

## **American Library Association President Report**

### **Emily Drabinski**

### **January 2024**

This report includes activities and events since my Fall 2023 report. I continue to share the story of American libraries in as many ways and places as I can, believing that a broad public appreciation for our work is essential to a just future for all of us. We know that the story told about us by organized pro-censorship forces is not the true story of me, of American libraries, or of the American Library Association. Our stories are rich, diverse, and expansive. Our institutions contribute to human flourishing and to human freedom. I extend my deepest gratitude to the library workers who have trusted me with their stories and to all the ALA members whose work strengthens ALA and expands our collective reach. It is an honor and a privilege to lead together with you.

The second quarter of my term was marked by the selection and onboarding of Leslie Berger, our interim Executive Director. Thank you, Leslie, for your willingness to serve. Working with my esteemed executive board colleagues, we have made progress in the search for a permanent Executive Director. Thank you to Immediate Past-President Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada for stepping in to chair that search with a group of member-leaders from across the association and its divisions and round tables.

In December, I was pleased to join 90 state chapter leaders from school, public, and academic libraries in the Chicago area for a weekend of media and advocacy training with ALA's exceptional staff and member leaders. This grant-supported gathering offered us all an opportunity to learn with and from each other. Despite differences in legislative landscapes and chapter organization, we share a common commitment to libraries and the communities we serve and an appreciation for the urgency of this moment in American library history.

As the midway point of my presidential term I am pleased to report the following progress on my presidential initiatives.

### **Presidential priorities**

#### *Member engagement*

The capstone of my presidential year will be a tour of American libraries. This tour will highlight the great work. The tour will take place June 3-22, 2024. The following site visits have been confirmed:

Cranston Public Library, Cranston, Rhode Island  
RM Captain Elementary School, Clayton, MO  
Daniel Boone Regional Library, Columbia, Missouri  
Rossville Public Library, Rossville, Kansas  
Page Public Library, Page, Arizona

Additional tour stops in West Virginia and New Mexico continue to be developed. Thank you to the library staff whose collaborations are making this tour possible. Additional thanks to staff liaison Ian Ware and Flynn Murray, tour producer.

Thanks to support from the Lannan Foundation, filmmaker Nikita Carpenter will join the library tour to document the great work happening at libraries across the country. This film will be made available to libraries for screening to their communities.

#### *Climate Action*

Under the leadership of Rebekkah Smith-Aldrich and in collaboration with the Sustainable Libraries Initiative, we continue to make progress toward a climate agenda for libraries. The final report of this group is expected at the Annual conference in San Diego.

#### *Library worker support*

Onsite counseling support for library workers will be available at LLX and at Annual under the stewardship of Beatrice Calvin. As presiding officer, I will continue to shepherd the recommendations of the ALA-APA task force through the board review process.

The quarter has not been without challenges. Due to a range of factors, I will no longer be hosting an ALA Connect Live session about organizing against censorship. Due to leadership changes at the Lambda Literary Foundation, we will not be co-hosting a book club. I look forward to supporting our LGBTQIA+ library workers in other ways during the second half of my term.

#### **Speaking Engagements**

- Panelist, "The Freedom to Read," Howard County Library System, Virtual (October 15, 2023)
- Welcome remarks, American Association of School Librarians conference, Tampa, FL (October 19, 2023)
- Plenary panelist, "Let Freedom Read!" PFLAG National Conference, Washington, D.C. (October 20, 2023)
- Panelist, "Book Bans and the Attack on American Democracy," Columbia University AlumniTALK series, Virtual (October 25, 2023)
- Keynote, "Libraries Do Good Work," New Mexico Library Association, Albuquerque, NM (October 26, 2023)
- Guest Speaker, Harvard Kennedy School fireside chat series, Boston, MA (October 31, 2023)
- Guest Speaker, Ann Arbor Public Schools, Virtual (November 1, 2023)
- Keynote, "Libraries Do Good Work," New York Library Association, Saratoga Springs, NY. (November 2, 2023)
- Keynote, "Libraries Do Good Work," Sharjah International Book Fair, Sharjah, UAE, (November 8, 2023)
- Guest Speaker, "State of Intellectual Freedom," Rochester (MN) Public Library, Virtual (November 9, 2023)
- Panelist, "Building Connections through Global Librarians," University of Southeastern Philippines, Virtual (November 29, 2023)
- Guest speaker, "They Want to Ban What?!?", DOROT, Virtual (January 1, 2024)

- Keynote, “They Want to Ban What?!?” VALE New Jersey Academic Libraries conference, Edison, NJ (January 5, 2024)
- Welcome remarks, “Salary Equity and Library Workers: Experiences from the Field and How to Make it Happen,” COWSL/ALA-APA SSLW, Virtual (January 11, 2024)

### **Library Visits**

- P.S. 90, Brooklyn, NY (November 14, 2023)
- Museum of Modern Art Archives, Library, and Research Collections, New York City (December 13, 2023)

### **Additional Travel, Appearances, and Support:**

- Guadalajara Book Fair, Guadalajara, Mexico (November 25-29, 2023)
- Chapter Leaders Forum, Chicago, IL (December 8-10, 2023)

### **Thanks**

Leading the American Library Association is a group project. Thank you to my Executive Board colleagues for their ongoing support and commitment to the association. Proud to beat you all at bowling. Thank you to ALA’s exceptional governance office staff, particularly Sheryl Reyes for her direct support of the office of the president and parliamentarian Adrian Stratton for his generosity of time and wisdom. We are here to get the best ideas out of everyone’s heads and in front of us so that we can make the best possible decisions. Your commitment to democracy is inspiring and I thank you for believing in us. Thank you to ALA staff in Chicago, Washington, D.C., and across the country for your tireless work on behalf of American libraries. Gratitude to the Lannan Foundation for supporting media strategy and our June library visits. Leah Richardson continues to be an indispensable co-conspirator. I can’t wait to spend three weeks in a van with you.

Finally, thank you to library workers across the country and the world for being the very best of us. Solidarity.