Years ago, people remarked that libraries were neutral spaces because we didn’t get involved in politics.

Those days are long gone and now you will often hear it said that indeed libraries are not neutral spaces. Neutrality implies that we are uninvolved in politics, that we do not hold positions. Yet, our own Library Bill of Rights is in itself a position statement, validating that we as librarians agree to uphold certain principles. ALA acknowledges 11 core values of librarianship: access, confidentiality/privacy, democracy, diversity, education/lifelong learning, intellectual freedom, the public good, preservation, professionalism, service, and social responsibility. Whether we like it or not, these are political issues.

However, political does not mean partisan. In order to effectively advocate for our communities and our patrons we must take these sorts of positions, but taking positions on library values and therefore setting aside neutrality is not the same as playing partisan politics. Our libraries’ values might be political, but they are not automatically liberal or conservative in nature. No matter whether you are Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, or other, the value of libraries and the values they uphold are clear. This is why it is critical that librarians,
Like any other citizen of our society, participate in our political process and share our values with our Representatives, Senators, and state legislators no matter which side of the aisle each of us resides on.

That’s why I volunteered for the American Librarian Association (ALA) Policy Corps and it’s why I spent Tuesday, May 8, at our nation’s capital speaking with Alaska’s federal legislators along with Patience Frederiksen, Alaska State Librarian; Mary Jo Joiner, Library Director of Kenai Public Library; and Katie Baxter, Kodiak resident and Alaska Library Association Legislative Committee member.

The ALA Policy Corps is a pilot program designed to take on-the-ground librarians from all types of libraries and geographical areas and develop policy experts who can speak to a variety of issues. This year, we attended a two-day training in March that involved a deep dive into ALA’s three main legislative priorities: Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funding, network neutrality, and e-rate and broadband connectivity.

These issues span all types of libraries and are critical no matter where you live or what you do for libraries. In May, we reconvened in D.C. for National Library Legislative Day (NLLD) where we joined more than 450 other librarians and library advocates from around the country to speak with our legislators about these issues. Party politics was irrelevant. The only thing that mattered was that you lived or worked in the legislator’s district and that you care about libraries.

The first day of NLLD is called briefing day. During this day, the ALA Washington Office staff prepared us by reviewing ALA’s legislative priorities, providing tips for how to talk to your legislators and their staff, giving us time to plan with the other librarians from our state, and engaging us with in-depth Q&A from seasoned pros. ALA went over the things they wanted us to cover.

First was IMLS and LSTA funding, which provides a large chunk of library funding to each state. Each state then matches the funds by one-third, helping to stretch the federal dollar and ensuring state funding to libraries.

Second, we discussed the reauthorization of the Museum and Library Services Act (MSLA), which comes up every five years. This year, the re-authorization expands the authority of IMLS to use funds for emergency response when libraries are part of declared disaster areas. Finally, we talked about e-rate and the Tribal Connect Act, asking Congress to leave e-rate alone and support the Tribal Connect Act, which makes tribal libraries eligible for e-rate funding.

Day two was National Library Legislative Day itself. As members of the Alaska delegation, the other three Alaskans and I visited all three of our national legislators. Our NLLD coordinator, Patience Frederiksen, did a fabulous job of creating one-page flyers for us to share and setting up appointments for us. We began the day by visit Representative Young’s office, where we met with his staff member in charge of libraries, Eleanor Gray Mullen.

One of the important messages

(Cont. on pg. 3)
we received during NLLD was about doing your research and tailoring your message to your legislator’s priorities. We know that as a former teacher, Congressman Young cares about education, that Senator Murkowski cares about equal access to services, and that Senator Sullivan focuses much of his attention on veterans and military families.

Therefore, during our 20 minutes in Congressman Young’s office, we explained how IMLS and e-rate funding are critical to Alaska’s libraries, shared some of the programs and services they fund, and I told a story of a student who overcame social anxiety to share her love of books with others during Battle of the Books. Our facts and statistics were important, but the most impact we had was the sharing of personal stories about our libraries. We ended by asking the Representative to support funding for IMLS and LSTA and to sign the MSLA re-authorization bill, as well as the Tribal Connect Act when they appear in the House.

In the afternoon, we visited with Senator Murkowski and her staff member Karen McCarthy. Again, we shared our message, but this time we changed it slightly. Senator Murkowski was an original co-sponsor of the Tribal Connect Act and is on the appropriations committee.

She has a long-time history of supporting libraries. So, instead of just asking for her support, we asked that she reach out to her colleagues in the Senate and ask them to support library-related legislation. Katie Baxter shared a touching story of how one man used his public library service to go from unemployed to owning his own businesses; and because his children visited the library along with him when he went to find the next business form or use the broadband to get training, he developed lifelong library users in his children as well.

Senator Murkowski shared her love of libraries with us, and particularly mentioned how she appreciated the books-by-mail service which ensures that Alaskans have access to books no matter where they are in the state.

Our last meeting was with Senator Sullivan and his staff. Once more, we shared the same information, slightly

tailoring our message. Since Senator Sullivan is an enormous supporter of our military veterans and their families, Mary Jo Joiner shared a story of how library services helped a veteran connect with important resources to adjust to life after deployment, get a new job, and get the mental health assistance that he needed. Senator Sullivan shared with us that he had recently talked with the FCC chairman about e-rate and net neutrality and was looking for a solution to get e-rate for our tribal libraries. He was pleased to hear about the Tribal Connect Act and agreed to look into it.

No matter what happens when it comes time for the vote, these meetings gave us a chance to connect with our legislators and their staff and form relationships that can grow over time. During these meetings, we used our opportunities not just to ask for support but to show the Congressman and Senators how libraries support their priorities. This two-way exchange is not about playing politics; it’s about messaging.

Libraries are already supporting veterans, contributing to the local and state economy, ensuring equity by providing broadband and databases and ebooks and books by mail, and helping students develop academic and social skills. We already provide training and education and connect people to the other resources available to them. Our job during NLLD—and any advocacy opportunity—is to point out what we already do and how it aligns with the priorities of our policy and decision makers so that together we can work toward a shared goal.

Many librarians view the issues that we hold dear as liberal ideals, but in fact freedom of choice is also a Libertarian value, network neutrality is an economic principle that many legislators can get behind, and funding libraries that ensure equity in their communities crosses the aisle.

It’s a bit of a cliché, but I heard it said at the meeting several times: “If you aren’t at the table, you’re on the menu.” The other way to think of this is no one can know what you want or what you need if you never tell them. I often hear people speak of advocacy like it’s a dirty word. They are afraid that by speaking out and demonstrating what they need, they are implying that not everything is perfect. They are afraid that they will draw negative attention. Or perhaps they are afraid they don’t have the skills necessary to be an effective advocate.

I’m here to tell you that none of that matters. Advocacy is necessary for libraries to communicate the amazing work we do every day and to tell our legislators what we need them to do, even if it’s just to maintain the status quo. The great thing about advocacy is that anyone can do it.

Our Senators and Congressmen and state legislators may seem imposing, but they are people just like you and I, and whether we agree with the way they go about it or not, they want what’s best for our community. If we don’t do this important work there is no way for them to know how libraries support economic development, lifelong learning, and more. And it’s not enough just to send a few people to National Library Legislative Day.

One day is a beginning, but we are competing for their attention with all the other people with legitimate needs and concerns. We all must take a minute to advocate if, as a community, we want to be heard.

No matter which political party our legislators belong to, we can meet on the common ground of helping our communities. As librarians, we have an obligation to speak to these issues and share their importance with those that have the power to make, change, and vote on policy.
and funding.

Not everyone can physically come to National Library Legislative Day, which is why ALA has created a virtual version so librarians and library advocates across the nation can still participate.

More importantly, the work that is done on NLLD is just the beginning of a relationship.

Now it’s time to follow up: to send emails expressing our thanks, to send more stories and photographs from our libraries, to invite our legislators to visit our libraries when they are home, and to start planning for next year.

Deborah Rinio, Librarian
North Pole High School
Fairbanks

(Bridging Gaps - Cont. from pg. 4)
CONTINUING EDUCATION GRANTS ENHANCE CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE

The Alaska State Library has instituted a CE grant requirement that we believe will help disperse the learning that occurs during conferences. Individuals who have been awarded a CE grant are now required to write a short (up to 250 words) Newspoke article about their conference attendance to share what’s been learned with the larger library community. We hope this requirement will provide attendees with an opportunity to stop and reflect back on their conference experiences and personally apply what they’ve learned.

Julie Marie Niederhauser
Public Library Coordinator
Alaska State Library

I received a Continuing Education write-up from “Linda” at email address akreallady@hughes.net. I replied to this address requesting full name and (library) location but have not heard back. If anyone knows her, please have her contact me (afima@gci.net).

Loretta Andress
Editor, Newspoke

Quite a number of these CE write-ups were received; some will be published in the next issue of Newspoke.

CH-CH-CH-CHANGES, TURN AND FACE THE STRANGE

At the 2018 AkLA Conference, I participated in a panel titled “Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes, Turn and Face the Strange.” During our program planning process and also during the actual panel presentation at the conference, I learned so much from my co-panelists, from the organizer, and also gained some insight by reflecting on what I have learned from the changes in my own career. The panel included folks who have made the change from school to public libraries and from Librarian to Library Assistant. One person shared her experience transitioning to a new position after being fired. A couple of people talked about moving from the nonprofit world to the library world and back. I personally talked about making the change from urban to rural libraries. During the session, we had insightful and engaging conversations with each other and with session participants.

If you are considering whether to participate in an AkLA panel or even whether to organize one, I encourage you to do so! The audience was engaged and supportive, and the other folks on the panel were insightful and wonderful to work with. This is a non-intimidating way to jump into presenting at a conference, and it was a fun learning experience all around.

Karen Kresh
Unalaska Public Library

(Cont. on pg. 7)
ATTENDING CONFERENCE WITH ANOTHER INCREASES VALUE

The 2018 AkLA conference was an especially valuable experience for me because this year the CE grant program made it possible to have a first-time attendee (volunteer Pam Grieve) come with me. Generally I work alone at the Aniak Public Library, and it was a unique experience to have a colleague to discuss ideas with. Also, I was able to coordinate session attendance with her. Pam and I both signed up to earn the one-credit conference class, which meant we had an implementation requirement. We worked on that together, and less than a month after the conference we had already hosted a family game night (inspired by one of the conference sessions).

We were both very enthused about the summer reading and AkLA Ignite sessions, and we’ve continued to collaborate to design what we hope will be the best summer reading program our town has ever had. My experience this year is that attending Conference with another person makes it more likely that ideas will be implemented. Also, it made a fun learning experience even more enjoyable. I’m grateful that the CE grant design made a team approach possible. Thank you!

Carrie Longpre
Librarian
Aniak Public Library

LEAN INTO LITERACY

I was excited to attend the Alaska State Library conference. I had fun attending the Battledecks session and look forward to participating on the next occasion. In addition to networking opportunities I hope will pay off over time, there were many aha moments for me. As a means of highlighting some of my most memorable moments, let me reflect on the nuggets I gleaned from the stream.

Practical skills for difficult homeless patrons with Ryan Dowd was an excellent session. I have to admit that many of the tips he presented are natural to me, but I also learned as much as I was validated. One idea that I took away and immediately shared with teammates was the notion of banking positive interactions with all patrons to draw on if and when a patron is a difficult one in the future. There was also a great amount of applicable actionable content regarding body language and positioning for safety and to communicate calm.

(Cont. on pg. 8)
I really enjoyed the “Storytimes With Bells And Whistles” roundtable session. I walked away with a book and many ideas and series of books to look into. The key takeaway for me, though, was to lean into literacy. In addition to exciting activities, excitement can be generated as much from solid story selection and a real love for the books used. I’m all for innovative programming ideas, but I love stories and books. Remembering that and letting kids tap into that energy has as much or more long reaching impact.

I hope to attend again. Next time I would prefer to be alongside a colleague to best digest the experience and home in on what will be applicable in our library.

S. Grady Deaton
Bethel Library

PLA CONFERENCE—CULINARY LITERACY

This year I had the opportunity to attend the Public Library Association Conference in Philadelphia. This was my first national conference, and it was a great experience. I attended a variety of different sessions. The one that I was most excited about was called “Culinary Literacy 101: A how-to for your library.”

The Philadelphia Free Library started this program several years ago. They coordinate with local chefs and home cooks to teach cooking classes in the library. They discuss cooking techniques, nutrition, and ethical food practices. For example, they make every effort to purchase food from Pennsylvania farmers, and to source the ingredients as locally as possible. Each class ends with a communal meal. Many classes are offered for adults, and they do charge a minimal fee for participation. However, the money generated from those classes is used to fund the free classes for children and special-needs adults.

If this something that your library is interested in doing, the Philadelphia Free Library has an online toolkit with all of the information that you need to get started. They also have a checklist for a “kitchen in a box,” which includes the basics of what you need to do a program if you don’t have a kitchen at your disposal. You can make your own “kitchen in a box” for only $350 to $800. We are fortunate to have a commercial kitchen in our library/cultural center, and I am excited to put what I learned in this session to use this summer.

We are planning to do a series of four cooking classes in cooperation with Bethel 4-H Cooperative Extension. We can get the vegetables from the 4-H garden and fish and moose obtained locally. We are planning to teach kids how to make four entire meals using only materials harvested in Bethel.

(Cont. on pg. 9)
Check out the tool-kit here!  

Theresa Quiner  
Library Director  
Kuskokwim Consortium Library

EARLY LITERACY: MOTHER GOOSE ON THE LOOSE

During April 2018 I attended the Public Library Association conference for the first time. Among the many lessons learned, I was privileged to meet one of my personal librarian heroes, Dr. Betsy Diamant-Cohen. Betsy created the Mother Goose on the Loose (MGOL) program in the 1990s. It is an early literacy program designed to meet the developmental needs of babies ages birth-24 months.

A typical MGOL program includes songs, books, knee bounces, fingerplays, instruments, and circle time. I was first trained in this method while working in California, and when our library opened in Soldotna, we began offering a weekly “Bouncing Babies” lapsit session for new moms. My husband and son were part of the first cohort, and our library staff still have a special connection to those babies and their families. Most of the babies have been regular attendees at our toddler, then pre-K story times, and are starting Kindergarten this year ready to read, write, and listen.

Bouncing Babies continues to be a wonderful gateway program to introduce new parents to library resources, while also providing babies with enriching activities, and parents with a built-in weekly support group. If anyone is interested in learning how to start an MGOL program, I can answer any questions or you can visit their website http://www.mgol.net/

Sidenote: At PLA Betsy shared updates to her program to make songs more relevant to children today. One of my favorites was to change the words to “Pease Porridge Hot” to “Pizza Pizza Hot.”

Rachel K. Nash, Librarian  
City of Soldotna

(Cont. on pg. 10)
AkLA 2018: Learning to Listen

At this year’s Alaska Library Association Conference in Anchorage I learned a lot—the best sources for Alaska statistical information, facilitation techniques for civil dialogue, and new ways to engage young patrons. But the most important lesson was how to listen—not just with the brain and heart but with the soul. I am known as a good listener, but talks by Jennifer O’Neal, Dr. Jervette Ward, Brendan Kiely and others provided insights and context that broadened my awareness of cultural differences and taught me how to communicate with others with more sensitivity and humility.

In her talk, "From Time Immemorial," Jennifer O’Neal described the history of Indigenous collections in Western institutions, repatriation efforts, and the development of archival systems to describe and manage access to collections, in close collaboration with Indigenous groups and informed by Indigenous knowledge systems.

Dr. Jervette Ward, in "The Work and Worth of Words," spoke about the power that words have to support—or undermine—systems of privilege and oppression, and the obligation each of us has to speak intentionally and make our words count to fight for social justice.

Brendan Kiely, co-author with Jason Reynolds of the book All American Boys, gave a talk on how to practice radical empathy, to listen to another’s experience without judgment and with awareness of one’s own preconceptions and privilege.

I came away from AkLA this year with a lot to think about, and a lot to put into practice.

Pat Tully
Ketchikan Public Library

Face to Face With Our Colleagues

AkLA conference is one of our primary means to obtain training and get current information on local and state issues, technology, and products with other librarians from around Alaska. It’s a chance to do face to face with our in-state colleagues, to put a face to the voice on the other end of the line, and it’s a chance to get to know our state library staff.

I really enjoyed the Alaska Books for Alaska Kids session. It gave me a good insight on what publishers are recommended and how to identify which Alaska children’s books are authentic. I really appreciate all the hard work that Ann Dixon, Sue Sherif, Elizabeth Nicolai and Katy Spangler put
Connections with a Web of Passionate and Knowledgeable Librarians

Working for my community via the Fairbanks North Star Borough Public Libraries fills my heart with joy and drive every day. With dark Fairbanks winters, having a source of sunshine through my colleagues who are now more than names on a listserv—they are sources of inspiration, knowledge and support manifested.

I am originally from New Jersey; my geographic markers consisted of malls and highway exit numbers; needless to say I am very green when it comes to Alaskana. Conferences and professional meet-and-greets are essential in helping new colleagues to professionally acclimate and learn about the regional quirks that no library school curriculum can cover. I felt that in those four days I became connected to a web of passionate and knowledgeable librarians who are more than willing to listen and share.

We face challenges in public libraries with problematic patron behaviors and, in addition to the collegiate good will and networking, this conference gave me the tools to tackle difficult issues while staying true to our profession’s ethics of equity of access and respect for the Bill of Rights. From the emotional to the practical, this conference will make a difference in my everyday reference interview, but will also help inform the direction of our website, libguides and adult programming. I look forward to the next conference and doing my part for a bright and innovative future for libraries in Alaska.

Julia Troike
Adult Services Librarian
Noel Wien Library
AkLA IMPACT

Jo Cassidy
Big Lake Public Library
Of Special Interest: Library Services to the Homeless

As a first-time attendee to the Alaska Library Association Conference, I can’t begin to express how beneficial the conference was to my personal professional development.

Library services for people who are homeless was the focal point of my research in graduate school so the opportunity to spend all day with Ryan Dowd was a personal treat. I was even fortunate enough to interview him for Sitka Public Library’s first podcast episode!

Attending the Civic Engagement Roundtable and AkLA Advocacy Committee meetings was enlightening to someone new to Alaska.

Other work sessions and programming ideas that came up throughout the conference sparked a few ideas that I hope to share with both the Civic Engagement Roundtable and AkLA Advocacy Committee as areas of possible collaboration. One of the most engaging events I attended was the Librarianship and Traditional Cultural Expressions discussion. The topic was not new to me but realizing there are no easy answers or general consensus on the issue made the discussion very interesting.

I loved the Red Hot Library Programming session. I was impressed with all of the different approaches to innovative library programming and hope to explore similar opportunities for the Library in Sitka.

More than anything, though, I enjoyed interacting with other librarians in Alaska. Attending the AkLA Conference broadened my perspective of both the role that libraries (public, academic, school) play throughout the state and the importance of state-wide collaboration. There are not many in-person training opportunities in Sitka so being refreshed on librarianship with in-person discussion was very helpful and enjoyable.

Andrew Murphy, Director
Sitka Public Library
AkLA IMPACT

Conference Means Amazing Speakers, Sessions, Activities

Ok, I admit it…every year when AKLA rolls around, I hem and haw and drag my feet. While my brain knows there are SO many benefits, the rest of me cringes at the idea of leaving the comfort and safety of my own little world and the pile of work that will be waiting on my desk when I get back--but I go. I am so glad that I do.
Not only are there amazing keynote speakers, interesting sessions, and sidesplitting activities (if you haven’t seen Battledecks, you’ve missed out! Long live King Daniel!), where else do you get the opportunity to sit down for a few quiet moments of discussion with the State Library faculty and staff and join a whole lot of like-minded people and share war stories (Luke, I AM your Librarian)?

So once again, thanks AKLA and the CE grant for forcing me out of the library and giving me an opportunity to hang out with a group of amazing people!

Julie Mitchell, Librarian
Willow Public Library

Impact of Continuing Education Grant

As a new library professional I was very excited to have the opportunity to attend the 2018 AKLA Conference due to receiving the ASL Continuing Education Grant. This grant afforded me the opportunity to build many new library contacts and resources to greater improve collaboration in my field.

I am confident that the knowledge learned through the various sessions, especially the session on Practical Skills for Difficult Homeless Patrons, will be instrumental to my daily work. I was also excited to learn from an experienced youth librarian how to better conduct an engaging story time, as well as how to cater a story time to patrons with autism.

As a result of the conference, I plan to reexamine my 2018 Summer Reading Program to better implement the concept of overall summer learning. I am eager to share this knowledge with my colleagues, which I plan to do at our next staff meeting and programming meeting.

James Adcox
Children’s Librarian
Kenai Community Library

I Look Beyond My Library to the Larger Scale

Bridging the Gaps was an excellent theme for the 2018 AkLA Conference in Anchorage. Something that really stayed with me after conference is the importance of telling our stories and using our voices.
I hope I can take this lesson and apply it to my community and library. Colleagues also shared important advice on how to streamline collection development and introduce new programs. I now have specific strategies and possible funding sources to help improve our collection.

Part of the reason attending Conference is so important is that it forces me to look beyond my library and pay attention to what is happening on a larger scale. The speakers at this year’s conference definitely delivered on that front. I want to thank the Alaska State Library for offering grant assistance to attend conference and other training opportunities. We are often isolated in Alaska, so the chances we have to be with other Alaskan library workers and receive training are so important. Thank you to Erik Carlson and the Conference Committee for putting on such an excellent conference. See you all next year!

Mollie Good
Valdez Consortium Library

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**Working Compassionately With the Difficult Homeless**

The best take-away I got from this year’s conference was a simple, yet brilliant tip from a session I was unable to attend but heard much about.

Ryan Dowd is the director of a homeless shelter near Chicago, Illinois. He trains libraries (and other organizations) on how to work compassionately with difficult homeless individuals. From a fellow librarian, I learned about The Penny Cup, or 5:1 rule. Be sure to make five positive comments to patrons (smile, greet them, ask how they’re doing, etc.) before a negative one (please remove your feet from the table). This practice not only applies to dealing with homeless patrons, but any patron.

It applies also to marriages, work relationships, and more!

Virginia Morgan
Cooper Landing Community Library

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(Cont. on pg. 15)
Conference Invaluable to Small Village Library

The Alaska Library Association Conference in March 2018 was my first library conference. I’m from a very small village, so heading to the big city is always exciting. I stayed very close to the conference center so it was very easy to attend all the events I was interested in.

I enjoyed the First Time Conference Attendee Opening Reception and meeting others who were also there for the first time. The keynote speaker, Jennifer O’Neal, had good points on traditional cultures and how to give the respect needed for all people. I also learned much from the Librarianship and Traditional Cultural Expressions class, as well as Alaska Native Issues.

The words of the keynote speaker Jervette Ward were very timely, as were those of the speaker at the Authors to Alaska Luncheon. The conference venue was very pleasant, with ample space and beautiful art. The views were some of the best Alaska has to offer.

I learned much to bring back to my small library, which is a very important part of this tiny, isolated village. It is a meeting place for the community and popular with tourists in the summer months. It is the only place for visitors to get wi-fi and contact with loved ones because we don’t have cellular.

I hope I can attend Alaska Library Association Conferences in the future. They are a great way to meet people and find new ideas that can improve even my small library.

Patricia Nix
Eagle Public Library

Collection Accessibility and Community Engagement

A recurring theme from the 2018 Northwest Archivists Conference was community inclusion. In many presentations, this theme was addressed from the backend of archives, as we archivists describe and make accessible our materials, and through outreach and advocacy efforts.

These conversations forced me to examine how we were describing our own collections. Is the language we’re using accessible? Is our catalog easy to navigate? How are others, from different backgrounds, interpreting our descriptions? One of the fundamental principles in the archival profession is the need to represent all histories, not just the dominating one, within our collections.

As I move forward in my career, this is something I will reflect on as I process and describe our collections. We must think about the language we use and how it may be interpreted;

(Cont. on pg. 16)
also, whether our audience may be from a different culture, age group, or educational background. The words we use in our finding aids can either make our collections easy to access or they build a wall that says you must be this highly educated, speak this language, or already know this much background information before you may locate the information you’re seeking.

The work that’s being done by institutions to tear down these walls is inspiring. From the behind-the-scenes development of cultural heritage platforms like Mukurtu, to outreach initiatives aimed at collecting records of previously underdocumented groups, to efforts aimed at engaging with our patrons, we are making progress as LAM professionals. Conferences like this one remind you that there is always work to be done and still a long way to go, which for this archivist is a challenge happily accepted.

Leah Geibel
Alaska State Archives
Juneau

Creating a Virtual Tour for a Library

This year’s AkLA preconference—on creating a virtual tour for a library—was one of the best workshops I’ve ever attended. I’ve wanted to find new ways to reach people interested in our library before they even come to town, and a virtual tour was something I wanted to explore. I was eager to learn how to put one together, and like most of us, never had time to learn the skills to do so. Now after taking this amazing class, I feel ready to go. I had no idea we’d leave the session with the framework of a tour in place, and that we’d have so much uninterrupted time to actually dig in and work. That was the best part of all—no phone calls, no distractions, and three eager and knowledgeable instructors standing by.

Afterwards, I spoke with one of the instructors and suggested the virtual tours could be listed on the State Library website. She brought it up to someone from the Juneau office, and the idea was well received, much to my delight. Which means I need to get going and edit the shiny new Delta Library virtual tour as soon as possible. I’m so excited for our patrons, especially those new to town, who will have the ability to “check out” our library on line, on social media, and through the State Library website.

Kudos to all the instructors—Ruth Terry, Lorelei Sterling and Christie Ericson—for making this a delightful, interesting, and very productive class. I enjoyed every minute!

Joyce McCombs
Director
Delta Community Library
Transformation Not Trend: Dismantling Institutional Racism in Public Libraries

held during the 2018 Public Library Association Conference, http://www.placonference.org/ is that if we want to work on solutions to combat racism in our institutions, we need a common and shared definition of what racism is and how it differs from race prejudice and bigotry.

According to information created by Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training, racism is more than race prejudice. It is more than individual attitudes and actions. Racism is the collective actions of a dominant racial group. The Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity https://www.racialequityalliance.org/ defines institutional racism as racism that occurs when (intentionally or unintentionally) policies, practices and procedures work better for white people than for people of color.

Fernando Ospina, the Co-Executive Director of Eliminating Racism & Creating/Celebrating Equity (ERACCE), acknowledged that discussing racism can be difficult as people are reluctant to share personal experiences, thoughts, or feelings. This is out of fear that their words may inadvertently hurt someone and their comments may come across as racist and insensitive.

He stressed the importance of creating a safe space for our discussions and laid simple ground rules:

1. What we learned at the workshop could leave with us.
2. What others shared during the workshop should stay at the workshop.
3. If we respect one another, listen to understand, take responsibility for our words and our reactions, create space for other’s voices and maintain confidentiality, we would create a space where all of us could feel safe and heard.

Next, Fernando led us through a power analysis exercise based on Gloria Anzaldúa’s research on cultural identity and borderlands theory. We were asked to form groups and record our answers on a handout with a blank square printed on the middle of it. Answers to the first question—“In the U.S. what are the social identities and values that are considered: normal, standard, good, more and best practices?”—were to be recorded inside the box. Answers to the second question—“What are the social identities and values that the dominant center considered deviant, non-standard, or exotic?”—were to be recorded outside and around the square.

It was shocking to see each group report nearly identical results. Every group had created a power center (inside of the box) that was white, male, middle class, Christian, educated, employed, English-language speaking, heterosexual, and a homeowner. This simple activity clearly illustrated where the power in our culture and institutions resides.

The activity concluded with a discussion on White Culture and how it defines what is considered normal, what is valued,
and how decisions are made in our institutions.

The second part of the pre-conference was led by Judi Rambow, Caitlin Hoag, and Angela Fortin, librarians from the Kalamazoo Public Library (KPL) and members of KPL’s Antiracism Transformation Team. [http://www.kpl.gov/about/antiracism-transformation-team.aspx](http://www.kpl.gov/about/antiracism-transformation-team.aspx)

Their presentation focused on efforts their library has undertaken to combat institutional racism. The first step was identifying where KPL was on the Continuum on Becoming an Anti-racist Multicultural Institution.

The second step was the creation of the Antiracism Transformation Team, whose members represent diverse cultural, racial, gender and age groups, commit to serving for three years, and are tasked with implementing the process of dismantling institutional racism. Members of the Antiracism Transformation Team were provided with extensive training from Eliminating Racism Claiming/Celebrating Equality (ERACCE) so that everyone had a shared understanding of what systemic racism is and the process they would need to follow to dismantle it.

While none of the KPL facilitators sugarcoated the process (eliminating institutional racism takes dedication, persistence, and time), all of them expressed the importance of their work, the progress being made, and the strong bonds they share with their fellow team members.

Julie Marie Niederhauser
Public Library Coordinator
Alaska State Library

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**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-aprove, 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.

Maybe you don’t read physics books for fun, but every now and then, the mysteries of the universe put you in a state of wonder and awe and you just wish you knew a bit more. This is the book. Whiteson is the physicist and Cham is the cartoonist, and together they are humorous, clever, and understandable.

If you have no idea what a quark is, nor that their “flavors” are up, down, strange, charm, bottom, and top, that’s only the tip of the iceberg.

If you’re in the dark about dark matter and dark energy, join the club: NO ONE knows what constitutes 95% of the universe. We Have No Idea is a run-down of all we don’t know. With funny bits thrown in.

Barbara Brown

I want to feature one of my favorite Alaskan authors, Naomi Gaede-Penner, one of the best contemporary Alaskan personal experience writers.

Her family experienced life and adventure in the Territory and State over wide distances for six decades. Her

Prescription for Adventure series is excellent: always good humored, honest yet courteous—with abundant detail, fact, and critical thinking. She tells her stories in her subjects’ voices and succeeds in making them authentic. I can’t recommend any series more highly.
Gaede-Penner’s series includes four books:


This book chronicles the Alaskan career of Anna Bortel Church, an unsung Alaskan hero. Miss Bortel (married later than this book’s time span) was a long-term teacher in remote villages and elsewhere in Alaska. This book covers her experience in Valdez and especially Tanana. Gaede-Penner’s story is biographical writing at its best.

I can’t fathom how Gaede-Penner managed to take Bortel’s voice so completely. Mrs. Church, who perhaps collaborated, died in December 2014.

‘A’ is for Anaktuvuk. Teacher to the Nunamiut Eskimos. Mustang OK: Tate, 2013. ISBN 978-1-61777-756-1. Indexed. (My copy is autographed.)

This is my favorite of the series. Gaede-Penner recounts Bortel’s later career as the first teacher at the first school in Anaktuvuk Pass.

Anaktuvuk residents, the last nomads in the United States, settled in the pass in 1949 but had no school until 1960.

Miss Bortel lived in a sod house and performed many other community functions: playing the organ, teaching Sunday school, teaching adult English and reading classes, providing emergency medical treatment, writing letters for villagers, and many other tasks.

Mrs. Church held several other significant Alaskan teaching jobs, most notably as an Alaska Native Service Hospital teacher for several years.


Doctor Elmer Gaede certainly took risks and surely was rewarded with adventure in his long Alaskan aviation and medical practice.

This book recounts Public Health Service and private medical practice incidents—big game hunts and a long, cold walk along the Bering Sea Coast. With the possible exception of the Aleutian Chain and the Alexander Archipelago, Dr. Gaede visited pretty much all areas in the territory and state. The book is full of excitement, humor and, at times, pathos.

(Cont. on pg. 21)

This is the fourth in Gaede-Penner’s retelling of her family’s and Anna Bortel Church’s Alaskan experiences. It’s her most personal, written in her own voice.

Like the other three volumes in her series, Kansas Wheat Fields is excellent. It combines both fact and adventure, but there is also an undercurrent of ambivalence that works itself out as wisdom. Anyone would enjoy, and many would profit from, this story.
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CALENDAR

Alaska Historical Society Annual Conf., Nome, AK Sep. 2018
PNC/MLA Annual Meeting, Spokane, WA Oct. 14-16, 2018
ALA Midwinter Meeting, Seattle, WA Jan. 25-29, 2019
Medical Library Assn. Conf., Chicago, IL May 3-8, 2019
ALA Annual Conf., WA, DC: Jun. 20-25, 2019