FLORIDA
LIBRARIES

FALL 2024

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, LITERACY!

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF IL

HISPANIC HERITAGE

DIVERSE BOOKS

THERAPY DOGS

WHEN THE GOING GETS RUFF

Florida Libraries

AN FLA PUBLICATION

2024-2024 FLA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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* INDICATES PEER REVIEWED

FROM THE EDITOR

MARY DANIELS

Happy Autumn!

As we enter the -ember and -ober months, life can get a little chaotic. A high-octane election cycle has just passed (as of the time of writing this, the election hasn't happened yet). The holiday season approaches and brings its unique brand of festive stress. Through all of it, my sincere hope is that you're able to carve out some time to enjoy quiet moments of peace as we head into 2025.

For many of our friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues, this time is made more difficult following the disasters of Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Our thoughts are with everyone impacted by the storms. Please be sure to visit the FLA website and learn more about FLA's Hurricane Relief Fund. Applications are open for both libraries and individuals. In this season of giving, I encourage everyone to donate or share the information so we can do our best to assist those affected by the storms, and thank you all for your kindness and generosity.

A sincere thanks to our FLA President, Jorge Perez, for his ongoing compassion for and commitment to Florida's library professionals. If you haven't read his message for October, be sure you do—the pictures alone make it worthwhile!

Thank you to all who submitted articles for this issue, and I encourage any library workers thinking about writing to go for it—it's my genuine pleasure to work with you to make it happen.

Wishing you and your loved ones a safe, joyful, peaceful holiday season, and a very happy new year,

MARY DANIELS, MLIS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

FROM THE
PRESIDENT

JORGE PEREZ

By showcasing what we do and what we are thinking about, we not only gain ideas that benefit the communities we serve, but we also create a collection of narratives that celebrate our professional identity.

Aligning with our annual theme, Overdue for Fun: Celebrating Libraries and Ourselves, the articles in this and past journal issues serve as a testament to honoring our professional life stories and shared experiences. We, library professionals, have a rich history of fostering knowledge, supporting communities, and championing the freedom to learn and explore diverse perspectives.

The content gathered in this issue embodies the joy of affirming our professional existence. I am thankful to our editor, Mary Daniels, and our dedicated peer review team for making these issues a success. I also want to thank all the authors published in this issue. They truly understand that their articles are more than just a professional task; at a deeper level, they are a meaningful contribution to the growth, identity, and legacy of our values. I hope this issue inspires you to reflect on your own contributions and consider how you can continue to shape our profession.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue and the ongoing story of our profession. Your dedication ensures that libraries remain vital, inclusive spaces for all.

JORGE E. PEREZ
FLA PRESIDENT 2024-2025

FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JENNIFER K. ABDELNOUR, CAE

Building Community through FLA Membership

By now, you have heard the good news that the Florida Library Association's annual dues for Individual members have decreased. And FAME members may join or renew with FLA for only **$30** a year! **Individual members must log into their FLA account to select their new salary tier so that the appropriate dues invoice is sent.** Take advantage of this great opportunity to build community!

Current Salary Tier	Rate	New Salary Tier	Rate
$0 - 19,999	$44	$1-$39,999	$40
$20,000 - 29,999	$66	$40,000 - $59,999	$60
$30,000 - 44,999	$84	$60,000 - $79,999	$80
$45,000 - 59,999	$112	$80,000 - $99,999	$100
$60,000 - 79,999	$144	$100,000 - $119,999	$120
$80,000 and above	$173	$120,000 and above	$140

Not an individual member? Whichever your membership type, it's still a great time to renew (and to tell a student or colleague about FLA!). Renewing now will provide membership through December 2025.

FLA Membership benefits include:
- Professional development opportunities—from free webinars, to conference registration discounts, to eligibility to run to serve on the FLA Board of Directors or as a Committee Chair
- Networking opportunities with colleagues across the state
- Opportunities for student members to apply for scholarships
- The opportunity to nominate your library peers and allies for awards
- A voice in Florida library advocacy

FLA and Florida libraries are great because of YOU. We're all "Overdue for Fun"— join or renew today to help us reach our 2025 goal of 1,000 FLA members by sharing with a library friend!

Interested in sharing your love of libraries and FLA with the wider library community? FLA's Communications and Membership Development Committees want to hear from you!

Whether you're a student, library staff, library trustee/board member, friend of a library, or retired library worker, share your thoughts with us. Tell your story by filling out the FLA Member Spotlight Form, and you could be featured on the FLA website and social media!

FLA's greatest asset is our community. Your participation shapes our programs and services. We encourage you to share your ideas, whether it's an item you'd love to see in your collection or a program you think would benefit your peers. Together, we can continue to create a space where everyone feels welcome and inspired.

Thank you for being a part of our FLA family. Your passion for learning and community drives us to keep evolving and improving. As we move forward, let's continue to build a brighter future together, fueled by curiosity and a shared love for knowledge.

I look forward to seeing you at FLA's Library Legislative Day, March 10-11, 2025, in Tallahassee, and wish you a meaningful holiday season.

Once again, thank you for supporting librarianship in our state!

Jennifer K. Abdelnour

JENNY ABDELNOUR, CAE
FLA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MEET THE EDITORIAL BOARD

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

2024 Organizational Members

Florida Libraries, Consortia, Cooperative, Network and Library School/Degree Programs

Alachua County Library District

Altamonte Springs City Library

Bethune-Cookman University

Boynton Beach City Library

Broward College

Broward County Library

Broward County Library

Charlotte County Library System

Citrus County Library System

City of Parkland Library

City of St. Petersburg Library System

Clearwater Public Library System

Collier County Public Library

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University-Hunt Library

Ethel M. Gordon Oakland Park Library

Everglades University

Florida A&M College of Law Library

Florida Atlantic University Library

Florida National University

Florida State University, Strozier Library

Florida Virtual Campus (FLVC) Library Services

Fort Walton Beach Library

Franklin County Public Library

Full Sail University

Gadsden County Public Library

Gulf Beaches Public Library

Homestead Cybrarium

Largo Public Library

Lee County Library System

LeRoy Collins Leon County Public Library

Lighthouse Point Library

LIRN

Maitland Public Library

Manatee County Public Library

Mandel Public Library of West Palm Beach

Miami-Dade Public Library System

Orange County Library System

Osceola Library System - Hart Memorial Library

Palm Beach County Library System

Palm Harbor Library

Panhandle Public Library Cooperative System

Pinellas Public Library Cooperative

Santa Rosa County Public Library

Seminole County Public Library

South Florida State College

Sumter County Library

Tallahassee State College

Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library

Temple Terrace Public Library

The Society of the Four Arts

Three Rivers Regional Library

University of South Florida

Valencia College

Volusia County Public Library

2024 BUSINESS MEMBERS

FLA thanks our Business Members who are committed to serve Florida's libraries and library professionals.

BRING JOY WITH THERAPY DOGS

BY REBECCA GREER

Last year when I transitioned from working in public libraries to a school media center, I realized I could achieve one of my career goals: bringing therapy dogs into the library. The idea was to have therapy dogs come in for a few days during midterms and finals to help alleviate stress and bring joy back into the students' days.

The first step was to get the administration on board with the idea, necessitating research into the subject, focusing on the benefits of bringing therapy dogs onto campus. I started by looking at similar programs in Florida and found one at the University of South Florida (USF). At USF, "the Center for Student Well-Being invites dogs and other animals to come to campus during exam time to help students cope with the added stress" (Paws, 2024). At Berkeley Preparatory School in Tampa, Florida, the AP Psychology teacher and clinical psychologist Dr. Michelle Barrett stated

…petting these dogs actually brings about physiological changes, particularly when stressed or anxious. Research consistently supports a reduction in heart rate and blood pressure when petting an animal. Even more significant is the documented reduction in cortisol levels (stress hormone) and increase in oxytocin (feel good/social connection

hormone). This is really strong evidence that there can be a decrease in stress/anxiety and a mood boost, potentially for depression/loneliness, simply by petting a dog.

There are very few interventions that are this simple, fast, and effective (Therapy, 2024). I was extremely fortunate to immediately get the full backing of my school administration. The school's Student Government had been trying to get a Therapy Dog program for the last few years, but needed someone to help facilitate it. As I have experience with running large-scale library programs, I was happy to volunteer myself and have the assistance of these students in promoting the program and getting the student body to sign up to participate.

A high school in upstate New York had therapy dogs visit their school library and stressed the importance of having officially registered Therapy Dogs for their long-running program (Walker, 2021). Based on this information, I knew I needed to reach out to local therapy dog organizations that ensured the dogs were well-trained, healthy, and approved for visits along with their handler.

There are several national and even international therapy dog organizations that

BRING JOY WITH THERAPY DOGS

There are several national and even international therapy dog organizations that test the dogs and provide them with certifications for visits. These organizations often have local chapters from which visits can be requested. I reached out to as many places as I could, not knowing how many local members might belong to each group or what their availability would be. The organizations I reached out to were the Alliance of Therapy Dogs, The Bright & Beautiful, and Pet Partners.

The organizations did not provide me with the names of contacts, but instead had me fill out a form with information about my event. I had to include dates, times, location, information on who would be participating (students), and if there would be someone from the school present to oversee the visits. As the handlers are only responsible for the dogs, a school representative needs to run the program.

Once I started getting interest from the handlers and their dogs, I put together a spreadsheet listing the dates and times of the visits. This made it a lot easier once the students signed up, and I could assign them a time slot to visit with a therapy dog. With help from the Student Government, I posted flyers with QR codes to advertise that therapy dogs were coming to visit for midterms, making it easy for students to download and fill out the sign-up form I created along with a parental permission sheet that parents/guardians needed to sign. Additional forms were kept in the library for students who may not have access to a printer. As students filled out and returned the forms, I added their name to a time slot in my spreadsheet and tried to schedule an equal number of students for each therapy dog visit.

Students were e-mailed with the information for their therapy dog visit; the date, time, and name of the dog they were going to get to hang out with. Since students don't reliably check their e-mails, I also had Student Government post the spreadsheet I made so students could check the time of their scheduled visit with the therapy dog.

On each therapy dog day, I met the handler and dog at the front door and escorted them to the library. I had Student Government help students sign in as they arrived at the library and make sure each visit was capped at 30 minutes to allow for turnover. Seeing the students' faces light up as soon as they saw a dog on campus is absolutely amazing. You can see them come into the library looking tired, exhausted, and stressed out from taking or studying for their exams, and a switch was flipped once they laid eyes on the dogs. When they left, they were smiling and laughing, looking refreshed and no longer bogged down by exams.

I had several students write thank you letters or directly thank me for bringing the dogs in and brightening their days. Having therapy dogs at the school for midterms was such a success that there was no question we would be bringing them back in for finals. The therapy dog handlers are absolutely amazing and deserve all the accolades for taking time to train the dogs in the first place, and then donating their free time to bring the dogs into the school. I made a big point to write each handler a personal thank you letter after their

BRING JOY WITH THERAPY DOGS

final visit and let them know what it meant to the students. For finals we had even more therapy dogs visit; some were repeats from midterms and others were brand new. Many of the handlers who came for midterms recommended friends who might be interested in scheduling future visits and helped to spread the word that we were looking for therapy dog teams to come to our school.

Now, I'm in my second year at a school media center, and I'll soon be reaching out to dog handlers to bring them back for midterms this year. Thanks to last year, I have a huge list of therapy dog teams that I can now reach out to directly, and hopefully fill up all the open time slots for midterm week.

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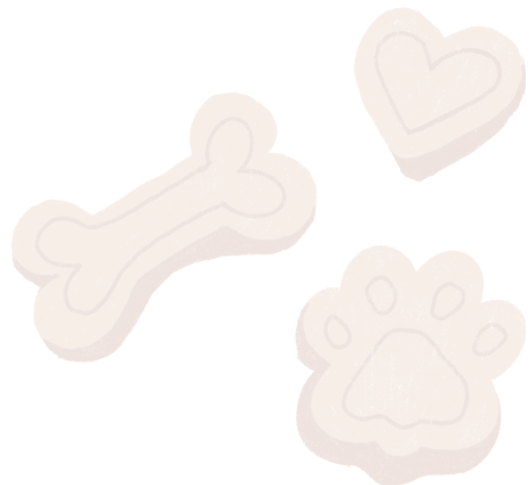
PUTTING the FUN INTO LIBRARY FUNDRAISING

A 5-MINUTE READ FOR THE LIBRARY EMPLOYEE ON THE GO!
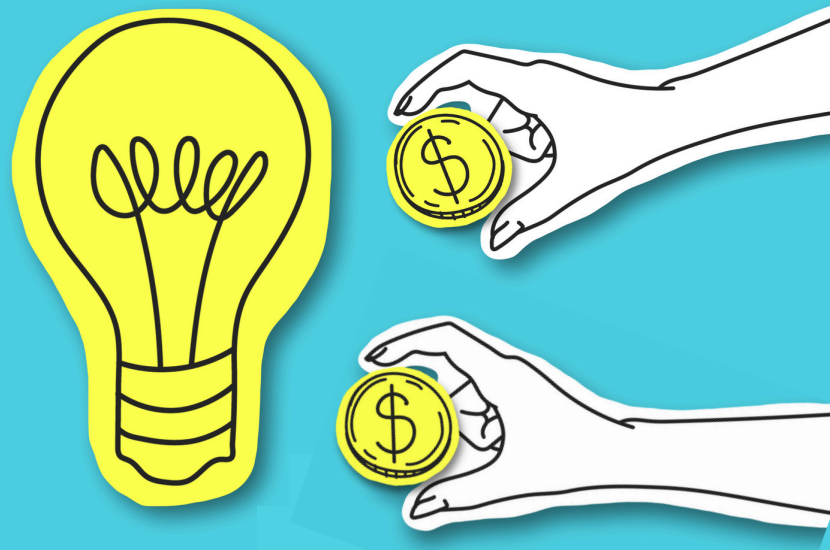
BY DWAIN POSEY TEAGUE, MLS; MA

As libraries of all kinds across the great state of Florida deal with budget issues and cuts to funding, there is no better time than NOW for everyone within the library profession to learn more about the variety of ways one can increase philanthropic support for their library.

Identify the top three to five funding priorities within your library. Whether these funds go towards renovations, new buildings, technology needs, collection development, staff development, increased programming and outreach, or something else, it is imperative that every library always have their top funding priorities prepared.

For example:

 DID YOU KNOW?
$50 will purchase X number of books for the circulating collection?
$500 will enable the library to provide increased outreach and programming?
$1,000 will purchase access to an online database for 1 year?
$5,000 will name a group study room in the library?
$25,000 will endow a fund to ensure funding in perpetuity?

Promote, promote, promote these funding priorities! Now is not the time to be bashful! Promote your funding priorities everywhere that you can, and in front of as many audiences/civic groups/Friends of the Library Groups as you can. Promote them via social media accounts and print publications. If you don't get the word out, how will your constituents and future donors know that you have exciting funding priorities that may align perfectly with their personal philanthropic interests? Train your board members and volunteers to effectively speak to your funding priorities within their networks of colleagues, friends, and professional organizations. Don't be shy!

When was the last time that you thanked your donors? (Other than a generic "thank you" in a newsletter or email blast?) Now is the time to evaluate your donor lists and segment those donors who have been giving to your library consistently for months or years. Reach out to those constituents personally via email or phone to say THANK YOU for your ongoing support of the library! Tell them, "Your generosity makes a huge impact on our ability to serve the community and for that, we are grateful! When your schedule allows, I welcome the opportunity to host you for coffee/lunch/a VIP behind-the-scenes tour of the library to show you how your funding supports us while also updating you on our ongoing funding needs."

PUTTING THE FUN INTO LIBRARY FUNDRAISING

The stewardship process of the giving cycle is often overlooked. It is vitally important that donors be thanked and acknowledged for their support. Not only is it a basic courtesy, but it's a fantastic way to ensure that your donors stay engaged with your library so they will be inclined to give again in the future.

Planned Giving. Always encourage your constituents and donors to consider including the library in their estate plans. There are a wide array of giving vehicles that will easily enable a donor to make a tremendous impact on their favorite library via effective estate planning, such as:

- A basic Will designation: a donor can designate within their Will/Trust that upon their passing, a percentage or dollar amount be bequeathed to your library to be used for specific purposes.

- IRA Rollovers: this targets donors aged 70 ½ or older. If they are required to take a mandatory distribution from their IRA, but they don't need that income nor need to pay income tax on it, they can have their IRA broker directly transfer that distribution to your library. As long as the funds go directly to the library from the IRA and do not touch the hands of the donor, the donor does not have to claim that as taxable income.

- Beneficiary Designations: anyone can designate a library/non-profit as a beneficiary of their retirement plan, pension, IRA, Life Insurance Policy, Long Term Care Policy, etc. They can designate a percentage or a dollar amount via such a designation.

- Named spaces. Don't wait until your ribbon cutting on your new building to decide to promote spaces that donors can name. As soon as you identify the spaces and gift amounts required to name spaces within the library, or the library itself, begin incorporating these within your renderings and marketing materials. Donors thrive on a sense of urgency and lack of supply! Donors who may wish to name a space within your library may make their gift months/years before the project is even completed.

HISPANIC HERITAGE

SHAPING OUR FUTURE ONE BOOK AT A TIME

BY MARIA G. O'BRIEN

I am a Hispanic American: a Latina, an Islander born in Puerto Rico, raised in the Northeast, and now living in the Sunshine State.

So, when September comes around, I look forward to celebrating my heritage with nearly sixty-four million other Hispanics who reside in the United States (Census, 2023). Our countries of origin are south of Texas—Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean—islands like Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. We are historically bonded to Spain and a language that defines us. We are Latino, Hispanic, and modern-day "Latinx," and for one distinct month that begins on September 15th and ends on October 15th, this demographic is afforded the opportunity to celebrate their respective origins and their many contributions. This year's theme for Hispanic Heritage Month is *"Pioneers of Change: Shaping the Future Together."*

Finding My Heritage in Books

I have evolved from someone who reads when prompted to someone who reads for pleasure. When I reflect on my life as a Hispanic child, there were no books in the home, except for the collection of *novellas* (novels) my mother read. The stories I heard were typically told by mouth and not always intended to be heard by a child. We were held captive by our elders: "Sit here and listen. When I was your age…" Many years later, I read a children's book that triggered a memory, not because the book was read to me as a child but because the character's name, "Juan Bobo," was often used among adults. This reference was based on a character from a popular Puerto Rican folk tale. The character's general reference, "Simple John," was not a complimentary one. According to the story, Juan Bobo was a peasant boy who had a propensity to mess things up. When I read this folk tale, it gave me a frame of reference and a renewed appreciation for individuals who worked in agriculture. A more common descriptor was *Jibaros* or country folk. John's simplicity portrayed innocence and consequences, which led to a heartfelt lesson and learning.

The first book that I embraced as an adult was *An Island Like You: Stories of the Barrio* by Judith Ortiz Cofer. This book is a collection of short stories about Puerto Ricans on the Island and in the *barrio* (neighborhood). Again, finding this book was an incidental occurrence. I wasn't looking for the book but when I picked it up and read the very first story, "Bad Influence," it sparked a personal memory. I immediately committed to reading this book and the stories that reminded me about my past and my family, but when it came to the *barrio*, it wasn't like the ones I grew up in-- metropolitan areas, cityscapes, and the projects.

In 2001, I returned to public education as a school librarian at a rural school with over forty percent of the demographics representing

HISPANIC HERITAGE

Hispanics. Most were first and second-generation migrants. Many worked in agriculture and nearby ferneries. The media center had a small collection of books, including some bilingual and Spanish translations of popular fiction titles. Books written by Gary Soto, (e.g., *Baseball in April and Other Stories*; *Taking Sides*; and the books about *Chato* the cat) and Pam Munoz Ryan's*, (e.g., Esperanza Rising* and *Becoming Naomi Leon*) were titles I became familiar with. But it was Pat Mora's *Tomás and the Library Lady* that inspired me both professionally and personally. That year the students got to meet the author, and they also learned about *Tomás* and his contribution to society. I can say in retrospect, "I was content in knowing that there were books written by and for Hispanics, but I took it for granted that diverse books weren't readily available to most."

A Turning Point

We Need Diverse Books and the *Read Woke* movements revealed impactful data about the lack of books that included blacks and Hispanic characters, themes, and authentic authors. As best practice, I encouraged students to read, to simply find a book that would appeal to them. In hindsight, I'd celebrate when a book was being checked out but didn't stop to consider how circulation might be different if my students had access to diverse books. This caused me to re-evaluate my practice and include stories written by authors with similar cultural experiences. The next time I attended a conference, I was on a mission to get more information and resources to diversify my collection. I sat at a

session featuring Hispanic authors. I heard Dr. Raquel M. Ortiz speak about her book, *Sofi and the Magic, Musical Mural*. Inspired, I reimagined the possibilities. She wrote about a child's magical journey through the Island of Puerto Rico. At the time, I was at a different school, but not in a rural area, and it too had more than forty percent of Hispanics enrolled, most of whom were of Puerto Rican descent. The book became an essential piece in an event I sponsored in my media center that brought families together to engage in storytelling. Each family created a tile that depicted a shared moment or pastime. The tiles were brought together, reframed, and printed on a larger scale—it became the mural. Dr. Ortiz returned to present on *When Julia Danced Bomba*, this time as part of our Black History Month celebration. This allowed us to introduce a new and developing topic that featured Afro-Latinos, specifically the island's African roots and rhythm. I was at a turning point, influenced by the books that spoke to me as an individual, my heritage, and my role as a school librarian.

The Evolution: We are more than one book, story, experience.

As I evolved as a reader, I've come to realize that observing Hispanic Heritage is not always inclusive or fully understood. The best Hispanic celebrations are open to cross-cultural experiences; that is, stories with cultural exchanges, phrases, slang language, the use of idioms and different meanings—things that are common among us and some that are not. For example, *The Poet X* and *Clap When You Land* are two of my favorite books written by Elizabeth Acevedo, an Afro-Latina of Dominican descent. Each of

these books mention distinct moments that are common practice in our respective cultures. Other books share situations I may never experience but I appreciate learning about. *We are Not from Here,* by Jenny Torres Sanchez, is a touching story about a journey from Guatemala through Mexico and the challenges the characters faced. Then there are short stories and anthologies like *Wild Tongues Can't Be Tamed: 15 Voices from the Latinx Diaspora,* by Saraciea J. Fennell. Books like these can ignite a conversation between Hispanics. They can also include non-Hispanics or stakeholders to broaden the discussion about immigration and race. These books go beyond Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop's concept of *Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors.* Collections of stories, themes, and authors can support those concepts all at once.

New Chapter: A Book for Every Purpose

After thirty years of being in secondary and post-secondary education, I've begun a new chapter in my career: elementary education. I consider the demographics of my school and decide to include the books I used with students from my previous high school VPK programming.

I begin with one of Pura Belpre's original folk tales, *Perez and Martina*, (Viking, 1991) This tale has been retold and recreated in countless iterations with modern day twists–most recently as *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach,* (Deedy, 2014). The authors, illustrators, characters, and settings are interchangeable, but the embedded message never changes.

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A new favorite of mine is a story rooted in folkloric tunes, simply titled, *Wepa,* by J. De La Vega (2023). I was beyond excited when I first found this book because I grew up hearing this word in my youth. "Wepa!" is not a word you say quietly. The author used it to describe a young child's energy (ADHD) and how it was perceived by others. "Wepa" is also the title of a traditional Puerto Rican Folkloric song, and it is also the title of a modern-day song created by Cuban American singer and artist Gloria Estefan. More recently, it's become a popular Latin cumbia-type dance. I use the combination of storytelling, music, and dance to celebrate what is different and shared among us, as Hispanics-- specific to this term.

At some point, books that underline or align with other educational standards need to be introduced. Biographies about Hispanics of past and present, historical and current events, and real-time issues can also be considered during this time. Books like *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez,* (Krull, 2023), can be used to educate readers about civil rights, farmers, and immigration. A book like Supreme Court Justice, Sonya Sotomayor's, *Just Ask: Be Different, Be Brave, Be You,* can be used to introduce her as a Hispanic, a leader, and as an author who encourages her readers to feel empowered by simply asking to be included, no matter your differences. She threads this through the concept of a community garden and the importance of getting to know one another while working toward a common goal. Sometimes we have to turn to bilingual books to teach a central theme, contemporary issue,

or historical view. The goal here is to ensure that all students including Hispanics or Spanish-speaking students have access to books that can facilitate learning in both languages. Timely books like Vice President Kamala Harris' bilingual version of *Superheroes Are Everywhere* (2020), show her interpretation of heroes and how each person can find a hero within themselves. This is an opportunity for the reader to gain a perspective on our current Vice President and her personal story, told in a unique and engaging way.

Being a Pioneer of Change: Let them Read, Learn, Know, and Grow
Change only happens when one has a perspective on the past and a renewed vision for something different or better in the future. Change also comes from opportunities to learn, know, and grow by reading a variety of books including books about Hispanics. These days, if you can get students to embrace reading and develop a sense for critical thinking, then in my opinion, this would put them on the path to becoming lifelong readers and more successful overall.

As I revealed my path to becoming a reader, I also shared that the discovery of books that represented me and my heritage happened, "One Book at a Time." I now know and understand both the history and the challenges of this practice. Becoming a school librarian gave me another responsibility, a voice. I will use this voice to continue to advocate for intellectual freedom and for our collective right to be represented in books. Together, we can change and shape the future of all readers.

Note: I purposely focused on the stories that have spoken to me as a Puerto Rican or have inspired me as a Hispanic, as well as stories that have opened my eyes to other Hispanic barriers, perceptions, and experiences. Included are Hispanic themes, authors, and characters that shaped the start of my career; diversification and woke period; and my continued hope for positive change and related aspirations. Lastly, it's important to remind students and patrons that if you can't find the featured books in your school libraries, partner with your public libraries to make it happen.

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LIBRARIANSHIP & *the Catholic Seminary*

By Otis D. Alexander
LIBRARY DIRECTOR, SAINT JOHN VIANNEY COLLEGE SEMINARY

As a librarian with an ALA-accredited MLS degree from Ball State University, a second master's in media science, and a doctorate, I have not only studied at prestigious institutions like the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Leadership for Academic Librarians, but also led in various roles. I have directed academic, prison, and public libraries in the District of Columbia, Virginia, Indiana, Texas, and Florida. I have managed libraries in the Virgin Islands of the United States and the Republic of Liberia and led a library program on the beautiful island of Dominica, West Indies.

I never thought that working as a librarian and director of a seminary with a rigorous curriculum for its seminarians and all ordained priests and professors had foundational studies in philosophy. One is even a Canon Lawyer, and the Monsignor who heads the institution is also a historian. Of course, like myself, a layperson, there are some outstanding lay professors with doctorates in religion and the humanities who come from many countries.

I will demonstrate a background account of historical development to help me understand the excitement, joy, and intellectual challenges I am experiencing.

St. John Vianney Catholic School (SJVCS) is a hidden treasure in the serene southwest of Westchester with a Miami address and an 'up-in-your-face' reflecting pool. The campus, nestled amidst a breathtaking array of lush greenery, including the *Roystonea regia* (Royal Palm Tree)

and Flamboyant Red Blossoms, is picturesque and includes the striking Saint Raphael Chapel, the spiritual hub for the community's gatherings. Equipped with a pipe organ and a baby grand piano, the chapel resonates with the melodious hymns of Catholic Mass that linger in the air on Sundays and weekdays for the seminarians and community.

SJVCS is a Catholic institution founded in 1959 by Archbishop Coleman Carroll, the first bishop of the Archdiocese of Miami, Florida, to serve and prepare seminarians from all the Catholic dioceses primarily in the state. However, seminarians from various dioceses throughout the United States and the rest of the world are trained and educated for the diocesan priesthood at this bilingual-based center, focusing on <u>human, spiritual, pastoral, and academic learning, leading to holistic education and spiritual growth.</u>

Like the main chapel on campus, the Maytag Memorial Library, accessible in the center of the campus, is a refuge point for the seminarians, faculty, and staff. This comprehensive library and archives are in place because of the generosity of Mary Louise Maytag McCahill in 1981.

The Maytag is among the largest seminary libraries in the South, with a respectable collection of English, Spanish, and Latin materials and relevant current periodical subscriptions in various formats. All of the materials are available to the seminarians to check out. With special permission, they can check out reference materials with limitations if

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they're working on their required senior thesis. The library and seminary work on the honor system, as the seminarians can check out materials without the library's assistance. However, they are taught the library rules and regulations during their first "Information Literacy" session and understand the library's Acquisition Policy. They are given a package of instructions to keep.

Our commitment to inclusivity is at the core of everything we do at SJVCS. We ensure that our materials are selected and sanctioned by the Library Committee and approved by the librarian, reflecting our stakeholders' diverse needs and interests. The library's acquisition policy is based on the Core Collection and four significant areas of academic offerings in Philosophy, Theology, Humanities, and Language, which include English for Academic Purposes (EAP), Spanish as a Second Language (SSL), Accent Reduction Program (ARP), Spanish Immersion Program, and Latin.

At the Catholic Seminary, the seminarians have easy access to materials through the SEFLIN One Card program, which is part of the Southeast Florida Library Information Network, a non-profit membership organization, Interlibrary Loan (ILL), or Consortium Loan Services (CLS). We also hold membership in the Florida Library Association (FLA), an advocate that extends professional leadership support.

One of the most exciting aspects of our library is the Rare Book Collection. This treasure trove consists of religious materials, philosophical works, and the history of SJVCS and the Catholic Church. Each book is a window into a different era, and I am thrilled to share this wealth of knowledge with our faculty, staff, and seminarians.

Every day, as I navigate the library, I am struck by the impressive collection of seventeen original paintings by the 19th-century French Academic Painter Jehan Georges Vibert (1840-1902), who was inducted into the French Legion of Honor in 1870, part of the gifts from McCahill. The museum-like ambiance of the library adds a charming touch to my work, making it a joy to start each day with a sense of wonder and appreciation.

Relevant books are donated on an ongoing basis, and immediately, the Academic Dean recognizes the donors. The Library Committee assists with evaluating materials. Then, I do what I do best: I classify the books, catalog them, and add them to the Core Collection. We get to toot the horn by sharing all of the valuable information with the faculty via email, and they rush down to see the new books on display in the library's lobby.

The Core Collection is superior and has the expected religious and philosophical materials found in a seminary, ranging from all of the required works of Saint Thomas Aquinas, including *Aquinas's Shorter Summa: Saint Thomas's Own Concise Version of His Summa Theologica*, *Catechism of the "Summa Theologica" of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, and *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas*. The collection includes *Ancient and Medieval Greek Etymology: Theory and Practice, A New History of Western Philosophy, Peter Cave's How to Think Like a Philosopher* as well as Nishida Kitaro's *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*. The impressive collection also includes numerous James Baldwin books addressing complex social and psychological dilemmas; W.E.B. Dubois; Margaret Just Butcher, author of *The New Negro*, who continued the philosophical thoughts of the philosopher Alain Lock after his death; and Audre Lorde, to name a few.

Every Wednesday, the seminarians maintain shelves, insert cards in the returned books, restock the shelves, and maintain cleanliness through custodian services.

Weeding books and materials at SJVCS is a necessary biannual process in our library for numerous reasons, which involve removing damaged items, upgrading volumes, and finding lost books. Some libraries weed their collections daily, weekly, or monthly, and remove materials that have not been read or checked out, whose publication dates are at least ten years old, or because shelf space is needed. Our staff and stakeholders play a crucial role in this process, ensuring that the weeded materials are not wasted but made available for others to pick from

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the 'Homeless Cart.' Because books have not been checked out, it does not necessarily indicate that the seminarians do not use them, as many books are used and left on the tables and later returned to the shelf. However, whenever we "weed," those books are not thrown away but placed on the "Homeless Cart," and the seminarians and professors rush for the great pickings.

There is never a dull moment in the Maytag Memorial Library. It serves as the meeting spot for the annual senior oratory exhibit and the existing thesis presentation. The seminarians present the hypotheses of their year-long research before their peers, faculty, staff, and community in the lecture hall on the second floor, marking the culmination of their academic journey.

Alongside these academic events, the Maytag Memorial Library also celebrates a diverse range of cultural milestones. It hosts exhibits and displays for National Hispanic Heritage Month, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and Chinese New Year, each of which holds significant cultural importance.

This diversity of events ensures that there is something for everyone at the library.

During African American History Month, the library pays tribute to the contributions of the African diaspora. Seminarians, regardless of their ethnicity, recite poetry and prose from the Négritude, Negrismo, and Harlem Renaissance Movements in many languages, including French, Spanish, and Creole. The celebration culminates with a musical performance featuring violins, trumpets, crumbles, drums, flutes, and a New Orleans rendition of "When the Saints Go Marching In."

Women's History Month is an annual observance to highlight the contributions of women to events in history. Contemporary society is displayed at an international level with a dramatic display of Easter celebrating the resurrection of Jesus.

The joy, warmth, knowledge, and challenges I experience at SJVCS fuel my passion and commitment to the institution's mission. This is how a wandering librarian "rolls" at Saint John Vianney College Seminary.

LIBRARY LOBBY, PHOTO CREDIT O.D. ALEXANDER

RAPHAEL CHAPEL, PHOTO CREDIT O.D. ALEXANDER

Let's Get personal

Implementing a personal librarian program

Submitted by Kristin Heifner, Suzanne Odom, & William Bowman
Evans Library, Florida Institute of Technology

Reaching the populations we serve to inform them about the library's great resources has always been a struggle for librarians. Nothing is more frustrating than talking to a library patron and having them tell you they wished they had known about a library service years ago. We wanted to find a way to reach out directly to students about our services rather than relying on faculty or students passively finding out about these things on their way to the library or by hearing it in a passing conversation with the librarians. Following all the upheaval of Covid and remote learning, we strove to find new ways to connect with our students directly. After several of us attended conferences and heard about Personal Librarian programs, we started learning more about how other libraries have implemented them in their own institutions. The Evans Library is an academic library serving a small private university focusing on STEM majors with over 9,000 students. Approximately half the student population attends in-person.

Our Personal Librarian program pairs first-year students with librarians who stay in touch throughout the year and provide help in various ways.

We introduce students to library resources, assist with finding information sources (books, articles, etc.), and connect students to campus resources for academic success. Reaching out to our students early on provides them with another person to ask when assistance is needed and should improve student retention.

Implementing our Program
When we embarked on this program, we set up weekly meetings to plan the implementation. We established smaller teams to develop marketing materials for students, provide training for the librarians involved, and set up essential resources such as a research guide. The first hurdle was finding software for sending e-mails to our students. We reviewed several customer relationship management systems (CRM), including what was used by our university. To send the types of messages we wanted, with the level of personalization, we decided to add LibConnect by Springshare as we use their products for other library needs. Changing our package instead of buying something new was familiar and cost-effective. We decided to send three e-mails per semester to new students: one welcome/introduction, one mid-semester, and one before finals week. Our marketing team created the e-mails; each librarian personalized them and sent them out at coordinated times. As we established this program, we started by alphabetizing students to a librarian by their last name. At the beginning of each semester, we use Slate, a CRM admission software, to generate a list of incoming students we can sort. Then, we create a customized list, assigning students to their appropriate librarians.

IMPLEMENTING A PERSONAL LIBRARIAN PROGRAM

Marketing our Program

We established a dedicated committee for the marketing efforts for our Personal Librarian program. We opted for a streamlined approach to promotional activities in our inaugural year, using a minimal marketing budget (less than $50).

Leveraging our in-house resources, such as sticker printing and button making, we crafted eye-catching visuals to attract attention. Collaborating with Student Life, we actively tabled events within the library (300 interactions) and at the Student Org Fairs (234 interactions). We also discussed the program at our Freshman Orientation sessions (395 attendees). Furthermore, we proactively contacted first-year advisors, ensuring they were well-informed about our program to guide students to us effectively. We replaced traditional business cards with Personal Librarian Trading Cards featuring contact information for seamless connectivity. We created a fun, approachable, informal, and light-hearted tone throughout our marketing materials, e-mails, and in-person events. We hoped to convey a general sense that the library is a welcoming place and that the librarians are approachable and friendly even if students do not necessarily seek out their personal librarian. This concerted effort aims to enhance visibility and establish a personal connection between our patrons and their designated personal librarians.

Inaugural Year Results

Results for the program have been mixed but exciting. Our CRM reports that just under 70 percent of recipients opened our personal librarian e-mails, 43.8 percent above the number of e-mails opened in the average library e-mail marketing campaign, according to LibConnect. By contrast, only 2.3 percent of opened e-mails led to clicking on one of the included links. Another impediment to assessing impact is that students need to report when they are reaching out to someone as their personal librarian. To this end, we are looking into alternative metrics to analyze the program's success, such as advertised resource usage and future trends in overall library utilization. An early example of this is our new student guide, which saw several days of 300 plus percent utilization after being advertised in our Personal Librarian e-mails, despite the e-mail campaigns registering low clicks.

Looking to the Future

The personal librarian program at Evans Library is still a work in progress. We will be reworking the assignment of librarians for students and changing it to a major-based assignment, partly due to the loss of two participating librarians from our group. This will allow us to give more customized assistance based on each student's major as they advance through their education. By providing more targeted help, we hope the students will find information relevant to them as they progress towards their degree and then work in their field. Our results thus far show that the individual demand for the librarian's time could have been more significant, meaning the ratio of students to librarians is less crucial than we initially thought. While individual interactions were low with our students, we hope that as we narrow things down and target students more specifically by major, they will be informed about the resources most relevant to them. At the time of the writing of this article, one week into the Fall 2024 Personal Librarian program, the major-focused approach is showing success, with a respectable number of students making appointments with their personal librarian through our scheduling system (an average of 1.57/librarian in the first week).

As with all our work with students, our primary goal with this program is to help them be successful and informed community members. We want to find initiative-taking ways to reach more students in an ever-changing information landscape.

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INFORMATION LITERACY

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS!

KAREN F. KAUFMANN & CLARENCE MAYBEE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF INFORMATION LITERACY

50 YEARS

1974 - 2024

INFORMATION LITERACY: CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

The term Information Literacy (IL) was first coined by Paul Zurkowski in 1974 when he introduced this concept in his seminal work, "The Information Service Environment Relationships and Priorities. Related Paper No. 5".[1] This was the start of a new vision that has been transformative for information ecologies over the last 50 years.

In his paper, Zurkowski introduced how to think about information in a new way and presented several visionary ideas related to information, information literacy, and the importance of an information-literate society. He called for an information-literate global citizenry realized and evidenced by how humans interact with technology and information for information content creation, organization, preservation, and the ethical use of information in both private and public sectors.[2]

Shenton reminds us of Alvin Toffler's text titled "Future Shock," where similar themes are addressed.[3] Though Toffler is not as well known within the information science community, Zurkowski and Toffler share big ideas of the essentiality for people to "learn how to learn" (informed learning/metacognition), and that using information in the 21st century requires critical thinking and knowing how to evaluate information. These metacognitive understandings are essential for an information-literate society. Transdisciplinary in nature, IL has been and should continue to be described and identified more explicitly across disciplines and published for a broad readership. This is important for the

continued foregrounding of IL concepts and its disciplinary function.[4]

Zurkowski's legal training situates his lens of understanding with the implicit importance of an information-literate society. This understanding became part of the impetus of his writing and declarations. He aspired for "a major national program to achieve universal IL by 1984."[5] Though this aspirational challenge has not yet been fully realized, progress toward achieving his vision has been made. Over the last 50 years, a great emergence towards the recognition of the importance of IL in both the private and public sectors, both nationally and internationally, has been achieved. His legacy continues with the work of the Universal Information Literacies Association (UiLA), led by Jeffrey Kelly.

Badke (2010) notes how the articulated concepts by Zurkowski have shaped IL since his seminal work was published.[6] The concepts presented by Zurkowski include:
- Information is not knowledge until it is manipulated, or "molded."
- Knowing how to handle information so that it can be used effectively to solve problems is the essence of information literacy.
- Information can never be an end in itself but has to be enlisted as a tool to accomplish a purpose.

IL Maturing

From its foundations, IL has progressed and there is evidence that it is now emerging and maturing as a discipline. Aligned with early visions, information

professionals continue to work to create a global information-literate society. IL groups continue to emerge and grow - often associated with larger information professional associations.

Here is a short list of examples:
- International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) - IL Section
- American Library Association (ALA), Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)
- IL Association (InLitAs) - an organization that hosts the blog. The purpose of this international association is to promote IL research.
- CILIP- the United Kingdom (UK) Library and Information Association - an organization in the UK that has a dedicated IL group, which organizes the Librarians' IL Annual Conference (LILAC) Conference, publishes the Journal of Information Literacy, and maintains the CILIP IL website.

Since 1974 the growth of IL organizations has provided opportunities for research and practices to be shared within IL communities and expanding to information professions generally. The LILAC Conference and the European Conference on IL (ECIL) take place every two years, allowing researchers and practitioners to present and share ideas on the progress of information literacy-related topics.

In South Africa, the International Conference on IL (ICIL) - Africa Conference is hosted and is described as a "sister" conference to ECIL. In the United States (US), there

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1st ECIL Conference 2013 - Paul Zurkowski Autographs

are several conferences highlighting IL work including the Lifelong IL Conference in California (LILI Conference), the Library Orientation Exchange (LOEX) Conference, and the Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy. In Canada, the Workshop for Instruction in Library Use (WILU) Conference engages IL professionals to share their work and progress. Conference proceedings and other publications by these organizations and conference committees provide further depth to the scholarship of information literacy.

The IL community has two dedicated journals: the Journal of Information Literacy, and Communications in Information Literacy, for publishing research, practitioner work, and the convergence of research informing practice and practice informing research.

In a less formal environment, blogs can provide outstanding coverage of various IL events, webinars, policy updates, and works in progress, such as The IL Weblog hosted by Sheila Webber with contributor Pam McKinney, and Library Professional Development hosted by Courtney Milnar.

The public policy education and government arenas have also recognized IL as essential for a democratic and informed citizenry. In the US, some states have implemented legislation requiring information literacy/digital literacy instruction in the K-12 sector. New Jersey was the first state to implement this legislation.[7] This trend continues to grow in the US with 19 state legislatures taking some form of action regarding IL education.[8] The UK is leading in this policy initiative trend as well with Media and IL as a top agenda item for education.[9]

In the public sphere, an IL website was recently made available by the US federal government: informationliteracy.gov. The goal of this initiative is to coordinate a collective integration and participation of various government departments led by the Institute for

Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to explicate resources and educational tools for the IL community in the US. This initiative intends to provide education, identify support structures, and more seamlessly facilitate shared resources for IL enhancements in communities and educational organizations.

On the international front, one example that provides recognition of the maturing of IL include the important 2005 Alexandria Proclamation, which affirmed the importance of IL and lifelong learning as "the beacons of the Information Society, illuminating the courses to development, prosperity and freedom." [10]

The 2021 IFLA Trends report includes trend #18, "Information Literacy Recognised and Valued," which states:
Moreover, developing IL can also be a competitive boost, ensuring that people are better able to navigate the digital world in general, and be more effective and productive in their work. Indeed, faced with the abundance of information available today, it could even become a key part of education from a young age, in parallel with efforts to broader younger people's horizons and openness to the world. This could imply a place for libraries – school, university, public and beyond. [11]

The positive developments for IL policy by governments and support for the education sector point toward the essentiality of this knowledge for our communities and the global impact of information-literate citizens by leaders and governments. These trends give us

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reason to celebrate the vision and progress of the movement towards Zurkowski's vision for IL articulated 50 years ago.

Recognizing the 50th IL Anniversary

Organizations, publishers, educators, researchers, and others in our IL communities are recognizing the 50th IL anniversary! Here is a sampling of IL community celebrations:

The Universal Information Literacies Association (UiLA) is sponsoring a special event in November 2024, to celebrate this 50th anniversary and the landmark work of Paul Zurkowski.

The CILIP has started various conversations on their blog and website around the 50th Anniversary of IL and has an image and button commemorating this milestone. The Journal of IL has published a special issue, JIL at 50: Celebrating IL's milestone anniversary. The issue contains seventeen articles that address the history, current scholarship, potential gaps, future trends, and IL and social change.

The Ohio State University Libraries, hosted by Jane Hammons, offered a summer series of webinars highlighting the 50th Anniversary of IL that provided discussions for the IL community to reflect and consider future directions. The videos are posted on YouTube. The topics included in this series include:

- Celebrating 50 Years of Information Literacy

- Preparing Future Librarians for Instruction and Advocacy
- AI Literacy and Information Literacy
- IL and Related Literacies
- Approaches to Teaching Information Literacy
- Exploring the Teach the Teachers Approach
- IL as a Concept and Practice

IL as a Maturing Discipline

As we celebrate the maturation of IL we can also consider its place as a discipline. The Information Literacy is a Discipline (ILIAD) group suggests that IL has matured as a discipline. This recognition is important for the continued work of Zurkowski and many others who have contributed to the body of knowledge that supports and demonstrates the understanding that IL possesses the elements of an established discipline.

Webber & Johnston (2017) identify the essential elements of a discipline that IL possesses.[12] Building on their work, the ILIAD group began discussions in 2021 about how IL has emerged and matured as a discipline. The discussions and insights from those involved determined that a publication that harnesses and outlines the progressive work of the IL community would assist in developing support and understanding of how the characteristics of IL align with the elements of a discipline.

To that end, a book is in progress, with authors worldwide contributing to the collective understanding of the great work of the researchers and practitioners in the IL community. Under contract

with Facet Publishing, the IL Handbook will present entries from authors representing over 20 countries, with an advisory board of over 30 members and an executive advisory board that includes IL scholars Christine Bruce, John Budd, Bill Johnston, and Sheila Webber.

The ILIAD group has been presenting to various audiences over the last two years to introduce the concept of IL as a discipline and to get feedback from IL practitioners, researchers, academics, and educators.

ILIAD
Information Literacy
is a Discipline

What we learned, primarily through conducting polls using SLIDO polling software, is that after the presentation about disciplinary elements, there is general agreement that IL is a discipline. There is also a recognition that much work remains to understand the changes that may occur for IL educators and educational institutions once it is accepted as a discipline. However, the overarching understanding is that IL does possess the elements of a discipline as outlined by Webber and Johnston (2017) as well as by Beecher and Trowler[13] and Biglan[14].

ILIAD has upcoming presentations planned for this year. Learn more about ILIAD and their past and future presentations on our website ILIAD-group.org and consider joining our ILIAD LinkedIn group

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CREATIVE ESCAPES

JENN BISHOP
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
MAITLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

Escape rooms have become popular forms of entertainment that offer a unique immersive game experience. Players are tasked with a mission that must be completed during a set time to win the game. Whether it be solving a crime or finding a missing artifact, the adrenaline rush that comes from the ticking timer only adds to the experience. Commercial escape room companies routinely charge $25 to $50 per person to play their games. Offering a free escape room at your library can be an excellent opportunity to bring new patrons into the building, while reminding regulars that their local library is much more than just books.

As part of our Summer Reading Program, we have built an escape room at the Maitland Public Library two years in a row. In 2023, with permission from the author, we created an Enola Holmes adventure targeted at players ages eight and up. Inspiration was drawn from characters and references from the popular book series. This year, our Pirate Quest game was geared towards our teen and adult patrons, recommending a minimum age of 10 to play. We drew inspiration from assorted pirate lore to create our game's story. There are a few things to consider as you start planning your escape room build. These should help you get the ball rolling, if you are unsure where to begin.

Location

Take inventory of your available spaces. Do you have a meeting room, study space, or office that can be temporarily repurposed for the escape room? Depending on the floor plan, even a well-placed supply closet can become an escape room. The size of this space will help you decide how many people can attend each game session, as well as the number and type of puzzles your space can support.

The space we have dedicated to our escape rooms is in our Community Meeting Room. It is a very large space, so we used folding room dividers and hanging fabric panels to create walls and define the parameters of the game area. This space has a television mounted on one wall and a built-in bookshelf. We decided to incorporate these features, rather than try to hide them. In our Enola Holmes game, a portrait was displayed on the TV, and a newspaper article later revealed the answer based on that photo clue. We used a video animation for our Pirate Quest game to make the TV look like a ship's window overlooking the ocean. Animated curtains would open at set intervals to reveal the needed clue. By using a video, we could also incorporate sounds that helped the players feel more immersed in the theme of the game- waves crashing, the creak of the wooden pirate ship, and seagulls cawing in the distance. The bookshelves provided a great space to hide clues, puzzles, and decorative props.

CREATIVE ESCAPES

By using a video, we could also incorporate sounds that helped the players feel more immersed in the theme of the game- waves crashing, the creak of the wooden pirate ship, and seagulls cawing in the distance. The bookshelves provided a great space to hide clues, puzzles, and decorative props.

We have a portable puppet stage we used as a wall in the game area. Most commercial escape room companies use cameras and intercoms to keep an eye on their players and to communicate with them. We designate an in-room host who stands in the puppet stage to offer the same support without the need for added technology.

Theme

There are countless themes to inspire your escape room. We have used Enola Holmes and Pirate Quest as themes in the past, but there is no end to the possibilities. Some other themes that have been considered have been *First Day of School*, *Grocery Store Mystery*, and *Spaceship Shenanigans*. Your only limit is your imagination.

Do consider that just as we need a license to show movies in our libraries, we want to make sure that we are not violating any copyrights with our themes and props. Picking generalized themes, characters that are in the public domain, or getting permission from their creators is your best bet here.

Time Duration

Commercial escape rooms, on average, are 60-minute-long adventures. We have done 30-minute-long games to allow more groups to participate on a given day. You want to factor in that each puzzle you create should take players around five minutes to solve. If you were planning a 30-minute game, four or five puzzles would be ideal. If a puzzle is more complicated, it may take more time. Having colleagues or volunteers test your puzzles beforehand will help you fine-tune your anticipated game run time.
You want to factor in your reset time when deciding your schedule. We allowed 15 minutes between each group to allow for celebration and conversation with the players, and to reset the game. Be sure to budget time for these things, or you could find yourself falling behind schedule on the day.

Audience

Younger players may struggle with complicated puzzles. Older players may breeze through easier puzzles and escape the room too quickly to appreciate the game experience. Your audience's age and assumed skill level will determine how easy or hard your puzzles will need to be. Plan what clues or nudges you might give based on the areas of the room you expect players may become stuck on, and the ages of the players who might need those hints.

CREATIVE ESCAPES

Resources

Not all libraries operate on the same budget. Sticking to things you can create yourself will help keep expenses down. Do you have a hoard of cardboard tubes or scrap fabric? Do you have access to padlocks or locking cash boxes? All of these things can help keep the budget down. Remember, any locking containers you purchase can be used repeatedly, meaning that your investment this time will mean less money spent next time. Last year, we spent $35 for a 5-letter combination lock, a locking fake dictionary, and assorted craft supplies. This year, we spent around $25, most of which was on colored duct tape that will be used for other projects. Some decorations and props were borrowed from staff members or were reused from other programs. Depending on your existing resources, you may be able to build your escape room for even less. Use what you have, build or borrow what you can, and buy only what you need.

Skills

Use the skills of the people on your team. If you have staff members or volunteers who are more artistically inclined, ask them to help build or decorate your game space. Some people are naturally more puzzle-oriented than others are. Ask for their involvement in designing and creating the puzzles. A single-page-sized jigsaw puzzle might be easier for some to create, while an intricate magnetic treasure map maze might require more combined efforts.

When we realized that we needed a large treasure chest, one of our teen volunteers created this one from a cardboard box and craft sticks. Pieces of a braided leather belt were used for the locking hasp. Electrical tape and wires were used for handles on the side of the box.

Puzzles:

Once you have worked out the where, what, and how of it all, the next big hurdle is deciding what puzzles you want to include and how to build them. There are many great how-to videos online to help you determine how to build what you want to include in your game. There are also walk-throughs of existing escape rooms to help you understand how your room should flow. If there are commercial escape room companies in your area, contact them and explain your mission. Ask if they would be willing to give you a tour of one of their games to help you get inspired.

All of the puzzles we have used so far have been built by members of our staff. Here are some examples:

- Scytale - This cipher style can be traced back to Ancient Greece. A strip of fabric or leather is fitted to a set size tube or rod. When wrapped around this rod, the letters on the fabric align to spell out a word or phrase. Our scytale used a length of ribbon wrapped around a narrow cardboard tube. When placed in the room, it resembled a torch. Our decoded message gave a 3-digit combination.

CREATIVE ESCAPES

- Overlapping Layers - This puzzle can be translated into signs, pictures, or flags. One layer has holes or gaps, and the other has information revealed when the two pieces are fitted together. Our pirate flag was a great "reveal" layer. Our "info" layer was a list of birds. The quantity of each revealed bird was the code for a 3-digit combination lock. Two parrots were hanging from the ceiling, three seagulls appeared when the animated curtains opened on the TV screen, and zero pigeons were aboard our ship.

- Hidey-Hole Puzzle - Multiple tubes of varying depth are paired with multiple pegs of varying length. When placed correctly, the pegs appear level with one another. The sequence in which the pegs are placed reveal a word or string of numbers that can be used as a combination. Our puzzle featured five peg positions. Yours could have as many as you like.

- Hidden Maze - The inside of the maze was constructed out of cardboard channels and duct tape. A magnet is used on the outside to guide an object through the maze, and out through a hole in the side. Once the object was retrieved, it gave players a needed combination for a locked fake book. A secret message was used to guide the path the object would need to take through the maze.

CREATIVE ESCAPES

Our Success

In 2023, we ran our escape room multiple times over three days and had 82 people play. This year, we offered 21 sessions over three consecutive days. 103 people played the game with a 100% completion rate. Every group had the chance to take photos to celebrate their success and ask questions about the room. Every person who played the game left with a smile, and only positive things to say about their experience. Some patron feedback included how much fun they had, how they wished other libraries would offer free programs like this, and expressions of gratitude.

Building your own escape room, on a minimal budget, is not as difficult as you might think. All it takes is a little bit of creativity, some elbow grease, and maybe a paper towel roll or two. What adventures will you create?

INFORMATION ACCESS FOR EVERYONE: WEB ACCESSIBILITY IN THE LIBRARY

JAMES M. DAY & CODY MICHAELS

The first principle of the American Library Association's Code of Ethics reads as follows:

"We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests."[1]

Written into the bedrock of our profession is a commitment to access and a commitment to service. One area in which service and access are neglected is digital and online content. A study conducted by WebAIM, a non-profit based out of Utah State University, finds that among the 1,000,000 most popular homepages on the Internet, the average page has 56.8 errors.[2] To fulfill our institutional mission, libraries must make an effort to improve our digital accessibility.

Web accessibility can be intimidating – and perhaps for good reason, as it is a complicated topic. It is critical to our profession that we strive to maximize access to information. This article aims to provide an overview of the legal requirements, content standards, and overall workflow of how organizations can build accessibility into their digital content. It is not comprehensive, but it provides resources for all library technologists to learn more on their own and begin making their resources available to as wide an audience as possible.

Web Accessibility and Universal Design
Web accessibility refers to the practice of ensuring that Web sites, tools, and technologies are designed and developed in ways that allow people with disabilities to use them effectively. Web accessibility is crucial because it ensures that everyone, regardless of their physical or cognitive abilities, can access information and services available online. It benefits not only people with disabilities, but also those using different devices (such as mobile phones), facing temporary limitations (like a broken arm), or dealing with situational constraints (such as bright sunlight).

One way to think about accessibility is the concept of "Universal Design," which disability advocates have used since the 1970s. As outlined by the designer Roberta Null, Universal Design consists of the following four pillars:[3]
- The design is supportive
- The design is adaptable
- The design is accessible
- The design is safe

Universal Design means creating spaces (physical or virtual) which are usable by everyone, under a wide array of conditions and circumstances. A universally designed Web site allows someone to access it despite having a broken arm that prevents the use of a mouse, or someone who is blind being able to find information about your library's collection of audio books.

"Web accessibility means that people with disabilities can use the Web equally," according to the World Wide Web Consortium (or W3C). An oft-repeated slogan of theirs is

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"Web accessibility: Essential for some, useful for all."[4] Although accessible design is geared towards people with disabilities, Universal Design principles ensure that everyone benefits in some way.

Consider also the proportion of people with disabilities: "An estimated 1.3 billion people – or 16% of the global population – experience a significant disability today," according to the World Health Organization.[5] And unlike other groups, as a common refrain goes amongst disability advocacy groups, disability is the only minority group in which any of us can suddenly find ourselves after an accident, disease, or simply through age. Universal Design is not just about equity of access; it is about future-proofing as well.

The Law and Standards
Beyond the ideological mission of libraries, however, lies another reason to care about digital accessibility – it is the law. While not all Florida libraries are covered by the same regulations, they are all bound by legislation to ensure their services are accessible to people with disabilities. Two particular laws may apply.

Americans with Disabilities Act
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990 and took effect in 1992. It was expanded in 2008. In addition to setting regulations for accommodations for access to spaces in the physical world, it also requires online spaces to be accessible by removing "Website Accessibility Barriers."
Who is required to follow the ADA Requirements including Web accessibility?

- State and local governments (Title II)
- Businesses that are open to the public (Title III)

Title III does not just apply to private corporations but also to private universities and nonprofit organizations. Although recent rule changes to ADA have elaborated on the specific requirements for Title II organizations,

they are very clear also that Title III organizations are still bound by Web accessibility requirements.[6] Title II organizations, which include state universities and public libraries, are now required to comply with Version 2.1 of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) which we will discuss shortly.[7]

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act
For any organizations within the Federal government or organizations who contract with the Federal government and provide any form of Information or Communication Technology (ICT), Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act also sets strict requirements for Web accessibility. Fortunately, these requirements are similar to those under the ADA – conformance to WCAG standards.[8]

Content Accessibility Guidelines
Web Content Accessibility Guidelines are intended to provide a technical standard for Web accessibility that can be used as a goal (or law) for organizations and governments. They are developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), the organization behind standards for HTML, CSS, APIs, and many others.[9]

Versions 2.0, 2.1, and 2.2
The current standard is WCAG version 2, or most specifically 2.2. It has four principles:
- Perceivable – content must be accessible through the user's senses.
- Operable – users must be able to physically use the interface.
- Understandable – content and functionality must be able to be easily understood.
- Robust – content must be flexible enough to be read by many devices.

Testable Success Criteria
In a practical, measurable sense, the WCAG defines three levels of success criteria: A, AA, and AAA. Level A is the lowest level of success criteria and not considered up to legal standards. Level AA standard is generally regarded as "minimum acceptable" criteria.

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Each level's Success Criterion tells how to meet them including:

- Sufficient techniques for meeting the Success Criterion
- Optional advisory techniques
- Descriptions of the intent of the Success Criteria, including benefits, with examples.

PDF/UA

Another conformance standard useful to know is PDF/UA (Universal Accessibility). This ISO standard mostly exists to provide validators, software developers, and those on the more technical side with guidelines for more accessible PDFs.[10] From an accessibility specialist perspective, the main interactions with PDF/UA as a standard are through validation tools, the gold standard of which is the PAC 2021 tool by the PDF/UA foundation.

VPAT and ACR

For library technologists, software procurement might be an important – if occasional – part of their job descriptions. In these cases, it can be helpful to know two terms related to accessibility when considering vendor options: VPAT and ACR.

Voluntary Product Accessibility Template

Software vendors that want to demonstrate their compliance to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines can download—free of charge—and complete a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT). VPAT is a registered trademark by the Information Technology Industry Council (ITI). The first nine pages of the VPAT are instructions, which are removed before publishing. The next section, which gets published, consists of three tables listing the Criteria, Conformance Level, and your organization's "Remarks and Explanation" on where possible shortcomings might exist. The three tables are for the three Success Criteria: Level A, Level AA, and Level AAA. Level A has 32 Criteria, AA has 24 Criteria, and AAA has 31 Criteria.

Accessibility Conformance Report

Once the VPAT is completed and the introductory pages are removed, the results are published as an Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR). Sometimes the terms VPAT and ACR are used interchangeably, but they are not the same thing. The Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) itself must be accessible.

The primary function of an Accessibility Conformance Report is to demonstrate to potential customers that software is compliant with accessibility requirements. This is most important during the procurement stage and helps set vendors apart from one another. Prominent library systems vendor Clarivate/Ex Libris, for example, hosts an ACR for their discovery platform Primo.

Three Stages of Accessible Web Design

Although the best time for making your Web site accessible is before a single page is published, the second-best time is now. Legislation and standards define the parameters for accessibility, but in practice designing accessible Web sites and digital resources is a complicated process – and it's one that never really ends.

"Thinking Accessibly" - Auditing for Accessibility

Accessibility auditing means poring over your digital content with a fine-toothed comb, looking for potential barriers to people with disabilities or those using assistive technology (mostly referring to screen readers, tools which will read aloud content on a computer screen to someone who is visually impaired). To do this successfully, it can be helpful to "think accessibly" – putting yourself into the mindset of someone with a disability and reviewing your content from that person's perspective. Often, accessibility is treated as a laundry list of compliance concerns and "best practices." While this is great for getting started, and

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guides for this exist (WebAIM has an excellent guide for this purpose), it is more helpful to think critically about the user perspective holistically.

The Mosaic of Disability
First, it is helpful to understand the scope and scale of disability. There is no monolithic disability which affects all people equally. In Web accessibility, visual impairments feature prominently, but even within this category, there are multiple visual impairments – and every individual's experience with their disability will differ. For example, people with colorblindness may have a different type of colorblindness from one another, being unable to perceive different colors from each other and the non-colorblind population. There is also a distinction between someone with low vision versus someone with total blindness. How they interact with your content will be completely different, as will their needs.

Broadly speaking, there are four main categories of disability which require accommodations for digital content:
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Motor impairment
- Cognitive impairment

Visual impairment includes color blindness, blindness, and low vision. Hearing impairment means both limited hearing as well as total deafness. Motor impairment refers to disabilities ranging from total paralysis to arthritis to broken limbs. Cognitive impairment ranges from learning disabilities to dyslexia, which makes navigating Web content more challenging if it is not designed with accessibility in mind.

The W3C WCAG standards are helpfully arranged in ways to accommodate users with these disabilities. For example, WCAG 2.1 Guideline 1.1 covers all forms of Text Alternatives to visual content required to accommodate people with visual impairments.[11]

Automated vs. Manual Auditing
Auditing for accessibility involves two processes. The first is automated scanning using one of several software tools and options. At our institution we make extensive use of the WAVE browser plugin which scans a page's code and identifies several common errors.
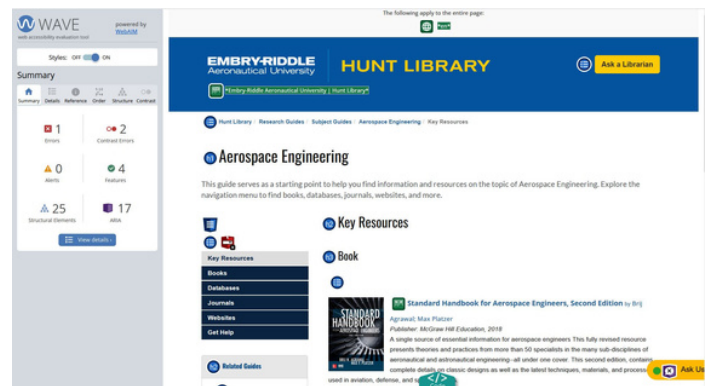
(Figure 1: WAVE Plugin [alt text: WAVE plugin view of a research guide highlighting errors and page elements])

Even with an automated tool like WAVE, manual review is necessary. When we audit our Research Guides, for example, we activate WAVE, review any errors detected, and then manually look the page over to determine if the structure makes sense. However, automated tools occasionally make mistakes. In these cases, it is necessary to manually review the HTML code to determine if an accessibility concern exists. A more advanced technique would be to manually review a Web page using a free screen reader such as NVDA.

"Machines Are Dumb" – Remediation
Remediation in accessibility refers to making the changes to your Web site or digital content's HTML code, presentation, or site structure necessary to be usable by people with disabilities. It is helpful to note, especially in this age of "Artificial Intelligence" that machines are, in fact, rather unintelligent. For the most part, they cannot understand implicit semantic connections between content. They

will generally know only exactly what a human has told them to know. Thus, a screen reader, for example, will only know what it has been told through either HTML code on a Web page or in the tags of a PDF. Remediation is largely a process of explaining your content to a machine so that it can relay that information to a user.

Remediating Web Sites
Web sites are relatively (emphasis on relatively!) simple to remediate. Once errors are identified, they will need to be corrected. Common errors found in Web sites include:

- HTML heading hierarchies not accurately reflecting the document structure (i.e. <h1> tags jumping immediately to an <h3> tag). (WCAG Criteria 1.3.1/1.3.2)
- Images containing text without providing a 1:1 text alternative. (WCAG Criterion 1.1.1)
- Videos embedded on a web page without accurate time-synchronized captions. (WCAG Criterion 1.2.2)
- A page can be navigated entirely without a mouse. (WCAG Criterion 2.1)

Remediating content can often feel more like an art than a science. Crafting alternative text for an image, for example, is much more complicated than simply describing it.

Context matters more than pure description, and there are many cases where alt text is simply unnecessary. The company Siteimprove has a helpful guide for alt text best practices.

Remediating PDFs
PDF remediation is one of the most challenging tasks for an accessibility specialist. The problem lies with the PDF format itself, which is very difficult for assistive technology to read. The solution is the creation of a tag tree system like HTML code, which explains the semantic relationship between elements of a PDF. Tags are available for editing within Adobe Acrobat Pro, though several solutions exist that aim to improve the process – our own library uses Equidox, for example. None are perfect, however, and all require a clear understanding of your content.
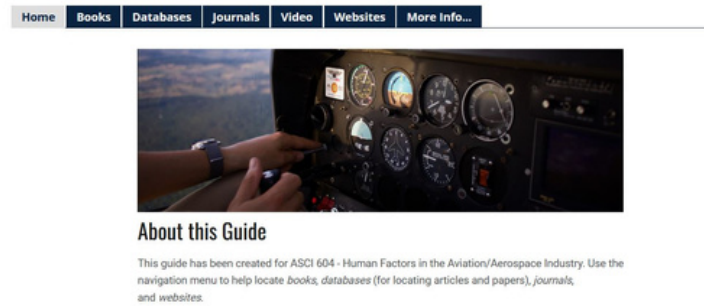
(Figure 2: Example of an image where alt text is unnecessary. This image serves purely as decoration and does not need description. [alt text: example of a decorative image where alt txt is not needed])

(Figure 3: Adobe Tag Tree [alt text: view of the Adobe Acrobat tag tree])

(Adobe has a series on using the tag tree and remediating PDFs. The timestamps are revealing, however, as the series is six hours long.)

The Cycle Repeats – Validation
Validating your digital content takes much the same shape as auditing – in fact, it is really the same step all over again! Accessibility is an ongoing process, especially with content which updates frequently. Our research guides at the Hunt Library, for example, are audited and validated monthly due to the frequency of content updates. Conversely, Web pages which are updated infrequently are audited less frequently.

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Conclusion

This has been a concise overview of the complicated topic of Web accessibility. While it takes years to reach an expert level with digital accessibility, there are numerous resources available to non-specialists to take the first steps necessary in making their online content usable to people with disabilities. It can be intimidating to take those first steps, of course, but as providers of information access, librarians and library staff owe it to our patrons to be inclusive to users of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

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