Greetings to my fellow library and archive cohorts! My name is Arabeth Balasko, and I am the new archivist at the Atwood Resource Center, Anchorage Museum. I arrived in early January and was quickly welcomed back to Alaska with a cold snap and piles of freshly fallen snow!

However, I am no stranger to cold weather. I grew up in Fairbanks, Alaska, where my love for history, museums, and the humanities truly began. In fact, I became involved in history and archives because as a child I used to LOVE going to the Public Lands Office and the University of Alaska Museum—I knew one day I wanted to work in that type of environment.

Over 20 years ago, I relocated to the Lower-48 when my family moved to West Virginia. After living and traveling around the world, and working at a variety of cultural organizations, I decided to come back to Alaska because of this unique opportunity to work in a photographic-based archive at the Anchorage Museum. I have always had an affinity for old photographs and visual materials. This collection seemed it would be a good fit for both my personal interests and my archival skill sets.
I love being able to share the importance of archiving with a variety of audiences; I am most passionate about access and outreach projects where community members are engaged and empowered through sharing THEIR voices while taking ownership of THEIR stories.

As a modern-day archivist, I recognize and embrace the work we must engage in to repair relationships from the past. It is something I do not shy away from. I strive daily to be a proactive steward for representation and equity in archives, and I aim to help create and foster an inclusive environment for ALL archival users.

I am excited to find ways in which the Museum’s archives can better serve the Alaska community at-large. I believe that an archive should be a welcoming place for ALL people. It should be an inclusive environment which advocates to collect, preserve, and make accessible the stories and histories of diverse voices. By getting individuals to tell THEIR story and making THEIR history part of the ever-growing story of humanity, we all win!

I am truly looking forward to the professional development and growth opportunities that this position will provide. I am also eager to be involved with the archives and library community in the state and work together to share archival services with underrepresented community groups throughout Alaska.

I hope to meet many of you soon and thank you for welcoming me to the neighborhood! If you would like to connect with me digitally, please reach out at: abalasko@anchorage-museum.org.
DO SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS REALLY VALUE WHAT LIBRARIES ADD TO THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS?

April is National School Library Month and there has never been a School Library Month quite like this! It’s amazing what all school librarians have achieved as we navigate these uncharted waters. There are numerous examples of this work which you can read about librarians during school closure, including http://www.ilovelibraries.org/article/school-librarians-take-lead-during-pandemic?fbclid=IwAR2Ni4OBv1u3TmQwoX26u2yASZiENot6351SUEr2rT5aLuMddISBho8mjZQ and https://www.adn.com/opinions/2020/04/09/schools-may-be-closed-but-your-school-librarian-is-only-a-few-clicks-away/

But, as School Library Month draws to a close, I am shifting gears from being excited about the roles school libraries can play to being horrified by posts I am seeing in some of my professional learning communities. I am deeply concerned to hear that some librarians are being excluded from the distance learning equation because school administrators either haven’t taken the time to learn what is REALLY happening in the school library or don’t value what libraries are adding to the educational process. I am even more concerned that, with school being out for a period of time and library services still active but often less visible, some school boards and administrators across the nation are taking this opportunity to cut funding, staffing or even integrating library services into a different teaching support function.

2020 is a pivotal time for school libraries in Alaska. School librarians (or even school libraries) are not required under state statutes. At a time when #AkReads is a focus statewide, libraries need to be part of the solution. In addition to fostering literacy, libraries also provide access to the skills and tools our students need as we move into the future.

School library standards in Alaska were last updated in 1999, more than two decades ago. Currently, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) has a proposal from the 2019 Alaska Library/Information Literacy Content Standards Writing Committee recommending that Alaska adopt the 2017 American Association of School Librarians (AASL) National Library Standards (https://standards.aasl.org/). Library standards have been bumped from the DEED agenda a couple of times, but we are hopeful that advocacy efforts will be successful and they will be on the agenda for their June meeting and then sent out for public comment. Public support and advocacy will be critical to bring these standards to the students of Alaska.

I’ve been told repeatedly, by people who haven’t had the opportunity to learn about and understand the AASL standards, “national standards—that won’t work for Alaska!,” and I can only reply that these standards were written by a team of seven librarians, including an Alaskan, Deborah Rinio. Yes, Alaska with its tiny population and unique needs was well represented on this committee. These standards DO work for Alaska.

The AASL Standards will prepare our students for the future, and the future is NOW! The AASL Standards contain six
foundations and each of them has been critical for our students during school closure. The foundations are Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore and Engage, and school libraries across the state (and teachers and administrators, even if they don’t realize it) have been scrambling to apply them to distance learning.

Tana Martin at Tanana Middle School is INCLUDING students by ensuring equity of access through initiating and leading a project to CURATE an organized and consistently formatted map identifying free wifi locations for students (and staff!) without connectivity at home. Tamra Wear at Soldotna High School has been COLLABORATING with teachers and joining class Zoom meetings to ENGAGE students in digital citizenship. Michelle Car- ton is encouraging INQUIRY and the ability to EXPLORE by hosting virtual field trips and updating her website to showcase Activities for Isolated Times. Ellen Scott is COLLABORATING with other librarians in the Anchorage School District to rewrite the district plagiarism statement, fostering appropriate means to ENGAGE in the responsible, ethical, and legal use of information.

School librarians and library staff across the state have used their cataloging and organizational skills to facilitate the distribution of devices and class materials. They have reviewed hundreds of free “COVID-19 offers” to curate them into relevant, appropriate, and organized lists, making them available to classroom teachers and students. School library websites are being updated to provide access to resources and opportunities to students. Librarians are staying connected with students through online book groups or storytimes, virtual office hours, at-home makerspace challenges and more. School library staff are assisting teachers with integrating new technology into their classes and in many cases are becoming the “Google Gurus” for teachers thrust into distance education.

When school closures first started happening, my husband and I watched Tom Hanks in “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood.” I was reminded of the Fred Rogers comment, in which he quotes his mother as saying “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.” School libraries are helping—and leading. I hope administrators are looking.

Be safe. Be well.

Pamela Verfaillie, President
Alaska Association of School Librarians
akasl.president@gmail.com
Juneau Public Libraries had two days' notice before closing to the public. To make the transition as easy as possible, we let all of our patrons know about the closure and encouraged them to borrow materials before we closed. All our branches were busy those two days as patrons borrowed books, audio books, movies and even board games to keep themselves and loved ones occupied. After closing, staff still reported to work to answer telephones and do basic library business. Some library staff were reassigned to other city departments, mainly to help with the new communications task force that was created. Our director, Robert Barr, served the Emergency Operations Center as their Planning Section Chief.

While closed, the main focus was how to give patrons access to library materials. We relaxed our library card requirements so residents could call and be issued a library card. Since March 17th we’ve issued sixty-seven “closure cards” so patrons can access online resources. Then in mid-April we started taking requests for library items over the phone and began mailing materials to patrons. The response has been amazing. As of Monday, April 27th we’ve mailed over 1000 items to patrons. We’ve received calls, notes, social media comments, and staff have even been stopped in the street by patrons who are ecstatic about their library packages.

My advice, should this happen in the future, is to breathe and remember that libraries are flexible and adaptable. Patrons turn to the library when they need help, and being there, even in a limited capacity, is a great comfort. Hopefully, there is a record of what the library did during this pandemic to serve as a guide for any future closures.

Focus on providing patrons with core library services they want, and don’t try to keep up with what other libraries are doing. It is heartening to know how much the Juneau Public Libraries mean to the community, and knowing that we’re in this together, living through this unusual time.

Kate Enge
Juneau Public Libraries
ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN FINDING RELIABLE INFORMATION

Heading to Nashville for PLA2020 was a whirlwind of information, intellectual discussions, and nerding out over books with like-minded professionals.

The speakers I saw were fantastic—Dr. Bettina Love encouraged us to step beyond being allies and become co-conspirators in protecting marginalized communities and amplifying voices of color; Haben Girma, the first deaf-blind graduate of Harvard Law, stressed the importance of disability representation and everyday library accommodations for inclusivity (photo descriptions! closed captioning!).

Soledad O’Brien, an award-winning journalist, pointed out the important role libraries play in helping patrons find accurate, reliable information, citing a study showing that 78% of adults polled said they trust libraries.

The sessions were filled with insightful, pertinent information and discussions. From a youth services perspective, one of the most enlightening topics focused on connecting kids with opportunity; presenters spoke about six different learning equity gaps (awareness, access, attendance, engagement, pathways, and opportunity), the barriers kids face in moving beyond each one, and the way libraries can work to support kids at all levels.

Another session highlighted difficult patron interactions; it speaks volumes that professionals in this field experience enough discomfort in everyday interactions to necessitate such a well-attended session, and I came away with a link to a database which offers sample statements to use: https://apps.olpl.org/patronresponse.html.

PLA2020 was inspiring, empowering, and affirming—a wonderful opportunity to immerse myself in library culture, learn different

(Cont. on pg. 7)
PLA CONFERENCE: INCLUSIVITY AND AWARENESS

More than 8,500 librarians descended upon Nashville from February 25-29 in order to attend the Public Library Association conference. There were many requisite jokes about the city never being quieter. False! As we all know, librarians are never quiet when it comes to things that matter. This was especially true at PLA, where vendors congregated and librarians attended more than 120 programs on diversity, ethics, data crunching, programming, and community partnerships.

One of the recurrent themes of PLA this year was inclusivity and awareness. Programs such as Racism in Children’s Literature, Teaching Cultural Literacy, and Mirrors and Windows discussed the impact of stereotypes and racism in favorite authors and best practices regarding.

The consensus is that pulling these books from the shelves removes our chance to have an open discussion about them, as well as negating merit that they do have. It was an excellent reminder that while parents and families must be the ones to decide what they’ll read, it is up to us to make sure that additional information and read-alikes are readily available.

Other hot topics of discussion were managing difficult patron interactions (have staff brainstorm potential discussions and formulate friendly phrases to fall back on in the heat of the moment) and mindfulness in story time and work hours alike (breathe, find a good de-stressor, breathe again, and don’t forget you are your library’s most important aspect!).

So…quiet? Certainly not. More a chance for us all to learn something new and share things that we love.

Leslie Meyer
Youth Services
Soldotna Public Library

(B Gastineau Grants -- Cont. from pg. 6 )

perspectives, and connect with people from various library backgrounds under a shared goal: to make the world a better place.

Kelsey Skrobis
Youth Services Librarian
Anchorage Public Library

BYSTANDER INTERVENTION IN THE LIBRARY

Public libraries serve all people in the community, from the homeless to the executive, and everything in between. Conflicts and difficult situations often arise during the normal course of the day and the interaction between the wide range of visitors. As a result, librarians need to be vigilant and aware of what is going on around them.

The program I attended called “Bystander Intervention in the Library” by Donna Seaton provided realistic tips for intervening when we see inappropriate actions or interactions taking place between individuals. Ms. Seaton addressed the excuses we often tell ourselves for not intervening.

(Cont. on pg. 8)
Some of these are: It’s not my problem; No one else is doing anything; I can’t make a difference; or I don’t know what to do.

She then spoke to us about why we should intervene and gave us the 5 D’s to intervention. These were:
1) Direct intervention,
2) Distract,
3) Delegate a task to the person being disturbed,
4) Delay the person who is causing a problem by talking to them or other action, and
5) Document the incident.

It is good to remember how much we appreciate an act of intervention when we find ourselves in difficult, disturbing, or scary situations.

Renee Van Nort  
Fairbanks North Star Borough Public Library

Katja Wolfe  
Assistant City Librarian  
Soldotna

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

I attended the 2020 PLA conference in Nashville, Tennessee, this February. More than 8,000 librarians from all over the United States (and beyond) came to Music City to learn, engage, share their knowledge, network and simply have fun. I learned much from the many sessions that I attended and the many people that I met throughout the conference; knowledge that I can take back to my library and ideas that I can share with my fellow staff members. I love that librarians are always willing to share their experiences and ideas and offer each other support and encouragement.

I can’t quite decide which session was my favorite, as they were all fantastic. Topics ranged from removing barriers to library use, improving user experience, and successfully managing change in libraries to programming for all ages, mindfulness and prevention of burnout, and critical literacies.

A common theme throughout many of the sessions that I attended was diversity and inclusion. Of course, there was also a lot of talk about the role of libraries in the upcoming census, which will largely be conducted online for the first time. I was impressed by the caliber of the presenters and the variety of topics.

This was a great learning opportunity, and I am grateful to have received the continuing education grant.

EMPHASIS ON THE UPCOMING US CENSUS

The opening reception of Public Library Association 2020 Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, was packed with librarians from around the country excited to see Stacey Abrams, the opening speaker. Abrams is a politician, activist, and romance author who recently launched the non-profit Fair Count, which seeks to provide 2020 census out-
reach and services for people in the state of Georgia. Throughout the reception, she impressed upon the audience the critical need for libraries to lead the way and promote accurate representation for all who are living in the United States. “If you do not get counted, you do not count,” she said.

Abrams was not the only one with the 2020 Census on her mind. This is the first year that the US Census has included an online response option, and librarians around the country are preparing for questions and increased use of library computers as people start to receive their Census materials.

Librarians are also preparing for scams and misinformation related to the Census count. As Stacey Abrams put it, “Libraries are places of truth. You can be the ones to tell them the Census is safe and is necessary.” A welcome reminder of the benefits of libraries, and the important tasks we have in the next few weeks as the Census starts to roll out.

Librarians are also preparing for scams and misinformation related to the Census count. As Stacey Abrams put it, “Libraries are places of truth. You can be the ones to tell them the Census is safe and is necessary.” A welcome reminder of the benefits of libraries, and the important tasks we have in the next few weeks as the Census starts to roll out.

The bystander intervention session was very informative. Learning how to react in and defuse situations in which you are an outside part is very important, especially in a library setting where a number of people come together every day. The training videos demonstrated a step-by-step simulation for several different types of situations in which librarians might find themselves.

The videos included patron-patron, patron-staff, and staff-staff, and presented how to react and help during each circumstance. I would highly recommend the videos to each library for their staff training. I walked away from PLA more excited about public libraries and the services they offer.

**PATRON/STAFF INTERVENTIONS**

During the last week of February I attended the Public Library Association Conference in Nashville, TN. While there I attended sessions about bystander intervention, decreasing barriers to library use, the dangers patrons might face while online and what librarians might do to combat these dangers. Other sessions included bringing technology to senior adults, how to avoid summer reading program burnout, and working with the homeless community and how they use libraries.

Each of these sessions taught me either something new or let me walk away with new ideas for programs and improvements to our library. I want to start offering computer and device classes after attending the session about bringing technology to seniors, and I will be talking to the head of our summer reading program about an online reading tracker for our program.

Ivory VanZant
User Services Librarian
Wasilla Public Library

Cassidy Owen
Talkeetna Public Library
Mat-Su Borough

(Cont. on pg. 10)
ATTACTING MILLENNIALS AS LIBRARY USERS AND ADVOCATES

Attending the Public Library Association (PLA) 2020 Conference in Nashville, TN, was renewing, exciting, and full of useful ideas and concrete examples that I hope to put to use this year. More than 7,500 professionals from all over the world attended this event in Music City, and presenters in the sessions I attended were well informed and motivating—providing useful research to inform our practice. It was a bit surreal leaving Alaska on February 24th, with the enormity and reality of the COVID-19 pandemic smacking us in the face along with the beginning slide of the stock market.

Being in Nashville was surreal to say the least, and I worked hard to stay 6' away from others. So far, so good. On February 26th, Stacey Abrams, former member of the Georgia State Legislature and candidate for governor, spoke at the opening session about voting rights and how the library is ground zero for protecting citizens’ rights, including access to the census and voting. She has a book about voter suppression coming out in June. Very motivating.

As at many conferences, the exhibit hall was chock-full of hundreds of vendors plying us with tote bags, galley proofs, and thousands of pens. I was excited to make contact with suppliers to discuss shipping issues and to meet publishers of materials printed in languages other than English. I’m happy to say that I shipped home only two boxes of books and gee gaws of promotional materials, and only half a suitcase packed with books.

Throughout the event, sessions called Book Buzz were held for various reading interests where four or five representatives of publishers presented new titles, many due to be published soon. They were the source of the thousands of galley proofs available at the publishers' booths.

These publishers want the galleys read by a cross section of librarians to get reviews ahead of publication, as well as feedback or needed grammatical corrections. Librarians’ reviews are the sources for the monthly Library Reads newsletter. Thousands of books were given away.

Attention was paid to attendees’ well-being, with daily meditation sessions, large rocking chairs from which to gaze out on the city, and ample coffee and water breaks. On the main floor was a physical texting and communication station, where one could make posts and post them (on paper). It was called AnyBubbler Town Square. It’s an immersion space put on by AnyThink and The Bubbler at Madison (WI) Public Library. Their young, coverall-clad employees encouraged participants to get up on a soapbox and rant. After lunch Friday I walked by and the crew was singing Hey Jude, with many people joining in instead of rushing to a session. It was all in great fun, and in the name of wellness.

In addition, I felt very welcomed in Nashville; employees at restaurants and stores were cheerful, helpful and proud of their city. They were excited to see so many tote-bag totin’ librarians! Notable sessions I attended were:

• Pitching and Producing a Library Podcast: An exciting prospect to consider in these days of library closures and isolation.

• StoryCorps; Tools to Amplify Diverse Voices in Your Community—with hints for
production, selection and basic pitfalls: This is of interest to me in order to be able to capture elders’ experiences and reflections on life in Kodiak, Alaska.

- Recruiting and Engaging Friends and Trustees Under Age 40: Excellent presentation of research on intergenerational communication and how to encourage millennials to join Friends’ groups.
  
  Learn how we moved from public awareness to unabashed marketing; how the media took up the cause; and the many touch points and communications tactics we used to bring staff members, stakeholders, policymakers, and community members along.

- Recruiting trustees under 40: Millennials are more likely than other adults to have visited the library recently. However, most Friends and Trustee boards do not have a single millennial member (Pew 2016, ALA 2018).
  
  The presentation focused on what accounts for this discrepancy and how can we rectify it. Ideas were shared on how to attract millennials to Friends’ groups, and turn the largest generation of library users into your best advocates.

- Going Fearlessly Fine Free: Many libraries have eliminated late fines. When Saint Paul (Minnesota) Public Library took the plunge, we led with our values to produce a comprehensive, transparent internal and external communications plan that boldly proclaimed our intent and celebrated our success.
  
  The closing session with Samantha B was humorous and serious, although the interview with Caroline Modarressy-Tehrani, an Emmy Award-nominated television correspondent, was very hard to hear—even up close. This conference was very satisfying and rejuvenating, and I appreciate the support from the Alaska State Library and the City of Kodiak that allowed me to attend.

Laurie Madsen
Kodiak Public Library

CREATING A DIVERSE PATRON-DRIVEN COLLECTION

This February, I was lucky enough to attend the annual Public Library Association Conference in Nashville, TN. During a session entitled “Creating a Diverse Patron Driven Collection,” Sarah Voels and Molly Garrett of the Cedar Rapids Public Library presented their preliminary findings and progress after the first year of a three-year diversity audit.

After gathering data on the diversity of their local population, Voels and Garrett altered their purchasing process to purchase a higher proportion of diverse titles. They then looked at each title on the shelf and evaluated the cover, book jacket description, and subject headings for diversity. By looking at each title, they hoped to perform the audit from a patron-focused perspective rather than simply pulling data from a report in their ILS. Qualifying diversity characteristics included economic welfare, LGBTQIA+, mental health, physical health, race, ethnicity, and religion.

They tallied the total number of items surveyed and each title that met one or more of their diversity criteria by filling out a Google form on laptops they brought with them into the stacks. They then compared that data

(Cont. on pg. 12)
to the diversity of their local population and found their collection was about half as diverse.

Their goal was to make their collection’s diversity meet or, ideally, slightly exceed that of their local population. After the first year of altered purchasing practices, they had grown the diversity of their collection by about 10% and are on track to meet the diversity of their population within the next year.

Maggie Thompson-Johnston
Library Assistant
Juneau Public Library,

This year’s Public Library Association Conference in Nashville did not disappoint. I am beginning to understand the flow of the conference, after attending it a couple of times, the comforting structure, rituals and culture of the event. From the time I hit the gate in Seattle for the plane headed to Nashville, I could tell I would be riding with mostly fellow librarians. Rarely do you find a gate with such a high decibel of excited chatter. The energy of this group of strangers: simply happy to be together, sharing ideas and their passion for their chosen profession. How lucky we all are!

PLA did not disappoint—the sessions were fabulous, speakers inspiring and contacts made, valuable. Such a variety of available options makes for the only negative of the experience: wanting to be everywhere at once. Everything is relevant, everything speaks to you, and—librarians being naturally curious—you want to be at every event. We heard from Samantha Bee, Stacy Abrams and so many other inspiring leaders—all of whom shared their love of libraries and urged us to go forth and carry on our important works.

I am so grateful that our State Library has the ability to assist librarians with attending training. To remain relevant, it is imperative that library workers learn the latest trends and possibilities to better serve our communities. Attending conferences is one way, but making learning a regular part of your work, whether in a large library or a one-person shop, will make your work more interesting and better position you for the future.

Melissa Harter
Fairbanks North Star Libraries

(Cont. on pg. 13)
I was extremely fortunate to acquire a State Library grant to attend the Public Librarian Association conference in Nashville on Feb. 25-29, 2020. There were so many great training opportunities to choose from, and never enough time to attend all that I’d like.

Thinking about what would work well for implementation in my Branch Library and wanting to build on the NASA STEM training we had in Anchorage last year, I decided to attend the “Whole Family Learning with NASA Science Programming” session.

This informational training was conducted by Anoka County Librarians (MN) alongside two scientists from CRESST (Center for Research and Exploration in Space Science and Technology) at University of Maryland and NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, a member of the NASA Space Science Education Consortium (NSSEC).

This program sounded fantastic, given that the NASA scientists have created nine complete programs that can be utilized within the library setting during an evening or weekend and can include an entire family unit, working and learning together. Generally created for middle school age students and their families, the Anoka Library found it worked well with younger siblings and older family members such as grandparents all working together for a common learning goal and fun! One thing that was pointed out was each family member had an equal voice, meaning that children should be given the freedom to make and learn from their choices or mistakes and not have a parent dictate the proper way to do something.

Also 1/3 of parents stated that they felt unsure helping their children with science projects and felt initially hesitant of the NASA subject matter but all came away having learned new things, enjoying the whole family experience and enthused for the next week’s experiment. Families really liked working together on projects and discussing what each individual in their group thought. Take-home kits were also given to families, which would be especially popular now.

If you think this program might be of interest to you, I encourage you to go to the NASA Family Science Night link to get more information about how to run one of these programs in the future (post-Covid). They definitely got me all excited about trying something like this post-Covid. https://sdo.gsfc.nasa.gov/epo/families/

Other sessions I attended that are extremely beneficial to use now were “How to start and run your own podcast” and “Making use of self-care to increase your productivity while avoiding burnout.”

I’m extremely grateful I had the chance to attend the Public Library Association conference and especially now in our new reality. Who knows when huge library gatherings may be possible again? Thank you for this valuable opportunity.

Pamela Verfaillie
President
Alaska Association of School Librarians

The third book in The Immortals series finds Daine and her friends from Tortall on a royal peace mission to the neighboring country of Carthak. Between testy rulers and meddling Gods, Daine has her work cut out for her. While trying to keep her adoptive country safe, Daine discovers that one girl can make a huge difference on her own with a little Godly help.


Completely terrifying, You gives the reader a glimpse into the mind of a stalker, who truly believes he is doing nothing wrong. While none of the characters are particularly likeable, the reader is given a unique look at those who will do anything for what they think is love. Kepnes weaves a fascinating tale of obsession and control that leaves the reader holding their breath, waiting to see what Joe might do next. Lock your doors and close your blinds; you never know who might be watching.


Dinosaurs! One word is all it takes to get the reader hooked. Dinosaurs bring back memories from our childhood—we devoured everything we could about the creatures that once ruled the Earth. Crichton’s classic novel puts the reader smack in the middle of an ethical debate: What happens when humans decide to play God? Introducing us to captivating characters and incredible animals, Jurassic Park is a rollercoaster from start to finish. Which side will you be on if dinosaurs walk the Earth again?


Determined to let her will decide her destiny, Victoria Blaisdell sets out for the San Francisco gold fields with her family in 1849. Though they are grossly unprepared for
what they find there, Tory manages to thrive on the hard work and desperate living conditions. How will she fare, though, when the most precious thing in her care disappears? Forced into the darkest parts of the new city, Tory must rely on her instincts and ingenuity to recover what was lost. Gold Rush Girl is Avi at his finest. Strongly reminiscent of The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle (1990), the new novel explores parts of history that aren’t widely known. For example, San Francisco’s Rotten Row: hundreds of ships that were abandoned on arrival, left for anyone to take, and eventually sunk in the bay to create what is now the Embarcadero. The inclusion of a map at the end of the book that shows the locations where the remains of the ships have been found when modern building projects were undertaken drives this point home even harder. Fascinating history, compelling characters, and a mystery to solve; what could be better?


This is not a book I would normally select from the library or bookstore to read. Hand ed to me by a friend, I chanced on what I would find to be an interesting novel set in early nineteenth century remote Iceland.

Based on the true story of the last person to be publicly beheaded in Iceland, it describes life in an isolated farming region where convicted murderer Agnes Mag-
Alaska Experience Corner

Submitted by Larry Hibpshman, Book Buzz Manager (Kenai)

But you too can submit to the Alaska Experience column

ILbombastico@yahoo.com

I multitasked pantry triage, decluttering, and pleasure reading last week. I read that copy of *The Whale & The Cupcake: Stories of Subsistence, Longing & Community in Alaska* by Julia O'Malley that my sister sent me last Christmas, but I hadn't yet had a chance to read. Granted, it was just published in December of 2019, by University of Washington Press.

It is a lovely anthology of Alaskan cuisine, told through essays, photographs, interviews, and recipes. Julia O'Malley explores seasonal subsistence, our relationship to available foods, and the common thread of "making do" that connects Alaskans from the North Slope to the Kenai Peninsula to Southeast.

It's easy to digest (176 pages), and I was inspired to try my own version of the salmon pot pie. This book definitely sparks joy—it's a keeper for my home library!

Martha Tomeo
Tri-Valley School Librarian
Healy


What better to read when closed in at home than the harrowing account of the 1967 winter ascent of Denali during which the author and two team members sheltered together for six days in an ice cave at over 18,000 feet.

The classic mountaineering tale uses the author's memory and journal entries from other team members hunkering in lower camps to tell a story about uncertainty, motivation, conflicts, and beauty experienced during the
(Alaska Experience -- Cont. from pg. 16)

expedition. Even those who aren’t climbers will relate to the mental fog and leadership shortcomings with which the team contends.

I gained a better understanding of some of the practical issues of being holed up in a cave for that many days with winds blowing so strong that they could not leave even to relieve themselves. What also makes this a classic is Davidson’s storytelling style, using very little jargon, as well as his ability to reflect on his own failings.

Edition tip: Don’t read any of the 2013 introductory materials if you want to experience the story as it unfolds. Save those for afterward; they are well worth it.

Rosemary Austin
Anchorage


Mr. Opheim lived and worked at Sunny Cove, Woody Island, Kodiak, Ouzinkie, Left Hand Bay in Alaska, Seattle; Oyster Bay, Scandia, Kitsap in Washington; Butte Creek and Miles City in Montana, and Portland, Oregon—almost all before his 20th birthday! He was a fisherman, boat builder and captain, rancher, logger, sawmill operator, trapper—and author. He lived briefly at the Woody Island Baptist orphanage and at Chemewa Indian School. His short chapters include huge detail about the lives, needs and attitudes of Alaskan fishermen, Montana ranchers and others who lived in remote places. Oddly, although his family lived at Monk’s Island for some time and he refers to the local Orthodox Church, he does not mention Abba Gerasim who must have been a contemporary.

Larry Hibpsman
Kenai

Pinguat. Josh Branstetter (Director) Produced by Alutiiq Museum, Kodiak, AK. 2020, with support from Sun’aq Tribe of Kodiak, US BIA, Musée Boulogne-sur-Mer, Koniag Inc. and Alutiiq Heritage Foundation.

Thirteen talented artists, a 148-year-old beaded headdress, and tons of cultural pride. Those are the ingredients of Pinguat, a new documentary film. Released online in April, the 17-minute film follows the artists as they recreate an ancestral headdress

(Cont. on pg. 18)
collected on Kodiak in 1872.

The piece is part of a rare, complete set of women's ceremonial regalia on loan to the Alutiiq Museum by the Musée Boulogne-sur-Mer, France. The film expresses the joy and excitement the artists feel as they study and recreate the pieces. Watch here: https://vimeo.com/403459516 Learn more about the project.

**BEADERS AT THE PINGUAT WORKSHOP**


**Back Row,** from left: Natalia Schneider, Hanna Sholl, Chelsea Dallal, Cien Hoen, Candace Branson, Diana Velez.

**Front Row:** Leona Haakanson-Crow, June Pardue, Melinda Abyo, Kayla Christiansen, Ashley Dehart, Cheryl Lacy, and Mary Jane Longrich.

Amy Steffian, Chief Curator
Alutiiq Museum Kodiak


The central character, Old Mike, is a traditional Aleut elder, living in a barabara.* He has a vision of his life as a young boy, accompanying his father via kayak to trade in Kodiak and return.

Then nuclear war happens! The group of Aleut people in the area retreat to Monk’s Lagoon and are apparently the only survivors of the holocaust. Old Mike teaches them traditional ways to stay alive and recover.

While the basic outline seems unlikely, this book is valuable because it respectfully reveals much information about Aleut life, customs and behavior. Oddly, Abba Gerasim, the Orthodox Monk who founded the retreat, is also a prominent character in this story.

Larry Hibpshman
Kenai

(Cont. on pg. 19)

This is a short adventure and love story about a couple who travel by foot from Western to Eastern Montana, their adventures and the people they meet.

Bryan Henderson sells his thriving construction business in Helena and with childhood friend Sadie O'Conner sets off to revisit the natural wonders of the state.

Along the way they encounter crooked state game managers, isolated yet hospitable residents and eventually link with another childhood friend, Olaf Hogan, Jr., who now runs a Miles City garage.

Some of the situations seem a little unlikely, but the tale is told well, and is worth reading.

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Larry Hibpshman
Kenai

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barabara

* Barabaras were the traditional, main or communal dwellings used by the Alutiiq people and Aleuts, the indigenous people of the Aleutian Islands. They lay partially underground like an earth lodge or pit-house, and most of the house was excavated from the dirt so as to withstand the high forces of wind in the Aleutian chain of islands. Barabaras are no longer used, as present-day Aleuts live in modern houses and apartment buildings.

The roof of a barabara was generally made from sod and grass layered over a frame of wood or whalebone, and contained a roof doorway for entry. Inside the barabara was a main room, and a secondary room used for parental purposes.

The main room had two rows for cots, less-excavated and higher than the rest of the room. The bottom of the room had one or more holes for an "inhouse." The entrance typically had a little wind envelope or "Arctic entry" to prevent cold wind, rain or snow from blowing into the main room and cooling it off.

There was usually a hole in the ceiling through which smoke from the fire escaped.
GENERAL GUIDELINES TO PUBLISHING IN NEWSPOKE

Alaska Library Association Newsletter

Not accepted: paid advertising; material intended to "sell; make a profit" rather than to "inform." Submissions viewed as advertisements, unless item is of particular interest to Alaska, Alaskan patrons, libraries, or is submitted by an AkLA member.

Accepted: Alaskana—books, book reviews, or articles relating to, or of interest to, Alaskan librarians and/or their patrons. Informative material related to libraries and librarianship, especially in regard to Alaska.

Most anything submitted by AkLA members—reasonably tasteful, of appropriate length, "decently" well-written; author is willing to submit to possible editorial changes. This may include length, perhaps spellings, downsizing of convoluted sentences... (Editor will make every effort to let the author know of, and pre-approve, any significant changes before the material is published in Newspoke.)

Other—determined on an individual basis by "the committee" (defined as a group of at least three AkLA members). If the Newspoke editor, or the individual submitting, has questions or concerns about any submission, the matter will be sent on to the Newspoke Committee.
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