

# NEWSLETTER

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the Spring 2025 ALD / ACRL-WA Newsletter!

I'm excited to introduce this newsletter as the current Chair of the Academic Library Division / ACRL-WA, at a time when so much of what we know of libraries, professionally and culturally, is up in the air. This year we are bearing witness to direct and intentional defunding and deplatforming of libraries on the national level, and subsequent fiscal and resource impacts on states, municipalities, and individual libraries. Many libraries and library workers continue to deal with nuanced problems, including book challenges and bans; barriers to access and inclusivity; and critical questioning around education and information structures decades upon decades in the making. Adjacent issues impact our collective psyche on a daily level, and include but are not limited to the removal of the historical narratives and naming of the marginalized and excluded, anti-immigrant initiatives, a growing shadow of censorship of people and ideas and protests, and mounting anxieties that authoritarianism is growing and more and more difficult to stop. And these issues are just the tip of the iceberg for so much that has been part of USA's ongoing narrative: chapters upon chapters of indigenous genocide, chattel slavery and anti-Black systems, anti-Woman systems, and anti-LGBTQIA+ systems. Our local lands and waters are exploited and poisoned, laborers continue to be beaten down and equated to disposable machines, and international tensions continue to grow as USA's billionaire class further aligns itself with the global war machines and dominant, capitalism-fueled resources. Generative Artificial Intelligence pairs with brain rot reducing critical thinking and cognitive awareness. There is isolation, more mental health and substance crises, and a significant lack of healthcare. The stories that emerge are heartbreaking and terrible, terrorizing and ever painting of a portrait of trauma. They are hard to sit with. Hard to breathe through. Hard to write altogether.

And yet here we are. Mid-2025. Pride 2025. And it challenged me to type this, but the more I think about it, the more it resonates: I am indeed excited for what is ahead. I am, as greater minds that have said this before, fired up. I'm indeed excited, acknowledging my privilege and positionality, because I see the hope that is in the eyes of my colleagues. I see the continued joy of collaboration and the persistence of resistance. In the library we fight for equity, inclusivity, and diversity, to help everyone in society be aware of and respond to the histories that plague us and continue today and into the future. To know them. To understand them. To liberate out of them. The hope as students and community members get involved, in their own small and large ways and actions. With their... (Continued on next page)



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**Message from the  
ALD/ACRL-WA Division  
Chair**

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**Sneak Preview!  
Member Engagement  
Survey Results**

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**Supporting Student  
Wellness at  
Odegaard Library**

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**Campus Updates**

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**Peer Updates**

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR (Continued)

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own voices, experiences, and identities, their own passions and commitments, to transform the world. We are hopeful because we can rest, we can reflect, and we can continue with the work that has carried us forward before and will continue to carry us forward together, in solidarity. It is a response to vocational awe, a crushing of the ideal of the Library Worker with realism: we are library workers, and we are not fixed. We are real people, we are individuals, and we are interested in being together, working together, building community together, creating structures and responding to problems, all of which helps and grows our collectives together. It looks different for all of us, which allows for what is so beautiful with our landscape of libraries: differences and textures, fluctuations in organizational visions and timelines.

I am writing this just a couple days before Spokane celebrates Pride Month, before the beautiful parade and beautiful celebration. Last year's was one of the most beautiful moments I've had in Spokane, having moved here to start work at Spokane Community College in Fall 2023, and I know it will be beautiful this year. I know it will also be an opportunity. This year, Pride will align with the nation-wide No Kings protest, mapped out across over 1,000 municipalities. I know this will mean something great for us, I know that it will further strengthen our collective. I know because I have to know, I have to hold onto those memories and the potentiality of what's to come, to think about what we can carry with us moving forward. As we aim to know who we are, as we recognize the alliances we can build, the stewardship we can have to the place we occupy and this chapter in our existence, and the ongoing hope that we need to build as we imagine and agree upon a collective future—for the collective, for our collectives. Each and every library has a place in that future, and it's one worth pondering. Especially with all that is at stake, with everyone that is targeted, with the ongoing decay and disruption and the pain and the hate. To imagine where libraries will respond, where they will end up, and how they will continue to foster whatever it is they individually foster through joy, through resistance, through rest. To lean into our libraries as we feel the waves of negative energy permeating society. To not only be for them, but to be of them.

This year will continue to be a year. And next year will continue to be a year as well. And so on. As we move forward, I invite you to bring your stories, your ideas, your movements into this professional space, and consider how the stories, together, shape who we are. As an Academic Library Division, with CLAWS, that pushes the envelope, or tears it open completely.

Greg Bem  
Faculty Librarian  
Spokane Community College

*Written within the valley of the Spokane River, on the ancestral and current lands of the four bands of the Spokane People.*

## SNEAK PREVIEW!

### MEMBER ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

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**Elizabeth Brown, Instruction Coordinator Librarian & Professor, Central Washington University**  
**Lydia Bello, Director, Research Services and Science and Engineering Librarian, Seattle University**

The Academic Library Division has seen a decrease in member interest and engagement over the past years. This can be the result of lack of time, lack of interesting or relevant opportunities, having our network needs met elsewhere, or other reasons. Recognizing that we all have limited time in a day and with a desire to make the WLA membership something worth all of our time, a small group of past and current ALD board members and the current co-chairs of the CLAWS Section developed a survey with the goal of understanding member needs. In March of 2025, you may have noticed or completed a survey about member engagement. If you completed the survey, thank you!!!

The current ALD Board Member and one of the Co-Chairs of CLAWS presented a preliminary set of these findings at the Academic Library Division Unconference at the WLA Conference this year, and hope to share an extended report on the results of this survey in the next issue of Alki. Preliminary results show that professional development opportunities were a high priority for what members wanted out of their participation. This included organized opportunities for conferences, publishing and presenting, professional development, trainings, and mentorship. Information sharing and communication was also highlighted, including elements such as: news and events, shared resources, email lists and communication channels, and information specific to being an early career library worker.

While engagement in the survey and responses indicate that people do value their WLA-ALD/ACRL-WA membership, the top barrier reported for not participating more was insufficient time. Unsurprising, many library professionals who may be feeling extra busy in their jobs, have less time to plan for or participate in outside activities such as those put on through WLA.

Despite challenges, the value of connections with others was still a strong theme throughout the results. Figuring out a strategy to move forward in light of these results suggest we may also benefit from continued emphasis on opportunities for connection in a variety of forms and formats, as well as opportunities for light-weight engagement. Another outcome of this survey has been a more integrated connection with the College Libraries Across Washington (CLAWs), a section within ALD. Coordinating efforts to reduce overlap is another area we can make meaningful, engaging connections for library workers within academia.



**Want to get involved? Volunteers are always welcome!**

**Reach out [here](#) to get more information on how to help out.**

## SUPPORTING STUDENT WELLNESS AT ODEGAARD LIBRARY

### Emilie Vrbancic, Undergraduate Experience Librarian, University of Washington Libraries

What do cell phone lock boxes, white noise machines, and robotic companion cats have in common? They are all part of the Odegaard Library Wellness Technology Collection! This year, staff at Odegaard Undergraduate Library took a special interest in bolstering our support of student success through the lens of wellness.

We created two new circulating collections: the Wellness Technology Collection and Wellness Kits. Both collections are intended to support students' positive in-library experience, enhance their well-being while studying, and lower their stress levels. We want to encourage students to tend to their own wellness needs with the equipment and resources provided by the library. The collections allow students to try out items to find what best supports their needs, provide access to higher cost items that students may not be able to afford, and add whimsy and fun to library spaces. All of the items are listed on our [Wellness at Odegaard Library online guide](#) and are available for check out for in-library use.

The Undergraduate Student Success team proposed a new collection of technology intended to provide students with tools for emotional regulation, sensory self-regulation, and time management. These items were purchased with funding generously provided by the UW Student Technology Fee Program. The collection includes:

- Lumie Light Therapy Lamps for an extra dose of light when the days get dark.
- White Noise Machines for when it's too quiet to think.
- Visual Timers for an alternative way to track the time.
- Cellphone Lock Boxes for a break from scrolling.
- Companion Cats for a sweet calming friend.
- Purrble co-regulating pet for a breathing break.



Grey animatronic companion cat



Light Therapy Light



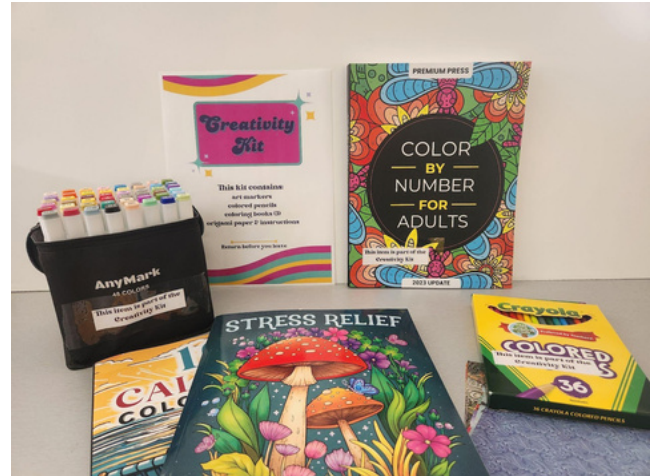
Pickles the Purrble

## SUPPORTING STUDENT WELLNESS AT ODEGAARD LIBRARY (CONTINUED)

Everyone has a different method for de-stressing, so the Odegaard Library Wellness Team created four kits consisting of items grouped by activity type. The Mindfulness Kit, Focus Kit, Creativity Kit and Sensory Kit contain items meant to de-stress, reinvigorate, and refocus students during long study sessions in Odegaard Library.



The Sensory Kit contains a soft sensory maze, a silicone activity board, an Infinity cube, textured silicone worry stones and a wobble seat cushion



The Creativity Kit includes art markers, colored pencil, three coloring books, and origami paper and templates

All of the materials were released during Fall quarter midterms, shortly before the November elections, and have increased in popularity during the rest of the academic year. The companion cats, Purrcival and Clawdia, boast 100 checkouts combined and can be seen around the library enjoyed by individuals and groups alike. These novel resources have boosted student wellness, allowed staff to harness creativity in their work and increased a sense of connection and fun in Odegaard Library.

## CAMPUS UPDATES

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### **Bellevue College**

**Nicole Longpre, Librarian**

#### **Outreach**

The Bellevue College Library has continued to develop and grow collaborations with groups and departments across our campus. These collaborations take the form of co-hosting programs and providing pop-up libraries to the locations of campus events, allowing individuals to check out relevant titles on the spot.

Some examples of where the BC Library popped up are campus-wide professional development days, an Earth Month author event featuring Camille Dungy, a Guided Pathways Career event, and a Know Your Rights workshop led by our campus LGBTQ+ Resource Center and the Punk Feminist student group. These events have sparked many great conversations between librarians and students, staff and faculty resulting in staff realizing that they too can check out materials, student suggestions of books for the collection and everyone realizing that the library has more to offer than they thought.

This academic year the BC Library started a new quarterly series with the Reading Lab which is part of our campus' Academic Success Center. The series is called Prose and Pastries, with local authors coming to talk to students and staff while enjoying a sweet treat and coffee. Each author is from a different genre and has their own style and flair. Students have been very engaged with these talks, and it has been one of the most successful collaborations of the year.

Coming soon, the library is partnering with our Social Science academic division to host The Cambodian Genocide after 50 Years: Cambodian Orphans Returning Home. One of BC's anthropology faculty was one of those orphans and recently returned to Cambodia. This event will include a presentation, discussion, and documentary film showing.

Bellevue's most popular outreach event, coordinated by library staff, is the quarterly visit of therapy dogs to the library! The dogs visit right before finals begin and provide a joyous distraction from finals. This quarter, we even had dogs visit one day during mid-terms!

#### **Instructional Learning Outcomes**

Bellevue College is in the process of changing the General Education Outcomes to Instructional Learning Outcomes (ILO). While this change will impact many courses across campus, the librarians who are leading the Information Literacy ILO are currently working with the English department. Librarian Michelle Schewe met with members of the English department to discuss the Information Literacy ILO and librarian leaders are developing a module in Canvas that includes a pre- and post- assessment tied to an existing assignment.

#### **Staffing**

We recently had a celebration for members of the BC community who were awarded tenure. Two librarians, Felipe Anaya and Elexa Freeman-Moore, were among those who were awarded tenure. Felipe is our Undergraduate Research librarian and frequently works with students in the Baccalaureate programs. He is also the librarian lead for the Puente Scholars Program. Elexa is our Instruction Librarian and coordinates all the library's instruction sessions. She is also the librarian lead for the Umoja Scholars Program.



## CAMPUS UPDATES (continued)

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### Lake Washington Institute of Technology (LWTech)

Sue Wozniak, Faculty Librarian

#### Human Library Project

The Lake Washington Institute of Technology Library started the Human Library Project as a way to engage colleagues and students in authentic conversations, as well as add our lived experiences to our collective pool of resources. [The Human Library](#) is a nonprofit organization started in Denmark to create a hands-on learning platform to challenge stereotypes, create more inclusive communities, and give voice to marginalized groups of people. Individuals volunteer to become books and share chapters of their lives on topics that represent lived experiences. A safe and respectful space is created through community agreements for engagement, and readers ask questions of the books that include questions they may not feel comfortable asking otherwise.

We started the Human Library Project initiative at LWTech during an all-campus In-Service day with 8 books situated throughout the library in locations that were spaced apart from each other, creating a space for listening and privacy. Multiple readers sat with each book to listen and share their curiosity. The experience was meaningful and engaging for both books and readers. Colleagues felt they had a better understanding of individuals as well as were able to understand particular challenges for groups of people. We have also held the Human Library Project virtually in a Diversity and Social Just Learning Community. Faculty had such positive experiences that some are looking to use this learning modality with their students. We have found it to be a great opportunity to honor the resources we all bring with us and get to know each other more authentically.



Did you know that you can access certain ACRL webcasts through the division?

ALD/ACRL-WA receives access to two webinars per year from ACRL. You can find past recordings by logging into the WLA website and checking out the [ACRL Webcasts page](#).

## PEER UPDATES

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### **Emily Henson, Library Program Coordinator Whatcom Community College**

My mom knew better than me (go figure).

When I was 16, my mom signed me up to volunteer at the public library. For 3 hours a week, I dusted shelves and observed those that frequented the library. Even though I was a member of my community, I had always stayed within a certain bubble. The library allowed me space to witness the broad spectrum of people that lived within the 7.14 square miles of my own town.

At the end of that summer, I knew I had to work there. Time passed without a job vacancy and with all my friends taking on odd jobs, I felt the pressure to do the same. But I knew what I wanted, and I was not going to waver. Eventually, a job opportunity opened, I applied, I interviewed, and I got the job. I worked there for 7 years.

Within that time, my passion for cultivating community and lifelong learning, flourished. When I told others that I was working at a library their responses were usually “Those still exist?”, “Are all your co-workers’ old women?” or “Wow, you must love books!” The stigma that library workers are dusty oldies that shush you, is the farthest thing from the truth. My boss took motorcycle trips across the country. My colleagues did hot yoga, community theater, summited mountains, were in the Peace Corps, published articles, were world travelers, and volunteered at elephant sanctuaries. And, yes, I do like to read but libraries are far more than books. Libraries are community centers where not just one thing is offered. While, libraries are traditionally a quiet place, they are no longer that.

Storytimes for young children. Drop-in tutoring for students. Learning kits for families that homeschooled. Tax assistance and retirement help for the older folks. Teen club where teenagers found a safe space during a vulnerable time. We have park passes, sensory kits, puzzles, dolls, instruments and more. We gave out bus passes and became emergency shelters. We hosted food drives, poetry readings, craft fairs, evening AA meetings, author signings, showed films, and occasionally live music. We celebrated our community, its history and the diversity that filled it. We hugged our patrons, grieved when a lifelong patron passed away, helped write obituaries and eulogies, checked the jail rosters daily, passed out hot chocolate and located books when the only description we had was “It’s a blue cover and a mystery book.”

I’ve moved on from public library spaces to academia. While I serve a more specific group here, the community aspect remains the same. People can fearlessly be curious and authentically themselves. At times I’ll have a one-off interaction with a patron and mutter, “That was so public library.” as a silent inside joke with myself. Whether it’s public, academia, special or digital libraries, we are all united together with the goal of supporting those who lead with curiosity. We work hard to remove barriers that block individuals from resources and knowledge. As having access to these things are both a privilege and a basic right. It’s been an honor and an incredible privileged to be able to work in spaces that give me a front row seat to seeing people advocate for themselves, lean on one another, and nurture their passions. In a world of uncertainty and a lot of fear, libraries are a place that I find comfort in. I know that I’m not alone in that feeling.



## PEER UPDATES (continued)

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### Natalie Brown, ALD/ACRL-WA Communications Manager

#### University of Washington, Library Technician

If you had told me a year ago that I would be putting together a newsletter for the ALD/ACRL-WA, there's no way I would have believed you. I could not have anticipated the Rube Golderberg-like mechanisms that led me to this committee. A chance meeting and a brief introduction (yay networking) later, and here I am, reviving this newsletter after its year long hiatus.

Truthfully, I do not enjoy writing. Through undergrad and grad school, I cursed myself for choosing degrees that required me to constantly submit essays. Yet here I am, dear reader, taking up the pen (or I suppose in this case, the keyboard) once again to bring you this newsletter. I tell you this not to complain to you about the choices I've made or the tasks I've taken up, but to contextualize my decision to be your Communications Manager. That is to say, even if writing is not my preferred method of communication, even if writing my thoughts on the page feels like an uphill battle against my words, I will do the best I can to reforge connections within this division. This year we need our bonds and relationships more than ever, and I will write and edit whatever I need to even if it means just one reader feels more connected than they did before.

The past few years have been rough to say the least. Between the pandemic, global economic uncertainty, and domestic instability, there's more than enough stress to go around. The daily bombardment of news is too much for any one person to handle. Each breaking news story brings a new issue to be debated, more lives to mourn, or a change to brace for. We are expected to be pioneers and champions in these uncertain times, and the burden of that expectation is crushing.

But hold steady. We are not alone in our fight. Take heart in the stories being shared with you here, in conferences, and in your daily life. We are here. No matter the changes to budgets, policies, personnel, or organizations, there will always be those on your side, whether you can see them or not.

As this newsletter comes to a close, I'd like to leave you with one final thing. Revel in your victories. Be they big or small, hard fought or easily won. Celebrate and find joy in all that you do: every ounce of it will help you persist in the times when all we have to work with is a hope and a prayer. Acknowledge where you've been, so we can continue into the future. Keep going. We're all right there with you.



**Do you have campus updates, news, or emerging projects to share with the ALD/ACRL-WA community?**

**Send them our way! The next newsletter will go out in Fall 2025.**