News,* and *Librarian News*) and, for our members, a twice-monthly e-magazine, *The BookBrowse Review*.

Forward Reviews

From their website: Since our inception in 1998, *Foreword Reviews* has never strayed from its mission to help booksellers and librarians discover great books from indie presses. At a time when the trade media devoted nearly all its attention to the larger corporate publishers like Random House and Simon & Schuster, the debut of *Foreword Reviews* introduced a new stream of quality reviews of independently published books to the wholesalers and distributors where booksellers and librarians order their books. The United States has always recognized the importance of a fiercely independent press—one that embraces freedom of thought, multiculturalism, religious diversity, and an understanding that the profit motive shouldn't be the only criterion used when deciding whether to publish a book. The fact that Foreword's business model was built around indie presses caused many heads to turn in the book industry.

The Library of Congress

An unlikely source for readers' advisory material, the Library of Congress website is nonetheless a great resource to explore. There are links to individual states' Center for the Book, and although the National Book Festival will have taken place before the publication of this article, articles and information on past festivals are available.

NoveList

As many of you know, EBSCO's NoveList is the premier database for readers available today. The combination of metadata librarians, curated content, and expert recommendations makes it an invaluable resource for RA librarians. From their website: NoveList began with a problem many library workers face every day—that the world of books is too vast for one person's memory. The original idea back in 1994 was to create a database that would be a "secret weapon" for keeping track of all the great books out there to recommend. Today, we still offer that original secret weapon, plus so much more. Thirty years later, we remain committed to our core mission of connecting books, readers, and libraries.

Readers' Advisory Adjacent – Censorship and Book Bans

Recently, there has been an increasing number of book challenges in libraries. This is a concerted effort that often can be overwhelming to librarians, especially in small systems. The following groups presented programs or had a booth in the exhibit hall, and they offer assistance, tools, and strategies to combat the banning of books.

Intellectual Freedom Awards – Intellectual Freedom Round Table (IFRT)

I had the pleasure of attending the awards ceremony for the IFRT. Organized by the Freedom to Read Foundation and the Illinois School of Information Sciences, this program highlighted several individuals dedicated to supporting intellectual freedom.

The Intellectual Freedom Round Table (IFRT) provides a forum for the discussion of activities, programs, and problems in intellectual freedom of libraries and librarians; serves as a channel of communications on intellectual freedom matters; promotes a greater opportunity for involvement among the members of the ALA in defense of intellectual freedom; and promotes a greater feeling of responsibility in the implementation of ALA policies on intellectual freedom (from their website).

Books Unbanned – Brooklyn Public Library

Inspired by the American Library Association's **Freedom to Read Statement** and the **Library Bill of Rights**, Brooklyn Public Library founded Books Unbanned in 2022 to support the rights of teens nationwide to read what they like, form their own opinions, and work together with peers across the nation to defend and expand the freedom to read.

Books Unbanned responds to an increasingly coordinated and effective effort to remove books tackling a wide range of topics from library shelves in schools and public libraries nationwide. Partnering libraries provide free digital library cards to teens across the country to enhance access to frequently banned materials and support the freedom to read (from their website).

United Against Book Bans – An Initiative of the American Library Association

With more than 200 partner organizations and tens of thousands of individual supporters, Unite Against Book Bans connects, equips, and mobilizes the public to advocate in their communities for the right to read and to defeat attempts at every level of government to censor reading material.

Unite represents the **overwhelming majority of Americans** who believe in the freedom to read. Our coalition members are readers, parents, students, educators, librarians and library workers, authors, publishers, community and advocacy organizations, businesses and workers, nonprofits, faith groups, elected officials, civic leaders, and other concerned people who stand ready to oppose censorship (from their website).

United for Libraries – Association of Library Trusties, Advocates, Friends and Foundations United for Libraries is a national network of enthusiastic library supporters who believe in the importance of libraries as the social and intellectual centers of communities and campuses. No one has a stronger voice for libraries than those who use them, raise money for them, and govern them. By uniting these voices, library supporters everywhere will become a real force to be reckoned with at the local, state, and national levels (from their website).

Library conferences are a vital part of an RA librarian's continuing education and growth in the field. Whether in-person or virtual, regional or national, taking the time to build a knowledge base in Readers' Advisory services, understanding issues and concerns within the field, and meeting with peers and colleagues will make you a more effective librarian.

Reference Services and Instruction
Rebecca Graff, Col. Ed.

From Learning Tool to Teaching Partner

How Librarians Use Generative AI to Support Research Across Disciplines

Bronte Chiang and Kathleen James

Introduction

Librarians in academic, public, and school settings frequently encounter reference questions outside their subject expertise. They also recognize the need for members of the profession to be arbiters of artificial intelligence (AI) in the information landscape and to be among the first to use this technology so that they can effectively advise and teach others how to best do the same.[1] As generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools reshape reference services across library contexts, they offer librarians both a way to address their knowledge gaps and a means to support student learning through instruction. In these instances, GenAI has emerged as a valuable tool for reference and instruction, allowing librarians to quickly build foundational knowledge, identify relevant terminology, and provide more effective research support. Through librarianship training, we have a responsibility to support library users in bridging knowledge gaps and discerning good information from bad.[2] These tools create new opportunities within reference interactions to model customized information literacy processes for library users.[3]

Demonstrating how GenAI works as a research support tool allows librarians to showcase AI literacy skills specific to a person's needs and teaches how they can do it themselves in the future. It can help a patron understand how to harness the GenAI tool as a research partner.[4] Rather than undermining information literacy goals, GenAI can reinforce them by promoting inquiry, critical thinking, and academic integrity. When used intentionally and responsibly, these tools support librarians in meeting their reference responsibilities by providing scalable, adaptable approaches that respond to the needs of twenty-first-century learners.

Reference Support in Unfamiliar Subject Areas

Librarians often support high-level research topics across diverse disciplines without formal subject expertise and rely on transferable reference skills to answer reference questions.[5] GenAI tools, such as ChatGPT, Copilot, and Scite, offer a solution to a lack of subject expertise, with

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outputs providing contextual overviews, suggesting relevant sources, and summarizing unfamiliar concepts.

These tools help fill initial knowledge gaps by surfacing terminology, frameworks, and methodological trends that are discipline specific. The process demonstrates the iterative beginnings of research, with the tool supporting the way.[6] However, their outputs require critical review. Librarians apply information literacy strategies, especially lateral reading, to verify AI content through source confirmation and contextual evaluation. Rather than competing against the GenAI tools, harnessing them to work for librarians can support our workflows.[7] This demonstration of GenAI as part of a reference interview can be sent to the person through the links the tools provide. Within reference interviews, GenAI tools can record and help with the flow of the conversation, moving from their initial question to their next steps beyond their librarian interaction.[8]

Crucially, this shift invites more transparency with library users. Librarians can model the responsible use of AI tools by openly sharing how we have a conversation with the tools about unfamiliar subjects and build understanding ourselves.[9] Rather than treating these tools as shortcuts or secrets, this approach normalizes uncertainty and frames AI use as part of a broader, thoughtful research process. Transparency helps demystify the research journey, reducing the stigma or shame some students may feel when using AI to get started. In doing so, librarians help foster a more open, iterative, and ethical academic culture.

Practical Applications During Reference Interactions

In the evolving world of reference services, librarians may encounter the challenge of students arriving with vague or broad research questions. This challenge may become especially pronounced if the topic is interdisciplinary or unfamiliar and outside of the librarian's expertise. Meanwhile, outcomes that many students report hoping for from a reference interaction are clarity in the research process and receiving support tailored to their specific projects and subject areas. When these outcomes are met, students report finding these interactions the most beneficial and meaningful.[10] GenAI tools offer librarians a promising solution to bridge this gap between patron needs and service delivery. These tools can enhance reference interactions by providing more personalized, subject-specific support that directly addresses individual research requirements. These tools can be used to guide reference interactions by helping to explore research starting points, guide question refinement, and help with keyword development.[11]

For students who seek assistance and are starting with a vague or broad question, the use of GenAI can help to frame research that many students lack when beginning a project. During reference interactions, these tools excel at transforming imprecise queries into focused research questions by prompting users to consider specific elements such as scope, methodological approach, and analytical angle. This is especially useful as students frequently struggle with strong question formulation. GenAI can offer variety in the different angles and areas that students may pursue in a research topic that they might not have considered independently.[12]

Beyond question refinement, these tools offer significant advantages in research planning and vocabulary development. These tools can be used to quickly structure starting points and outline research road maps. They can also be used to generate subject-specific keywords and synonyms that can be especially useful if there is a lack of subject expertise.[13] For example, during a reference interaction with a student interested in "sustainable plastics," Copilot might suggest "biopolymers," "circular economy," or "life-cycle assessment" as additional keywords that could be used to look for

information on the topic in other information sources like subject databases. By integrating these tools thoughtfully into the reference process, librarians can offer more targeted assistance.

Instructional Moments: Teaching with GenAI, Not Just Using It

GenAI tools can also assist librarians in the reference process by providing valuable teaching moments about the importance of critically evaluating research in real time. Librarians can model academic integrity and proper attribution during these reference interactions, demonstrating that AI outputs can serve as great starting points for exploration rather than authoritative sources to be cited directly.[14] The librarian's role in guiding students through this verification of AI-generated information and evaluating it using the same standards applied to other sources further reinforces the responsible and ethical use of these tools and contributes to building stronger information literacy skills.[15]

Librarians also have the opportunity to use these instances to teach students research skills that go beyond any single GenAI tool. Highlighting the best ways to create good prompts can be demonstrated as similar to the way students develop a strong research question or go about refining their traditional search strategies. It is worthwhile to clarify that the process is iterative and should be evaluated at every step.[16] These reference interactions allow librarians to reinforce the idea that students should be using GenAI tools as a supplement to the research process and not a total replacement of traditional and rigorous academic research. Comparing AI outputs and sources with those found in scholarly databases and verifying AI outputs using strategies such as lateral reading will give students a stronger foundation of AI literacy and help them to engage with these types of tools ethically and critically.

Conclusion

As GenAI tools become increasingly embedded in the research and information landscape, librarians are well positioned to lead their thoughtful integration into reference services. Rather than replacing subject expertise, these tools enhance core strengths such as critical thinking, adaptability, and user-centered service. This supports librarians who cannot be experts in all subjects but are asked complex questions. When used responsibly, GenAI can support the iterative and exploratory nature of reference, especially in contexts involving vague, interdisciplinary, or unfamiliar inquiries.

The incorporation of AI into reference work also creates opportunities for greater transparency in how librarians learn alongside library users. By modeling the ethical and strategic use of AI tools, librarians promote AI literacy while demystifying the research process. Making visible the intellectual labor of interpreting, verifying, and contextualizing information affirms the librarian's evolving role as educator, facilitator, and ethical steward of information and technology.

GenAI offers valuable instructional moments during reference interactions, where librarians can model critical evaluation, academic integrity, and proper attribution. These engagements help people understand that AI outputs are starting points, not replacements, for rigorous research, while reinforcing the importance of verification and iterative inquiry. Guiding users in comparing AI results with scholarly sources and employing strategies such as lateral reading strengthens both information and AI literacy.

Grounded in information literacy and supported by emerging technologies, librarians are well equipped to meet the demands of contemporary reference. As tools and user expectations evolve, so must our practices, balancing innovation with the enduring values of librarianship.

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Feature

Subscribe to Open (S2O) Journals

Their Articles' OA Discoverability

Xiaotian Chen

Abstract

Based on the 197 S2O journals listed at "Subscribe to Open (S2O) journals" by Simmons University (https://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/Subscribe_to_Open_(S2O)_journals) in November 2024, this study aims to find out if the S2O journals are included in DOAJ, and if their articles in the current issue are indicated as OA by Google Scholar, Scopus, and Unpaywall. As of December 2024, DOAJ listed 33% of the S2O journals. The OA indication by Google Scholar, Scopus, and Unpaywall was 91%, 32%, and 25%, respectively, with Google Scholar being the best service to let users know that the S2O journals' articles are freely available.

Introduction

Subscribe to Open (S2O) is a fairly new scholarly publication model. Its funding is similar to the traditional subscription model, in which subscribers, such as libraries, continue to make payments to publishers. Different from the traditional subscription model, S2O publishers offer their content open access (OA). Different from typical gold OA journals that either charge authors an article processing charge (APC) or count on support from home institutions or some other funding sources, S2O publishers do not charge authors an APC and may not have a supporting home institution or grant. Instead, S2O publishers continue to count on subscriptions as the main funding source.

There are various ways for users, reference librarians, and other library staff to discover typical OA articles and retrieve them as OA (without subscription or payment), such as OA journals' inclusion in DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), OA discovery and indication services (e.g., Unpaywall), and OA indication by article indexes or discovery services (e.g., Google Scholar, Primo, and Scopus). This study aims to find out if S2O journals are included in DOAJ and if their articles in the current volume/issue are indicated as OA by Google Scholar, Scopus, and Unpaywall at the end of 2024.

Literature Review

S2O was started by Annual Reviews in 2017, with the first S2O journal being the *Annual Review of Public Health*.[1] As the leader of the S2O model, Annual Reviews manages a S2O community site at https://subscribetoopencommunity.org/ and also an Annual Reviews S2O site at https://www.annualreviews.org/S2O. Both these websites provide general introductions to S2O.

Besides the above two websites explaining what S2O is and how S2O works, the following OA article probably offers the most complete introduction to S2O publishing because both the above two websites list this article as a top resource item for S2O:

Crow, Raym, Rick Anderson Gallagher, and Karim Naim. "Subscribe to Open: A Practical Approach for Converting Subscription Journals to Open Access." *Learned Publishing* 33, no. 2 (2020): 181–85. https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1262

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Michael interviewed the leadership of Annual Reviews on their rationale for pursuing S2O.[2] One of the interview questions was the volumes of access after becoming OA. Annual Reviews provided access to data of *Annual Review of Public Health* before OA and after OA: 26,000 downloads in February 2017 and 144,000 downloads in February 2019, which is a growth of more than 5.5 times. Hinchliffe reported that Annual Reviews developed the S2O model in partnership with Chain Bridge Group and with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.[3] Borrego et al. pointed out that Annual Reviews, which developed S2O, is a nonprofit publisher.[4] Bosshart et al. introduced how International Water Association Publishing implemented S2O, and they also reported "unprecedented increase in usage" after migrating to S2O: Article downloads during the first quarter of 2021 were 10 times higher than the same quarter in 2019.[5] Hogan and Eve reported that Taylor & Francis is the first among the big five traditional publishers to try S2O.[6]

Brundy and Steel mentioned author equity, among the advantages offered by S2O, because S2O authors do not have to worry about APC, which is a barrier in scholarly communication.[7] The Rouhi et al. study concluded that the APC waiver programs have failed to provide author equity and suggested that non-APC–based OA practices, such as S2O, should be pursued to improve author equity.[8]

Anderson brought about the sustainability issue of the S2O model because S2O assumes or counts on libraries' continued subscription or payment.[9] Felts et al. reported that all the members of the Big Ten Academic Alliance have participated in S2O deals and that the following are among their concerns on S2O: uncertainty and sustainability, transparency and tracking, challenges in assessing impact, potential publisher manipulation, and perpetual access.[10] Sharp et al. believed that the S2O model could be risky because it depends on the goodwill of libraries and their voluntary spending.[11]

Similar to the Crow et al. article in *Learned Publishing*,[12] the article by Langham-Putrow and Carter in *College & Research Libraries News* is another general introduction article to S2O published in a major library and information science journal.[13] Langham-Putrow and Carter summarized the benefits and challenges of the S2O model.

As of December 2024, no published literature was found on S2O journals and their articles' OA discoverability or search services' OA indication.

Methodology

Simmons University maintains a list of S2O journals at https://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/Subscribe_to_Open_(S2O)_journals. At the end of November 2024, the list had 197 S2O journals. The author of this study downloaded the list of 197 journals and converted the list into an Excel file on November 30, 2024. When the list was downloaded, the list update notice at the bottom of the page noted that "This page was last edited on 27 November 2024, at 10:18." The default order of the list is by publisher.

The 197 journals listed by the publisher are the subjects of this study. During November 30 to December 16, the author picked the first regular article listed in the current volume/issue from each of the 197 journals as samples. The criteria for selecting an article are:

1. Editorials, announcements, forewords, introductions, and other similar items that do not seem to be regular articles are not selected. The first article (regular article) listed in the table of contents is selected.

2. The current issue (most recent published issue) is used to select an article. Because quite a number of journals on the list did not switch to S2O until 2023 or 2024, choosing an article from the current issue would avoid including non-OA articles in the sample.
3. Articles in the "Ahead of Print" status and in the issue that is marked "In Progress" are skipped because they could be too new for indexing services to include them and also too new for Unpaywall to detect them as OA.

The following is a typical example of the 197 sample articles:

Dziubata-Smykowska, Katarzyna. "When Tradition Depends on the Weather: Polish Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Context of Climate Change." *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* 33, no. 1 (2024): 11–25.

Not all 197 sample articles were published in 2024. As of December 2024, the most recent issue of the journal *Conflict and Society* was Volume 9, Issue 1, published in June 2023, and the most recent issue of the journal *Groundings: The Journal of the Walter Rodney Foundation* was Volume 5, Issue 2, published in August 2022.

The 197 articles were searched with Google Scholar and Scopus by article title search during November 30 to December 16, to check if Google Scholar and Scopus can indicate the articles as OA. The Alma link resolver at the author's home institution in North America was also used to determine if the articles are included in Unpaywall and if the journals are included in DOAJ. The author's library has Unpaywall and DOAJ among activated collections in Alma. For each of the 197 samples, the search and link can find out:
- If Google Scholar indicates the article as OA. Usually, Google Scholar's display of the search result would have an OA indication such as "[PDF] berghahnjournals.com," if Google Scholar can detect that the article is freely available.
- If Scopus indicates the article as OA. Scopus would have the label "Open access" above the article title if Scopus knows that the article is freely available.
- If Unpaywall includes the article or not. Alma link resolver can take users from Google Scholar or Scopus to the Unpaywall link on Primo at the author's library, if the article is included in Unpaywall.
- If DOAJ includes the journal or not. Alma link resolver can take users from Google Scholar or Scopus to the DOAJ link on Primo at the author's library, if DOAJ includes the journal that carries the article.
- On rare occasions that an article is not indexed by both Google Scholar and Scopus, the author resorted to the home institution's Primo discovery service. This happens to a few journals, such as *Bibliotheksdienst* and *Historical Interactions of Religious Cultures*.

Findings and Discussions

The complete raw data of the findings are in Appendix A. This section breaks the findings down by DOAJ, Google Scholar, Unpaywall, and Scopus.

Table 1. S2O Journals Included in DOAJ

Included in DOAJ	Not Included in DOAJ	Total
65 (33%)	132 (67%)	197

As summarized in Table 1, in December 2024, 65 (33%) of the 197 S2O journals were included in DOAJ. DOAJ is a selective index or a selective list of OA journals. First of all, publishers need to apply in order for their OA journals to be considered for inclusion in DOAJ. Second, journals have to meet certain criteria before they can be included (https://doaj.org/apply/guide/). Due to those two factors, it is not surprising that S2O journals' inclusion in DOAJ is as low as 33%. To break down by publishers, this study noticed that a few publishers, such as Berghahn Books, have all their S2O journals included in DOAJ, some, such as Annual Reviews, do not have any of their S2O journals in DOAJ, while some have mixed DOAJ inclusions. Appendix A has the details.

It is possible that some of the new S2O journals are in the process of applying for DOAJ inclusion, and more S2O journals will be included in DOAJ later. However, because Annual Reviews is the first publisher that started S2O, and since none of the Annual Reviews journals are in DOAJ, we can conclude that some publishers are either not interested in having their journals in DOAJ or not willing to change their practice to meet the DOAJ requirements.

Table 2. Google Scholar Has OA Indication for the S2O Article Samples

OA Indication	No OA Indication	Not Indexed	Total
179 (91%)	16 (8%)	2 (1%)	197

Google Scholar's results are presented in Table 2. Google Scholar was able to indicate OA full-text availability with an indication like "[PDF] berghahnjournals.com" for 179 (91%) of the 197 sample articles, while Google Scholar did not index two (1%) of the sample articles, and it did not have an OA indication for 16 (8%) sample articles. 91% OA indication is a very high rate.

Table 3. Unpaywall Inclusion of the S2O Article Samples

Included as OA	Not Included	Total
50 (25%)	147 (75%)	197

Compared with Google Scholar, Unpaywall's OA inclusion rate or OA indication rate for the identical sample S2O articles is significantly lower. As shown in Table 3, only 50 (25%) sample articles in this study were included by Unpaywall, and Unpaywall was unable to include 147 (75%) sample articles at the time of the study.

Table 4. Scopus Has OA Indication for the S2O Article Samples

OA Indication	No OA Indication	Not Indexed	Total
64 (32%)	55 (28%)	78 (40%)	197

Similar to DOAJ, which is a selective list of OA journals, Scopus is a selective journal index, meaning not all S2O journals are indexed by Scopus. It is not surprising that 78 (40%) S2O journal articles are not indexed by Scopus (Table 4). Of those sample articles indexed by Scopus, 64 (32%) had an OA label "Open access" above the article title, while 55 (28%) did not have an OA indication. It is worth noting that while most of the S2O journals are on a quarterly or longer basis, Annual Reviews journals have only one issue per year; there are a few exceptions. For example, the *Journal of Applied Physics* is a weekly publication. By December 16, 2024, three December issues were published. Scopus had not indexed the articles from the three December issues yet, much less given them an OA indication. Unpaywall did not include those December articles either. But both Scopus and Unpaywall were able to include November articles and indicate their OA status. On the

other hand, Google Scholar was able to both index the December articles and indicate their OA full-text availability.

Although DOAJ did not include many of the 197 S2O journals, and although Unpaywall either was unable to or needed more time to cover the sample articles in this study, most of the S2O journals are included in a certain OA collection maintained by their publisher or a third party. The following are examples of the OA collections in the author's home institution's Alma system, and libraries can activate those OA collections so that library users would know the OA full-text availability of the S2O journal articles:

- "Annual Reviews Open Access" is an OA collection in Alma Community Zone (CZ) that Alma libraries can activate. The collection includes Annual Reviews' S2O journals, such as *Annual Review of Genomics and Human Genetics*, which is not listed by DOAJ, and whose current issue articles are not included by Unpaywall.
- "De Gruyter: Open Access Journal" is an OA collection in Alma CZ. It includes De Gruyter's S2O journals, such as *Bibliothek Forschung und Praxis*, which is not listed by DOAJ, and whose current issue articles are not included by Unpaywall.
- "JSTOR Free Journals" is another such OA collection in Alma CZ. The difference is that it includes OA and S2O journals from multiple publishers, including S2O journals published by the publisher "Pluto Journals," such as the *Institute of Employment Rights Journal*. Again, the *Institute of Employment Rights Journal* is not listed by DOAJ, and its current issue articles are not included by Unpaywall.

Limitations

This study reports a snapshot at the end of 2024 on S2O journals' inclusion in DOAJ and their articles' OA indication by Google Scholar, Scopus, and Unpaywall. The study chose to select articles from the current volume/issue for two reasons: (1) to ensure the sample articles are indeed OA, since the S2O journals' starting year and publishing frequency vary; (2) to have a comparison among Google Scholar, Scopus, and Unpaywall to see the differences. Due to the dynamic or fluid nature of S2O development as well as their coverage by various services, the results could be different if older sample articles are used. For example, it appears that Unpaywall needs more time than Google Scholar to identify OA articles from publishers' sites, and Unpaywall's OA inclusion could be better if the articles from earlier S2O volumes/issues, instead of the current volume/issue, are used.

Of course, the results on DOAJ inclusion would be the same at the end of 2024 because DOAJ's inclusion is at the journal level.

Conclusions

At the end of 2024, when the sample articles were from the current issues of the 197 S2O journals, Google Scholar was the most complete tool in indexing as well as in indicating OA full-text availability of the S2O journal articles. Google Scholar was able to indicate OA availability for 91% of sample articles. In contrast, Unpaywall was only able to indicate OA availability of 25% of the same samples.

DOAJ is a selective index or list of OA journals. Only 33% of the S2O journals were included in DOAJ at the end of 2024. Scopus, too, is a selective index. Only 60% of the same sample articles were indexed by Scopus, and Scopus was able to indicate 32% of the samples as OA.

Because of the lower OA inclusion/indication rates of Unpaywall (25%), Scopus (32%), and DOAJ (33%), Google Scholar (91%) is much more helpful for users to find OA articles from the current issues of S2O journals. Counting services such as Unpaywall alone may miss a lot of opportunities to realize the S2O availability. Libraries can add as many OA collections to their local systems as possible, such as "Annual Reviews Open Access," "De Gruyter: Open Access Journal," and "JSTOR Free Journals," so that non–Google-Scholar users have alternative ways to the S2O treasures freely available on the internet.

Appendix A. Data from the November–December study of S2O journals. The journal list was obtained on November 30, 2024, from https://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/Subscribe_to_Open_ (S2O)_journals (CC BY). "Y" means yes, and "N" means no in the cells, based on article title searches of the first article in the current issue from the journals during November 30 to December 16, 2024. The list obtained from the website was in order of publishers. It was then re-sorted by journal title, following one reviewer's suggestion.

Journal	Publisher	DOAJ	Google Scholar	Unpaywall	Scopus
ABI Technik	De Gruyter	n	y	y	not indexed
Afghanistan	Edinburgh University Press	n	y	n	n
Algebra & Number Theory	Mathematical Sciences Publishers	n	y	n	y
Algebraic & Geometric Topology	Mathematical Sciences Publishers	n	y	y	not indexed
Analysis & PDE	Mathematical Sciences Publishers	n	y	n	y
Annales de l'Institut Henri Poincaré D	EMS Press	y	y	n	not indexed
Annales de l'Institut Henri Poincaré C	EMS Press	y	y	n	y
Annual Review of Analytical Chemistry	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Animal Biosciences	Annual Reviews	n	y	y	n
Annual Review of Anthropology	Annual Reviews	n	n	n	not indexed
Annual Review of Astronomy and Astrophysics	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Biochemistry	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Biomedical Data Science	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Biomedical Engineering	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Biophysics	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Cancer Biology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	y
Annual Review of Cell and Developmental Biology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n

Journal	Publisher	DOAJ	Google Scholar	Unpaywall	Scopus
Annual Review of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Clinical Psychology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Condensed Matter Physics	Annual Reviews	n	y	y	n
Annual Review of Control, Robotics, and Autonomous Systems	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Criminology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Developmental Psychology	Annual Reviews	n	y	y	not indexed
Annual Review of Earth and Planetary Sciences	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	not indexed
Annual Review of Economics	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Entomology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	y
Annual Review of Environment and Resources	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	not indexed
Annual Review of Financial Economics	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Fluid Mechanics	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	not indexed
Annual Review of Food Science and Technology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Genetics	Annual Reviews	n	n	n	not indexed
Annual Review of Genomics and Human Genetics	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Immunology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Law and Social Science	Annual Reviews	n	y	y	not indexed
Annual Review of Linguistics	Annual Reviews	n	y	y	y
Annual Review of Marine Science	Annual Reviews	n	y	y	y
Annual Review of Materials Research	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Medicine	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Microbiology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	not indexed
Annual Review of Neuroscience	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Nuclear and Particle Science	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	not indexed
Annual Review of Nutrition	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n

Journal	Publisher	DOAJ	Google Scholar	Unpaywall	Scopus
Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	y
Annual Review of Pathology: Mechanisms of Disease	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	y
Annual Review of Pharmacology and Toxicology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Physical Chemistry	Annual Reviews	n	y	y	y
Annual Review of Physiology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	y
Annual Review of Phytopathology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Plant Biology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Political Science	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Psychology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	y
Annual Review of Public Health	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Resource Economics	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	not indexed
Annual Review of Sociology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	not indexed
Annual Review of Statistics and Its Application	Annual Reviews	n	y	y	y
Annual Review of Virology	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Annual Review of Vision Science	Annual Reviews	n	y	n	n
Anthropological Journal of European Cultures	Berghahn Books	y	y	y	y
Anthropology in Action	Berghahn Books	y	y	n	y
Anthropology of the Middle East	Berghahn Books	y	y	y	y
AQUA	IWA Publishing	y	y	n	not indexed
Arab Studies Quarterly	Pluto Journals	y	y	n	y
Arbeit	De Gruyter	n	y	n	not indexed
Astronomy & Astrophysics (A&A)	EDP Sciences	n	y	y	y
Bethlehem University Journal	Pluto Journals	n	y	y	not indexed
Bibliothek Forschung und Praxis	De Gruyter	n	y	n	not indexed
Bibliotheksdienst	De Gruyter	n	not indexed	y	not indexed
Centaurus	Brepols	n	y	n	not indexed
Climates and Cultures in History	The White Horse Press	n	y	y	not indexed
Cognitive Linguistics	De Gruyter	n	y	y	y
Commentarii Mathematici Helvetici	EMS Press	y	y	n	n

Journal	Publisher	DOAJ	Google Scholar	Unpaywall	Scopus
Conflict and Society	Berghahn Books	y	y	y	y
Credit and Capital Markets – Kredit und Kapital	Duncker & Humblot	n	n	n	y
Decolonial Horizons	Pluto Journals	y	y	y	not indexed
Demography	Duke University Press	n	y	n	y
Developmental Neuroscience	Karger	n	y	y	n
Déviance et Société	CAIRN/Médecine & Hygiène	n	y	n	not indexed
Diogène	CAIRN/Presses Universitaires de France	n	n	n	not indexed
DNK Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse kerkgeschiedenis na 1800	Amsterdam University Press	n	y	n	y
Droit et Société	CAIRN/Lextenso	n	n	n	not indexed
Elemente der Mathematik	EMS Press	y	y	n	not indexed
EMS Surveys in Mathematical Sciences	EMS Press	y	y	n	y
Environment and Society	Berghahn Books	y	y	y	y
Environmental Policy and Law	IOS Press	n	y	y	y
ESAIM: Control, Optimisation and Calculus of Variations (COCV)	EDP Sciences	n	y	y	y
ESAIM: ESAIM: Mathematical Modelling and Numerical Analysis (M2AN)	EDP Sciences	n	y	n	n
ESAIM: Probability and Statistics (PS)	EDP Sciences	n	y	y	y
Espaces et Sociétés	CAIRN/Érès	n	n	n	not indexed
Ethnologia Europaea	Berghahn Books	y	y	n	not indexed
Flux	CAIRN/Université Gustave Eiffel	n	y	n	not indexed
Focaal	Berghahn Books	y	y	n	not indexed
Frühmittelalterliche Studien	De Gruyter	n	y	n	n
Geometry & Topology	Mathematical Sciences Publishers	n	y	n	y
Global Environment	The White Horse Press	y	y	n	n
Groundings: The Journal of the Walter Rodney Foundation	Pluto Journals	n	y	n	not indexed
Groups, Geometry, and Dynamics	EMS Press	y	y	n	y

Journal	Publisher	DOAJ	Google Scholar	Unpaywall	Scopus
Historical Interactions of Religious Cultures	Mohr Siebeck	n	not indexed	y	not indexed
Information Services & Use	IOS Press	n	y	n	not indexed
Institute of Employment Rights Journal	Pluto Journals	n	y	n	n
Interfaces and Free Boundaries	EMS Press	y	y	n	y
International Development Planning Review (IDPR)	Liverpool University Press	n	y	n	not indexed
International Journal of Critical Diversity Studies	Pluto Journals	y	y	n	not indexed
International Journal of Cuban Studies	Pluto Journals	y	y	n	y
International Journal of Disability and Social Justice	Pluto Journals	y	y	n	y
Islamophobia Studies Journal	Pluto Journals	y	y	n	not indexed
Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte / Economic History Yearbook	De Gruyter	y	y	n	n
Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik	De Gruyter	n	y	y	not indexed
Journal for the Study of Indentureship and its Legacies	Pluto Journals	y	y	n	y
Journal of Applied Physics	American Institute of Physics Publishing	n	y	n	not indexed
Journal of City Climate Policy and Economy	University of Toronto Press	n	y	n	not indexed
Journal of Combinatorial Algebra	EMS Press	y	y	n	y
Journal of Contextual Economics	Duncker & Humblot	n	y	n	n
Journal of Fair Trade	Pluto Journals	y	y	n	not indexed
Journal of Fractal Geometry	EMS Press	y	y	n	y
Journal of Global Faultlines	Pluto Journals	y	y	y	y
Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies	Edinburgh University Press	n	y	n	n
Journal of Hydroinformatics	IWA Publishing	y	y	n	not indexed
Journal of Intersectionality	Pluto Journals	n	y	n	not indexed
Journal of Legal Anthropology	Berghahn Books	y	y	y	not indexed
Journal of Literary Theory	De Gruyter	n	y	n	n
Journal of Noncommutative Geometry	EMS Press	y	y	n	y
Journal of Spectral Theory	EMS Press	y	y	n	y

Journal	Publisher	DOAJ	Google Scholar	Unpaywall	Scopus
Journal of the European Mathematical Society	EMS Press	y	y	n	y
Journal of Water and Climate Change	IWA Publishing	y	y	n	not indexed
Journal of Water Sanitation and Hygiene for Development	IWA Publishing	y	y	n	not indexed
L'Enseignement Mathématique	EMS Press	y	y	n	not indexed
La nouvelle revue - Éducation et société inclusives	CAIRN/Association la Revue nouvelle	n	n	n	not indexed
Learning and Teaching	Berghahn Books	y	y	n	not indexed
Libri	De Gruyter	y	y	y	not indexed
Linguistic Typology	De Gruyter	n	y	y	y
Linguistics	De Gruyter	y	y	n	y
Mathematical Modelling of Natural Phenomena (MMNP)	EDP Sciences	n	y	y	y
Mathematical Statistics and Learning	EMS Press	y	y	n	n
Medical Law International	SAGE	n	y	y	not indexed
Memoirs of the European Mathematical Society	EMS Press	n	n	n	not indexed
Migration and Society	Berghahn Books	y	y	n	n
Museum Worlds	Berghahn Books	y	y	y	y
Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights	SAGE	n	y	y	y
Nietzsche-Studien	De Gruyter	n	y	y	n
Nomadic Peoples	The White Horse Press	y	y	n	y
Nouvelle revue d'esthétique	CAIRN/Presses Universitaires de France	n	n	n	not indexed
Pacific Journal of Mathematics	Mathematical Sciences Publishers	n	y	y	not indexed
Pedagogiek	Amsterdam University Press	n	y	n	not indexed
Pediatric Neurosurgery	Karger	n	y	n	y
Philosophy, Theology and the Sciences	Mohr Siebeck	n	n	n	not indexed
Physics of Plasmas	American Institute of Physics Publishing	n	y	n	n
Plant Perspectives	The White Horse Press	n	y	n	n
Policy Perspectives	Pluto Journals	y	y	n	not indexed

Journal	Publisher	DOAJ	Google Scholar	Unpaywall	Scopus
Population	CAIRN/Ined	n	y	y	not indexed
Portugaliae Mathematica	EMS Press	y	y	n	y
Preservation, Digital Technology & Culture	De Gruyter	n	y	y	y
Prometheus	Pluto Journals	y	y	n	not indexed
Publications of the Research Institute for Mathematical Sciences	EMS Press	n	y	n	y
Quantum Topology	EMS Press	y	y	n	y
Queeste: Journal of Medieval Literature in the Low Countries	Amsterdam University Press	n	y	n	n
Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken	De Gruyter	n	y	y	not indexed
Rabels Zeitschrift für ausländisches und internationales Privatrecht	Mohr Siebeck	n	y	n	not indexed
RAIRO - Operations Research	EDP Sciences	n	y	n	n
RAIRO -Theoretical Informatics and Applications	EDP Sciences	n	y	y	y
Religion and Society	Berghahn Books	y	y	y	y
Religion in the Roman Empire	Mohr Siebeck	n	y	n	not indexed
Rendiconti del Seminario Matematico della Università di Padova	EMS Press	y	n	n	not indexed
Rendiconti Lincei	EMS Press	y	n	n	not indexed
ReOrient: The Journal of Critical Muslim Studies	Pluto Journals	y	y	n	n
Revista Matemática Iberoamericana	EMS Press	y	y	n	y
Revue internationale de politique comparée	CAIRN/De Boeck Supérieur	n	n	n	n
Semiotica	De Gruyter	n	y	y	y
Sibirica	Berghahn Books	y	y	n	not indexed
Social Analysis	Berghahn Books	y	y	n	y
Social Anthropology/ Anthropologie Sociale	Berghahn Books	y	y	y	y
Socialist Lawyer	Pluto Journals	n	y	n	n
Soziologische Revue	De Gruyter	n	y	n	not indexed
State Crime Journal	Pluto Journals	y	y	y	y
The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology	Berghahn Books	y	y	y	y

Journal	Publisher	DOAJ	Google Scholar	Unpaywall	Scopus
Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies	Amsterdam University Press	n	y	n	not indexed
Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis	Amsterdam University Press	n	y	n	y
Tijdschrift voor Taalbeheersing	Amsterdam University Press	n	y	n	not indexed
Town Planning Review (TPR)	Liverpool University Press	n	y	n	n
Trajecta: Religion Culture and Society in the Low Countries	Amsterdam University Press	n	y	n	n
Travail, genre et sociétés	CAIRN/La Découverte	n	n	n	not indexed
Water & Health	IWA Publishing	y	y	n	y
Water Policy	IWA Publishing	y	y	n	not indexed
Water Practice and Technology	IWA Publishing	y	y	n	not indexed
Water Quality Research Journal	IWA Publishing	y	y	n	not indexed
Water Science and Technology	IWA Publishing	y	y	n	y
Water Supply	IWA Publishing	y	y	n	not indexed
Work Organisation, Labour & Globalisation	Pluto Journals	y	y	n	y
World Review of Political Economy	Pluto Journals	y	y	n	n
Worldwide Waste	The White Horse Press	n	y	n	not indexed
Zanj: The Journal of Critical Global South Studies	Pluto Journals	n	n	y	not indexed
Zeitschrift für Analysis und ihre Anwendungen	EMS Press	n	n	n	n
Zeitschrift für geistiges Eigentum	Mohr Siebeck	n	y	n	not indexed
Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte	De Gruyter	n	y	y	not indexed
Zeitschrift für Soziologie	De Gruyter	n	y	y	not indexed
Zeitschrift für Tourismuswissenschaft	De Gruyter	n	y	y	not indexed
Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie	De Gruyter	n	y	y	y

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Feature

Helping or Overstepping?

Adult Services Librarians Talk About Social Services in Public Libraries

Don Latham, Melissa Gross, and Brittany Baum

Abstract

Public libraries are increasingly seeing patrons with a variety of social services needs. Often, the adult services librarian is the first, and sometimes only, point of contact for these patrons. It is important, therefore, to explore adult services librarians' perspectives on and experiences with addressing patrons' social services needs. Two online focus groups were held with a total of 13 adult services librarians from across the United States. Findings indicate that these librarians are seeing patrons with myriad social services needs, and they are collaborating with community partners and, in some cases, social workers to address them. They generally do not feel that their LIS education prepared them to adequately provide these services. Moreover, feelings are mixed about the extent to which librarians should be expected to perform this kind of work. Overall, they desire clearer guidelines about the librarian's role and what the professional boundaries are in this context.

Public libraries are increasingly called upon to provide social services and social services–related information to patrons, including patrons experiencing housing insecurity, food insecurity, and issues related to mental and/or physical health, addiction, immigration status, and employment, to name a few.[1] Adult services librarians are typically the first, and sometimes the only, point of contact for patrons with such needs, yet while these librarians are equipped to provide information, they may lack training in responding to complex social services needs.[2] Some libraries have addressed this issue by adding a social worker or social work interns to their staff.[3] However, while this is a growing trend, it is still the case that most libraries do not have social work personnel available to them.

According to the *Whole Person Librarianship* website, there are 110 libraries in the United States with at least one full-time social worker, eight with at least one part-time social worker, and 183 with one or more social work interns.[4] By comparison, there are approximately 9,000 public libraries in the United States, with approximately 17,000 library outlets (main libraries, branches, and bookmobiles).[5] Some libraries have responded by offering training to library staff to help them better serve the needs of vulnerable patrons.[6] Relatively little is known, though, about the perceptions and experiences of librarians themselves in responding to patrons' social services needs. To gain an increased understanding of librarians' views, this study sought to address the following overarching research question: What are adult services librarians' perceptions of and experiences with providing social services in public libraries?

To address these questions, focus groups were conducted with adult services librarians in public libraries from across the United States. These focus groups were part of a larger study and were used for the purpose of developing a national survey administered to public librarians in the United States.

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Related Literature

The research literature indicates that patrons with a variety of social services needs frequently turn to public libraries for help. The needs most frequently studied are housing insecurity, mental health, and, more recently, substance misuse.[7] But myriad additional needs are evident as well. For example, Lili Luo et al., through 193 phone interviews and 41 surveys of patrons of a large joint public/academic library, found that patrons' needs included physical and mental health, family issues, employment, and housing.[8] Alanna Kelley et al. surveyed 32 patrons and conducted interviews with five staff members in a suburban library and found that patron needs ranged from concerns about children's success in school to health care, food insecurity, housing insecurity, employment, and mental health.[9] Mary Provence et al. conducted a needs assessment of 1,250 patrons of a large urban library system, including people with a permanent address and those without. Not surprisingly, those experiencing homelessness reported a greater number of basic needs such as clothing, personal hygiene, and a place to stay warm or cool. Overall, the top unmet needs of both housed and unhoused individuals were employment, financial needs, computer and/or internet access, job-related training, transportation, and health insurance.[10] Similarly, Elizabeth Wahler, Colleen Rortvedt, and Tasha Saecker surveyed 655 patrons of a single urban library about their psychosocial needs and found that the top unmet needs were social connections, mental health, financial needs, dental health, education, and health insurance.[11]

To address patrons' social services needs, libraries employ a number of different strategies. The most obvious strategies are by offering programs and services with, as Lily Rose Kosmicki puts it, an eye toward social equity.[12] In a comprehensive literature review, she provides an overview of the kinds of programs and services public libraries across the United States are offering, including collection development guided by community need, access to e-government resources, access to computers and the internet, educational opportunities such as language and literacy training, employment opportunities for members of vulnerable populations, financial information, food and nutritional programs, health and wellness, services for immigrants and refugees, legal services, improving quality of life, promoting diversity, reference services—especially those related to crisis situations, safe and welcoming spaces, information on climate change, community partnerships and outreach, library social workers, and special training for library staff.[13]

Employing social workers in public libraries has been widely discussed in the literature. In fact, two scoping reviews have been published in recent years exploring the phenomenon. Monique Shephard et al. approach the topic from the perspective of library and information science researchers; Sunwoo Lee et al. approach it from the perspective of social work researchers.[14] Shephard et al., in a review of 16 research articles, found that social workers engage in direct contact with library patrons and/or provide training to library staff. Articles described the evolving roles of libraries in addressing social justice issues among diverse patrons and also indicated that there are both opportunities and challenges in collaboration between social workers and librarians.[15] Lee et al. cast a wider net, reviewing both research articles and so-called gray literature, with a total of 53 items examined. They found that three different roles of social workers were documented in the literature: engaging in direct interactions with library patrons, providing training to library staff, and facilitating connections between libraries and social services agencies.[16]

One of the first libraries to hire a full-time social worker was the San Francisco Public Library in 2009.[17] Since then, more public libraries have added either full-time or part-time social workers and/or social work interns to their staff, though the numbers are still relatively small.[18] Several

studies focus on the various roles of the library social worker. Patrick Lloyd, who is a library social worker in Texas, argues that the library can be a protective factor, helping to mitigate risk factors for vulnerable patrons, and that the library social worker is a key part of that service.[19] Provence, in a survey of and interviews with public library social workers, found that the primary roles of these social workers involved establishing relationships with patrons, developing and providing programs, training staff, and working to modify library codes of conduct to make them more friendly to vulnerable populations.[20] In another study of library social workers in three urban library systems, Provence examined the ways social workers engaged in de-escalation techniques with agitated patrons.[21] A number of studies focus on how public libraries in different countries have integrated a social worker into their library services.[22] Other studies describe the use of social work interns in public libraries.[23]

The literature documents a number of benefits to having a social worker on staff. Social workers have the training that allows them to deal more effectively with certain kinds of patron needs, such as mental health issues or addiction problems.[24] Social workers are also trained in de-escalation techniques, which can help in interacting with agitated patrons.[25] Social workers can also assist patrons with time-intensive activities like helping patrons apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits or health insurance or complete job applications.[26]

Not surprisingly, many librarians appreciate having a social worker on staff to help support patrons who are in crisis.[27] There are, however, also potential drawbacks to having a social worker on staff. Issues can arise when the differences between the roles of social workers and librarians are not clearly defined.[28] In such cases, the consequent blurring of professional boundaries can lead to tensions between social workers and library staff and may lead to social workers feeling isolated in the library environment.[29]

Another potential drawback is related to funding, specifically the question of who, considering the budget constraints most libraries face, is going to provide funds to hire a social worker.[30] Other potential drawbacks include a lack of space in the library for the social worker to meet privately with patrons, liability concerns, social worker availability to meet with patrons, and supervising social work interns, especially when there is not a full-time or part-time social worker on staff.[31]

A related issue addressed in the literature is education and professional development training for librarians regarding the provision of social services and social services information. Several studies discuss the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed by librarians to respond effectively to patrons' psychosocial needs. Knowledge and skills related to serving diverse populations are frequently mentioned in the literature.[32] Also mentioned are KSAs related to using de-escalation techniques in interacting with agitated patrons, providing mental health first aid, working with patrons experiencing homelessness, and having more familiarity with social services resources.[33]

A survey of faculty in schools of library and information science found that approximately two-thirds feel that social services coursework is very important or extremely important.[34] However, other studies indicate that librarians are not receiving this kind of training in their pre-service education.[35] Consequently, professional development training is being employed by some libraries to fill this gap in librarians' KSAs. A study of librarians in Mississauga, Canada, for example, found that after training, they felt more comfortable providing services to patrons experiencing homelessness.[36]

The implementation of a Community Health Specialist curriculum in the Free Library of Philadelphia (PA) system greatly improved participants' confidence in their ability to serve patrons experiencing homelessness, mental health issues, substance use disorders, immigration issues, and trauma.[37]

And in Athens, GA, the public library implemented trauma-informed training for library staff.[38] A model for how librarians can interact effectively with people in crisis is offered by Lynn Westbrook in her now classic article "I'm Not a Social Worker." This four-part model, called the Information Services for People in Crisis model, emphasizes understanding the various influences a crisis can have on a patron's self-identity: as driven by the crisis, as driven by a specialized crisis service, as driven by a general service, and via transcendent perceptions.[39] As Westbrook says, "Librarians are not social workers, but they are asked to and certainly can provide practical, effective problem-solving information."[40]

Method

Two focus groups were conducted on Zoom with adult services librarians in public libraries in the United States. A total of thirteen librarians participated—five in one group and eight in the other. Human Subjects approval was sought from Florida State University's Institutional Review Board, and the research was deemed exempt. Recruitment of participants was undertaken through messages posted to professional association listservs—ALA Connect, Public Library Association (PLA), Black Caucus American Library Association (BCALA), REFORMA, Asian Pacific American Libraries Association (APALA), Rainbow Round Table (RRT), and Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT). Focus group members each received a $50 gift card for participating.

Each focus group lasted approximately one hour, was facilitated by a consultant, and was audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. Participants were asked to discuss the kinds of social services needs they were seeing among patrons, the community partners they were collaborating with, their preparation (education, training) for addressing patrons' social services needs, and the kind of help they would like to have. Data were analyzed independently by the three researchers. Codes were developed inductively from the data, and then coding was compared among the researchers, with consensus being established through discussion.[41]

Participants

The thirteen adult services librarians recruited for these focus groups had a range of experience in the field, from one to twenty-two years, with an average length of 6.53 years spent working in the field (SD = 5.63). All participants possessed MLS degrees and self-identified as Asian (n = 1; 7.69%), Black or African American (n = 2; 15.38%), Hispanic/Latino/Spanish origin (n = 1; 7.69%), and White/Caucasian (n = 8; 61.54%), with one participant noting they preferred not to answer.

The types of libraries where these librarians worked were fairly split between urban (n = 6; 46.15%) and suburban settings (n = 7; 53.84%), with most libraries located in the Midwest (n = 4; 30.77%) and Northeast (n = 4; 30.77%) regions of the United States, with three in the West (23.08%), and two in the South (15.38%). Regarding the size of the communities these libraries served, three had a legal service area of 10,000 to 49,000, and nine had a legal service area of 50,000 or more, with one librarian noting that they were not sure of the size of their library's service area. In the sections that follow, participants' real names have been replaced with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

Findings

Overall, participants reported seeing a variety of social services needs among patrons, collaborating with a variety of community partners as well as library social workers and social work interns, feeling underprepared to address patrons' social services needs themselves, and wishing

administrators would communicate more clearly, both to them and to the community, what the library can and cannot do.

Patrons' Social Services Needs

The most frequent social services needs participants reported are related to housing insecurity, food insecurity, and filling out government forms, such as SNAP, Medicare, Medicaid, health insurance, and Social Security benefits. Other needs mentioned include job help and career counseling, assistance with tax preparation, and legal aid. In terms of the latter, some patrons need help with immigration status or applying for asylum. The most common kind of mental health issue that patrons are dealing with is related to addiction, most frequently related to the opioid crisis. Some need tangible items such as clothing, hygiene products (including diapers), or a cell phone, while some are looking for a place to shower or do laundry.

Addressing these needs is sometimes complicated by the fact that the patron seeking assistance is a non–English language speaker, and the library may not have a translator available. A typical response to the question about patrons' social services needs is Claudia's, who said, "We get a lot of questions about filling out forms and other social services regarding food stamp benefits, housing insecurities, and, overall, just like job help as well." Avery, who works in a large metropolitan library system, commented on the extensiveness of social services needs: "I've worked at several different branches … and they've had different flavors of social services needs, but every branch in the system has some of these needs, whether they are unhoused people, a lot of job referrals, job help. About 80 percent of our branches provide afternoon snack [for children and teens]."

Collaborators

In helping to address patrons' needs, participants reported working with a variety of community partners. Some of these are part of local or state government, such as city government, job services, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Motor Vehicles. Libraries frequently partner with local schools as well as shelters, food banks, and family resource centers. Local doctors' offices often provide free health screenings in the library, and local attorneys offer pro bono legal aid.

Several participants reported working with local programs aimed at particular groups, such as women, infants, and children (WIC), senior services, and refugee and immigrant services. Participants' libraries also work with the local police department and with jails and prisons. Connie, who works in a large urban system, said, "Just any general, like, city-related service that you can think of, it's pretty easy to get clearance, so I think if it's a government agency, they're automatically allowed to come in."

Ruth, who works in a much smaller system, explained, "Everywhere is understaffed and doesn't have enough money, and so a lot of times we try to collaborate on different things." Samantha noted that often the partners are other local libraries: "So, the [city] itself has, you know, 30 branches, and they do a lot more, whether it's, you know, computer tech, interviewing assistance, different things like that." And Carol reported, "Most of what I do, at least that I can see, is connecting people with resources, so it's not direct partnership, but it's just knowledge of [local services]."

Overall, participants' experiences with collaborators were positive. Connie, for example, stated, "I'm always really thankful to be able to partner with some expert, you know, because we have so many things that we're trying to help people with, and I don't know everything, and we're here to refer

people to the proper services." And Ruth noted that the benefits work both ways: "[A] lot of times, like, we're offering something for [the partner], whether it's space or people or things, so they're usually very gracious and very thankful."

However, some challenges were reported. Participants noted that because community partners are often as underfunded and understaffed as libraries, what they are able to offer is limited. More than one participant reported being frustrated with the fact that social services organizations do not always follow through on referrals. Some problems arise in establishing policies with partners about who is responsible for what, and participants emphasized the importance of having a clearly written memorandum of understanding. One example offered was when AARP comes into the library to help patrons with their taxes, they need a more secure Wi-Fi connection than what the library has. It was pointed out that such a requirement should be spelled out in advance.

Services Provided

Participants reported several different services their libraries are offering in response to patrons' social services needs. Some of these services are offered in collaboration with a community partner; others are sponsored solely by the library. Among the latter are such things as notary services, services for specific populations such as people with disabilities, access to technology, a place to stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer, and a shelter-in-place location during a storm or other disaster. Some examples of services provided in collaboration with community partners include offering snacks or lunch for children during the summer (in collaboration with a local food bank), exercise classes (with a local fitness instructor), funeral planning (with a funeral home), and supervised family visits (with Child and Family Services).

Library Social Workers

Several librarians reported having one or more social workers on their library staff or in their library system; some libraries are hosting social work interns from local colleges and universities. Others reported partnering with a local organization that provides access to caseworkers, and some have no access at all. Some libraries are providing peer navigators (i.e., people who have formerly experienced a social issue such as homelessness or addiction) available to assist patrons. Community health workers are also available through some libraries.

Although having social workers or social work interns in the library was generally considered a positive thing, some participants expressed mixed feelings. For one thing, a social worker can quickly get overwhelmed by the demand for services and become burned out. For another, confusion can arise about the distinction between the roles of the social worker and the librarian, and participants firmly stated that they are not social workers. Dana described her experience with these issues: "It kind of got to this weird place where it was, like, oh, we have a social worker now. Refer all problems to the social work team, and then it was, like, stop referring your problems to the social work team; they're overwhelmed."

Preparation for Providing Social Services

When asked about their preparation for providing social services to patrons, participants unequivocally stated that their library and information science degree did not prepare them to do this. Several different reasons were offered as to why this was the case. Some stated the courses they took were "too theoretical" with no practical, hands-on experience provided. Connie, for

example, said, "My [LIS program] was very theoretical, and mostly, like, not, at least for working in a public library, it's more—I think you can get so much more out of just actually working there." Several noted they pursued a track in their program of study (academic libraries, for example) that was not focused on public libraries, yet they ended up working in a public library. One even stated, "I'll be mildly controversial, and I'll suggest that I think academic libraries and public libraries don't require the same degree" (Ruth).

Participants acknowledged that courses in research and reference have been useful, as these courses teach how to find information of all kinds. Rachel explained, "My education was very reference and research oriented, but, in a way, that did help because when someone comes to me and they need help figuring out how to get food stamps or … they lost their job or whatever, I can do that research. I can say, 'Well, let's find that out.'"

Another participant stated that a social justice course had proven useful in her work. As for the kinds of courses or topics they wish they had been exposed to, participants mentioned a variety of things: community building, community outreach, community mapping, forming partnerships, social services agencies, social services resources, crisis intervention, and working with specific populations such as LGBTQIA+ individuals, BIPOC individuals, and senior adults. Many participants said they wished more practitioners had been involved in teaching the courses they took. Overall, as Crystal explained, LIS programs need to offer more social services training: "At the end of the day, when you're talking social services, you need more of a social work, community activist, whatever kind of thought process in the training."

Outside of their formal library and information science education, some participants reported gaining valuable knowledge and skills from previous job experiences; examples included the insurance industry, restaurant and retail management, bookstore management, public library paraprofessional staff, and social services counseling. Claudia, for example, said, "I feel like what helps me most is my customer service background, so I'm able to deal with different types of people."

Several participants reported receiving training provided through their library or the American Library Association or the Public Library Association conferences. This training covered a range of topics, including empathy, de-escalation, crisis prevention/intervention, CPR, and working with individuals experiencing housing insecurity. Several indicated they had received no training through their library and that what they have learned has been from on-the-job experience and training they have sought out on their own. To take one example: Carol explained, "I do my own stuff. I'm very into PD myself, but it's not necessarily [something] my library pushes, you know? As an organization, they pushed the Ryan Dowd [working with individuals experiencing homelessness] training. That was the only type of training I found that, as an organization, they're pushing."

What Librarians Need

When asked what they needed in order to feel better supported in providing social services, participants mentioned more on-the-job training, more networking opportunities with librarians doing similar work, and more opportunities to be mentored. Other helpful strategies include being given work time to visit local city and county departments and agencies and allowing librarians to serve on the board of local non-profit organizations. Having more community partnerships— and making it easier to establish such partnerships—was also emphasized, as was the importance of having more in-library programming by community partners. Another strategy suggested was adding one or more social workers to the library staff.

Several participants expressed the need for better support from library administration, more understanding of public services by library boards, and more support services from cities so that libraries do not have to do so much. Ruth noted the administration's lack of support for training: "[I]f you want me to be a good community member, I need, you know, I need to be aware of what's happening. So, it kind of upsets me a little bit that they tell you you have to do [orientation to city agencies] on your own time." And Dana expressed frustration with city government: "I often say that the city really needs to be doing more so that we're not trying to fill in the gaps. … [T]here's stuff, like some of the locations for, like, workforce centers or human services are only open during, like, bankers' hours, and they require appointments."

Professional Boundaries

The issue of boundaries was also discussed, with several participants stating that a clearer definition is needed for what social services in public libraries actually entail. Claudia stated, "I think the role of social services in public libraries needs to be clearly defined if it's going to be a role because there are some things about social services that don't necessarily align with the core values of librarianship." Ruth agreed, noting, "Our general library mission is, you know, focusing on sharing information and offering cultural opportunities … so, yeah, I mean, ideally, we shouldn't be [providing social services]."

Carol, however, offered a different point of view: "I feel like I wanna do more than perhaps the library's comfortable with me doing." Participants felt that library administrators, in particular, need to make it clear to the community what the library can and cannot do. Participants expressed resentment at having to do the jobs of other agencies, although they noted that it is the nature of most librarians to want to be helpful. One said that, while you may want to be helpful, there are limits: "You can only help people so much. They have to wanna do it on their own" (Crystal). Another said they would sometimes like to follow up with patrons but felt that doing so would be outside the boundaries of librarianship; they further noted that co-workers, especially in the absence of clear guidelines, might have different boundaries—and that can complicate things.

One participant suggested that having a social worker on staff might not be such a good idea because "that's overstepping what we're meant to be there for" (Ruth). Avery captured the essence of the dilemma in describing the serious nature of many patrons' social services needs: "I agree that this is reference work … and that is the easiest way to catalogue it in my brain. But at the same time, as I'm looking at an individual, there seems to be so much more at stake, and it's easier for me to get drawn in and really worry."

The Role of Libraries

Finally, on the question of what role libraries should play in an ideal world, opinions were split. Some participants felt that libraries should provide information and refer people to community resources, but not provide social services directly. Rachel stated, "We're not social workers, we haven't been trained to be social workers, so we can't stand in for a social worker and give people all this—what we can do is give them information." Other participants felt that libraries should embrace doing more, as they could offer many benefits to their communities. Julia said, "I can tell you that the movement towards professional empathy and social work has been fantastic that I've seen over the years. I'm really proud of the profession for moving in this direction." Both groups seemed to agree that, overall, libraries should offer more programs, engage in more partnerships with the community, and help patrons to feel supported.

Discussion

The findings will be discussed in relation to the themes that emerged from the analysis of the data.

Participants are providing a variety of social services and social services–related information, but they do not feel adequately prepared to do so.

The adult services librarians who participated in the study are seeing a variety of social services needs among patrons, although this is somewhat dependent on the location of the library, which confirms findings from previous studies.[42] Libraries in more affluent suburbs and those not on a public transportation line tend to see fewer patrons with needs related to socioeconomic factors, such as homelessness and food insecurity. By comparison, urban libraries and libraries in lower-income neighborhoods tend to see more patrons with these kinds of needs. Moreover, patron demographics change over time, and that affects the kinds of needs that will be seen by adult services librarians. As more immigrants move into a community, for example, a library will see more patrons seeking help with immigration status.

Participants, in general, felt they were not well-prepared by their LIS degree to provide social services support to library patrons. This also confirms findings from previous studies.[43] What they know about the topic they have learned from professional development opportunities, previous experience (in social work, for example), or on the job. The problems with their LIS preparation were twofold: most LIS courses that addressed social services needs were elective courses, so not everyone took those classes; also, many people pursued a different track—academic libraries, for instance—in their LIS program but then ended up working in a public library. As for professional development, most participants were happy to have professional development opportunities but resented having to pay for these themselves and complete them on their own time. The literature offers several examples of and models for such training.[44]

Participants' libraries are using a number of different strategies to address patrons' social services needs.

As noted above, adult services librarians are providing social services information, typically in the form of referrals, but in some cases, they are providing actual social services. Almost all participants indicated they developed social services–related programs and services in collaboration with community partners, including shelters, food banks, government agencies, local non-profits, police, healthcare organizations, tax preparation specialists, attorneys, schools, and (in one case) a funeral home. The results of these collaborations were generally described as positive, with benefits to patrons, the library, and the community partner. However, several challenges were mentioned as well, most notably a lack of clear guidelines about who was responsible for doing what. Several participants emphasized the importance of having a memorandum of understanding between the library and the partner organization. Interestingly, no one mentioned how or if programs, services, and partnerships are being evaluated.

Participants reported mixed experiences with having library social workers on their staff.

Some of the librarians who participated in the study reported having one or more social workers on the library staff. This was not surprising as the literature is replete with examples of social workers being incorporated into public libraries.[45] Several mentioned having social work interns in their libraries, something else that is widely reported in the literature.[46] The advantages of having a social worker include having someone available with more knowledge of local social services resources and having someone with the time to meet with patrons one-on-one.

Participants were especially grateful to have a social worker who could help patrons fill out forms for government benefits. The librarians themselves stated they were not able to spend the time required with individual patrons to help in filling out complex forms and, moreover, did not feel comfortable having patrons share their private information with them. In addition, librarians felt that social workers were trained to deal more effectively with patrons experiencing mental health issues.

Disadvantages were mentioned as well, similar to those reported in the literature.[47] Social workers, especially those working alone in a library, can quickly become overwhelmed by patron demand, a situation that leads to social worker burnout and patron dissatisfaction. Other challenges include funding, or lack thereof, and space constraints; not all libraries have a private space where patrons can consult with a social worker. Some participants, particularly those who felt librarians should provide social services information rather than actual social services, believed that having a social worker in the library further blurred the line between the library's role and the role of other organizations.

Participants expressed willingness to assist patrons with their social services needs.

Overall, most of the librarians who participated in the study expressed a willingness to provide social services information; indeed, they saw this as part of their job. As has been reported in previous research, many noted that they needed more training in order to become more familiar with local social services resources.[48] Several participants were less enthusiastic about providing actual social services—such as assisting patrons with filling out forms; distributing hygiene kits, face masks, and COVID test kits; and administering Narcan (naloxone) to patrons who have overdosed on opioids. They stated they had neither the training nor the inclination to provide these kinds of services. Almost all of them noted, however, that librarians by nature want to be helpful (as is also true of social workers).

Participants see overlap between librarianship and social work.

Reflecting Margaret Bausman's view in "Two Noble Professions," participants see librarianship and social work as helping professions, and they see librarians and social workers engaged in the business of providing information.[49] In that sense, the two professions can be complementary. Librarians probably have a broader knowledge of information resources, whereas social workers probably have deeper knowledge of social services resources, especially those available at the local level. Several participants stated that, even though they felt their LIS coursework did not prepare them to provide social services, they did find their reference and research skills to be valuable in serving patrons with a variety of information needs.

The one thing lacking, for many of them, was an in-depth knowledge of local resources available for patrons with social services needs. Participants also indicated that both librarians and social workers encounter people in crisis situations, but social workers have more training in understanding and responding to people experiencing trauma. These gaps—in knowledge of social services resources and knowledge of patrons in crisis—could be remedied by including such content in required LIS courses as well as through professional development training.

Participants find it challenging to draw the line between the professional boundaries of librarianship and social work.

Making a clear distinction between the role of the librarian and the role of the social worker can be challenging, and librarians do not agree on where the line should be drawn. Some participants noted the difficulties that arise when library staff within the same library have differing views on

professional boundaries. Even in libraries without a social worker—or perhaps especially in those libraries—conflict can arise between librarians who are willing to play the role of social worker and those who are not. This is a case where administrators can help define clear roles for librarians and social workers.

Participants want clearer guidelines concerning their role in responding to their patrons' social services needs.

Interestingly, when asked what kind of help they needed to better respond to their community's social services needs, participants did not say more funding. Instead, they said that they wanted clearer guidelines from administrators about their role as librarians, and, related to this, a more realistic view on the part of patrons and funders about what libraries can and cannot do. They found it frustrating that some administrators, patrons, and funders felt that the library should be all things to all people. In short, they wanted permission to sometimes say no.

Limitations

Study participants were a self-selected sample, and the sample size was small. It cannot be assumed that participants' views represent those of adult services librarians in public libraries across the United States. Findings, therefore, represent only the perspectives of the librarians who participated in the study.

Conclusion

This study explored the views of 13 adult services librarians on the topic of social services in public libraries. Participants agreed that patrons approach adult services librarians with a variety of social services needs. Views were mixed on the extent to which librarians should provide social services as opposed to only social services information. Participants expressed a desire for more training and for clearer guidelines on addressing patrons' social services needs.

Implications for Research and Practice

Future research should investigate the topic across a much larger sample of public librarians. It should also explore patrons' social services needs in academic and school libraries. And more research is also needed on how librarians and library social workers can work together so that each complements the other's work most effectively.

In terms of education and training, LIS programs should incorporate more social services content into required courses and should encourage students to be somewhat flexible as they prepare for their careers so that they are not locked into one path. It is also important that library administrators make social services a part of professional development opportunities regularly offered and paid for by the library. These findings raise the question of whether librarians need more social services–related training or libraries need to hire more social workers. It is not an either/or, of course. Social workers can help provide such training, which in turn would empower librarians and take some of the burden off social workers.

In terms of practice, a clearer definition of roles would be helpful, and this is something participants felt administrators could be more proactive in providing. In addition, the professional organizations for librarians (the American Library Association) and social workers (the National Association of Social Workers) can develop guidelines for the professional boundaries between librarianship and

social work. Based on the findings reported here, it seems such guidelines would be welcomed by librarians.

Acknowledgments

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From the Sections of RUSA

Outstanding Business Information Sources 2025

Introduction

Each year, the Business Information Sources Committee of the Business Reference and Services Section (BRASS) selects the outstanding business information sources published since May of the previous year. This year, the committee reviewed twenty-three entries; of these, two were designated as "Outstanding" and four as "Notable." Works are examined for the following: ease of use; reputation of the publisher, author, or editor; accuracy; appropriate bibliography; organization; comprehensiveness; value of the content; currency or timeliness; uniqueness; quality and accuracy of index or cited references; and quality and usefulness of graphics and illustrations. This year's selection of works covers a wide range of topics, including artificial intelligence, women who shaped finance and retail, Spotify's impact on the music industry, the challenges inherent in energy transition, and redirecting economic growth.

Outstanding

Co-Intelligence: Living and Working with AI. Ethan Mollick. New York: Portfolio/Penguin, an imprint of Penguin Random House, 2024. 256 p. Hardcover: $30. (ISBN: 9780593716717). Contact the publisher for ebook pricing (ISBN: 9780593716724).

More people are using artificial intelligence (AI) for a variety of purposes, including business operations, research, education, and creating art. As AI use increases exponentially, Ethan Mollick[1] discusses several strategies for using AI to maximize the benefits and reduce the risks. For each strategy, Mollick includes recommendations and relevant examples from his research and his "conversations" with AI systems.

Mollick's first strategy recommends that everyone learn more about AI and how to use it as an assistive tool. Second, people need to double-check the AI system's feedback and replies to identify bias. Studies show AI may provide answers that it concludes will satisfy the user, even if the answer is incorrect. Also, because an AI system analyzes an infinite number of files, some of those resources might create bias if they have inconsistent (or incorrect) conclusions or even contradict each other. Third, people should avoid personifying AI but still guide the AI system by defining expectations and constraints on their queries. Additionally, people must distinguish between an AI

system's potential abilities with creativity and innovation. While AI can be creative, and it can be an important resource for brainstorming (for example, it can generate long lists), it cannot be innovative to the same degree as people. The last of Mollick's principles states that people should expect AI systems to only improve in the future.

Mollick includes a helpful and concise background of AI, including terminology, such as Large Language Models (LLMs); how the text analysis and predictive abilities of AI have evolved, such as supervised learning and pretraining; the standard tests for computer/machine intelligence, including the Turing Test and Lovelace Test; and the landmark studies, such as Google's introduction of the Transformer AI architecture titled "Attention is All You Need."

Co-Intelligence outlines several other AI advantages. AI has significantly improved productivity in areas that produce fact-based resources, such as business communication and tutoring. AI provides useful supplemental analyses with data and research studies. Also, people who do not consider themselves creative can use AI to generate art and illustrations for ideas and projects. However, Mollick warns that we lack common (and agreed-upon) laws, standards, and norms about developing and using AI, particularly with copyright, and those issues must be resolved as soon as possible.

Co-Intelligence: Living and Working with AI was selected as one of the best books of 2024 by *The Economist*[2]. Recommended for all readers, public and academic libraries.

Reviewed by Edward Kownslar, Stephen F. Austin State University

References

1. Ethan Mollick is the Ralph J. Roberts Distinguished Faculty Scholar and Associate Professor of Management at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.
2. The best books of 2024, as chosen by *The Economist*. (2024, November 22). *The Economist*.

She-Wolves: The Untold History of Women on Wall Street. Paulina Bren. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2024. 384 p. Hardcover $29.99. (ISBN: 9781324035152). Contact the publisher for ebook pricing (ISBN: 9781324035169).

She-Wolves: The Untold History of the Women of Wall Street by Paulina Bren offers readers a new perspective on the male-dominated world of finance. Bren's well-researched and engaging work highlights the lives and trials of the industry's female pioneers who scrabbled for a foothold in New York's Financial District from the 1950s to 9/11. Readers get a glimpse into the plight of women from all levels of society who had the brains, education, and talent to make it but were lacking opportunity, faced barriers of gender inequality, and endured sexism and other hardships to break into the sacred "boys club."

She-Wolves' primary focus is on women in the mid-twentieth century, but the book also includes tales of the Financial District's earliest female movers and shakers. From the early days of the Progressive Era—a time when Wall Street firms created women's departments to cater to the investment needs of their gender but did not offer opportunities to work in the industry in any real capacity—these women pushed the envelope and paid the price. Those who dabbled in finance were demonized and othered, labeled charlatans and clairvoyants. One was dubbed the "Witch of Wall Street," aligning with the misogyny of both the time and the industry.

Bren is not alone in shedding light on the underheard voices and stories of women and members of minoritized communities finding their way "in a man's world." Whether breaking codes during World War II, aiding in the safe landing and reentry of the first Americans in space, or becoming traders

on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, these stories provide a more complete and accurate account for the historical record.

This book deserves space in library collections because of its dual appeal; it focuses on the business world, while also spotlighting an important piece of history that has gone unreported. *She-Wolves* is a valuable addition to any academic or public library's business or general collection and will be of interest to a broad range of patrons, including business historians, students and faculty in economics and finance, women's and gender studies scholars, and members of social justice book clubs. While the vignettes and individual stories of these women who broke the glass ceiling are insightful, impressive, and, at times, harrowing and hard to digest, they are crucial, valuable, and a necessary truth.

Bren concludes *She-Wolves* in 2001 with America focused on the terrorist attacks in Lower Manhattan. Today, close to a quarter-century removed from the destruction of the Twin Towers, it begs the question: What is progress? While enrollment in US business schools is reaching gender parity, is that equality reflected on the floor of stock exchanges or in the boardroom? For all the strife that females in the early days endured to stand toe to toe with men on trading floors, how far do women still have to travel in the world of finance and beyond?

Reviewed by Katie O'Hara-Krebs, Pennsylvania State University

Notable

Mood Machine: The Rise of Spotify and the Costs of the Perfect Playlist. Liz Pelly. New York: Atria/One Signal Publishers, 2025. 288 p. Hardcover $28.99. (ISBN: 9781668083505). Contact the publisher for ebook pricing (ISBN: 9781668083529).

Mood Machine offers a multifaceted look at the processes behind Spotify's rise to prominence and the subsequent effects on the music industry, listeners, and the sounds of music itself. The author, Liz Pelly, is an experienced music journalist who has covered Spotify for more than a decade. Pelly draws from interviews with former Spotify employees, industry insiders, and musicians, as well as internal company communications and extensive published sources. Her use of internal communications and employee interviews adds to the existing literature by providing evidence of practices that had previously been the subject of speculation.

The strength of this work is the multiple stakeholder perspectives it draws from, which demonstrate the effect Spotify has had on the way music is produced and consumed. For instance, Pelly draws a connection between the company's decision to prioritize so-called lean-back listeners by curating mood-based playlists designed for background music and the later development of data dashboards for artists that encourage musicians to make music in styles similar to what is already popular. *Mood Machine* also outlines Spotify's role in shaping the current landscape of royalties and licensing agreements, and the effects it has on labor laws and policies for artists. Recognizing that music culture is currently at a crossroads, the book concludes by exploring the potential for creating more equitable and sustainable systems for musicians to thrive in the streaming era.

This approachable book should appeal to music and technology enthusiasts, business students, and researchers. Recommended for both public and academic library collections.

Reviewed by Meghann Kuhlmann, Wichita State University

When Women Ran Fifth Avenue: Glamour and Power at the Dawn of American Fashion. Julie Satow. New York: Doubleday, 2024. 320 p. Hardcover $32.50 (ISBN: 9780385548755). Contact the publisher for ebook pricing (ISBN: 9780385548762).

During a period when the business world remained largely dominated by men, *When Women Ran Fifth Avenue* follows the groundbreaking journeys of Hortense Odlum, Dorothy Shaver, and Geraldine Stutz as they ascended to top leadership positions across premier retail institutions, including Bonwit Teller, Lord & Taylor, and Henri Bendel. Spanning several decades, Julie Satow highlights how these three often overlooked women broke gender barriers, revolutionized American retail, and shaped fashion culture, all while navigating societal expectations and personal sacrifices. The book is a sometimes-intimate look at each woman's life, which highlights not only their personal stories but also their business acumen and innovative leadership styles. The women's stories are set against the backdrop of New York City's fashion world, illustrating how department stores shaped and reflected public taste and consumer culture.

Satow spent three years researching this book, drawing from a variety of sources, including biographies, memoirs, archives, family interviews, news articles, and advertisements. The primary sources allow each woman's authentic voice to come through, and the text is enriched with direct quotations, historical photographs, and vivid period details. Satow places the women in a historic context, discussing the impact of shifting New York City neighborhoods, changes in manufacturing, and evolving gender expectations. The historical framing adds an essential layer to the narrative and shows how each woman's career was both shaped by and helped shape the social and economic changes unfolding around her.

While thoroughly researched, the book is also written to engage a general audience, blending scholarly insight with narrative flair. For academic librarians, this interdisciplinary work is a valuable addition to collections in women's history, fashion studies, and business leadership. Its potential for broad appeal to general audiences, students, and scholars makes it a good fit for both public and academic libraries.

Reviewed by Carolyn Klotzbach-Russell, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York

Growth: A History and a Reckoning. Daniel Susskind. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2024. 304 p. Hardcover $29.95 (ISBN: 9780674294493). Contact the publisher for ebook pricing (ISBN: 9780674297050).

Author Daniel Susskind, a former Kennedy Scholar at Harvard University who has also worked within the British government, is an economics professor researching the ethics of AI. Susskind leverages his background and experience to explain economic expansion—its history, present, and future in his book *Growth*.

Susskind shares the history of competing economic theories, describes how economic conditions and growth were measured in the past, and explains how, for much of human existence, there was a "long stagnation" when economic conditions generally remained the same. This changed after 1800 when economic growth exploded.

The use of economic growth as a measure of a country's economic success is a recent occurrence. It started with the need to track resources and the status of countries during and after World War II. Today, gross national product and gross domestic product (GNP/GDP) numbers have become essential figures, with the goal of continuing to increase them. However, this focus on continued economic growth has come with costs, including income inequality and environmental impacts.

Economists have theorized different ways to shift this attention to continuous economic growth. Susskind discusses alternatives proposed by various experts, including GDP minimalism and degrowth. He also explains the morality of economic growth impacts and the schools of thought

aiming to disrupt it. He emphasizes the importance of developing new ideas and how they can lead to changing conditions and improved development. Susskind concludes by providing his own opinions on what should be done regarding economic growth. He attempts to forge a path between extreme ideas while demonstrating that our society has the power to bring about change.

Growth is a comprehensive book on economics and its impacts on society today. Relevant to the politics and concerns we are currently facing, the book is well-organized and researched, with notes (references) and illustrations. Aimed at academic library users, *Growth* would be of interest to any reader seeking to learn about economic theory.

Reviewed by Breezy Silver, Michigan State University

The War Below: Lithium, Copper, and the Global Battle to Power Our Lives. Ernest Scheyder. New York: Atria/One Signal Publishers, 2024. 384 p. Hardcover $30.00 (ISBN: 9781668011805). Contact the publisher for ebook pricing (ISBN: 9781668011829).

In *The War Below: Lithium, Copper, and the Global Battle to Power Our Lives*, Ernest Scheyder offers a compelling, if somewhat misleadingly titled, journalistic exploration of the foundational raw materials driving the energy transition. The text, rather than depicting a "war," portrays a global scramble and reshuffling of priorities and interests among nations and corporations vying for critical mineral resources. Scheyder concludes that despite attempts "to find alternate ways to produce metals for the green energy transition, there was no way around the fact that mining is loud, dangerous, and disruptive and will remain so for the foreseeable future" (298).

Scheyder highlights the dilemma at the heart of our shift away from fossil fuels: the technologies designed to green our future—electric vehicles, solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries—are dependent on dirty and messy mining excavations. He highlights a common theme: no one wants these environmentally disruptive operations in their backyard, state, or even country, creating a significant hurdle for resource acquisition.

Scheyder avoids opining on the often-turbulent decision-making processes of the US government regarding mining policies. This approach, while lending a sense of objective reporting, leaves the reader curious about the potential influences of political shifts on these industries.

The author makes an important point about global equity, emphasizing that the Global South, particularly nations with histories of colonization and exploitation, cannot be expected to sacrifice their local environments solely to satisfy the demands of developed nations. This ethical consideration adds a murky layer to the complex narrative of resource extraction.

One notable omission in Scheyder's otherwise thorough analysis is a discussion of demand-side solutions. He does not suggest or even hint at decreasing demand through moderating or reducing consumption, an obvious avenue for discussion. While acknowledging the economic sensitivities surrounding this and related topics, their absence leaves a void in the search for long-term and big-picture solutions to our mineral dependency.

This book's in-depth, objective analysis of a critical contemporary issue makes it a valuable resource for academic libraries, particularly for programs in environmental studies, political science, business, economics, international relations, and engineering. *The War Below* will interest students, academics, policymakers, industry professionals, environmental advocates, and general readers.

Reviewed by Amy Jansen, Southern Connecticut State University

From the Sections of RUSA

Best of the Best Business Web Resources 2025

BRASS Education Committee

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The BRASS Best of the Best Business Reference Web Resources Award was established in 2009. The award recognizes three websites highly relevant to information professionals involved in providing business reference services. The websites were nominated and selected by the BRASS Education Committee members in early 2025. The criteria include the quality of content, ease of use, and technical execution.

This year, we recognize resources that provide free access to international business information, nonprofit records, and data literacy training. Reviews are written by members of the BRASS education committee.

World Bank Business Ready (B-READY)

https://www.worldbank.org/en/businessready

The World Bank's new Business Ready (B-READY) site benchmarks the business and investment climate across economies, replacing the former Doing Business report. The complete open-source dataset and a reproducibility package are provided.

The B-READY methodology evaluates economies by assessing ten topics, such as business entry, labor, financial services, and international trade, and organizes this analysis around three pillars: regulatory framework, public services, and operational efficiency.

The strengths of this free resource include a broader, more balanced methodology and integration of de jure and de facto data (considering laws and regulations as well as how they are implemented), while also incorporating themes of digitalization, sustainability, and gender. There are some limitations regarding initial country coverage and ongoing concerns from civil society organizations, including NGOs, labor unions, and advocacy groups, about inclusivity and labor standards.

The first release covers 50 economies, with plans to expand to more than 100 in 2025 and nearly 180 by 2026, refining methodology and data collection in future editions.

Reviewed by Rebecca Maniates, New York University Abu Dhabi, Education Committee Member 2024–26.

Nonprofit Explorer

https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/

ProPublica's free Nonprofit Explorer provides comprehensive, searchable access to tax filings from over 3 million tax-exempt organizations in the United States. This powerful database allows users to search, browse, and download Form 990 filings dating back to 2013, offering unparalleled transparency into nonprofit operations. The interface includes user-friendly search capabilities by organization name, location, or EIN, while also offering filtering by organization type, revenue size, and filing year.

Beyond mere document access, Nonprofit Explorer extracts and displays key financial data such as revenue, expenses, assets, and executive compensation in easily digestible formats. The platform includes visualization tools that track an organization's financial trends over time, allowing for quick analysis of fiscal health and spending patterns. For business researchers, the database serves as an essential tool for nonprofit sector analysis, competitive intelligence, and identification of funding sources and partnership opportunities.

ProPublica regularly updates the database as new filings become available from the IRS, ensuring researchers have access to the most current information about tax-exempt entities. The combination of comprehensive data coverage, intuitive design, and powerful analytical capabilities makes Nonprofit Explorer an indispensable resource for business librarians, nonprofit researchers, grant writers, and anyone seeking transparency in the nonprofit sector.

Reviewed by Edward Junhao Lim, University of Connecticut, Education Committee Member 2023–25

Data Quality Literacy: A Guidebook

https://www.dataqualityliteracy.org/a-guidebook

This ebook equips information professionals, researchers, and students with the skills to critically evaluate data quality, edited by business librarians Grace Liu, Bobray Bordelon, Rashelle Nagar, Uyen Nguyen, Jordan Sarti, and Jennifer C. Boettcher. It was developed as a deliverable of an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)-funded project.

The edited volume is based on a series of national forum webinars, which were compiled and enhanced with infographics and supplementary materials. The guidebook covers various aspects of data quality literacy, including quality assurance in data creation, governmental and commercial data, data reproducibility and preservation, and more. The book's website also includes the original presentations, slides, and transcripts of each session.

This resource is invaluable for librarians involved in data literacy instruction, researchers seeking to strengthen their understanding of research data, and anyone striving to become more discerning data users. While it is available as an open-access ebook, it is also available in a print-on-demand paperback format for $15.53.

Reviewed by Alice Kalinowski, Stanford University, Education Committee Member 2023–25

AI Transformation Case Studies

https://aiexpertnetwork.notion.site/AI-Transformation-Case-Studies-779878d924fa466186071b79 39d7599a

The "AI Transformation Case Studies" Notion workspace, published by AI Expert Network (AIX), expands its "AI in Action" newsletter and Substack. The site provides a free, curated repository of business AI implementation examples. AIX is a global organization connecting businesses with AI professionals. This collection of case studies addresses the scarcity of documented real-world business AI deployments. The collection provides over 200 case studies indexed by company, industry, use case, and technology. Each case study presents structured information, including company approach, implementation, challenges, results, takeaways, and referenced sources.

Reviewed by Benjamin Hall, University of Southern California, Education Committee Member 2024– 26