

# WVLS Scholarship Reports



Annette Miller and Leah Giordano



WVLS Post-Conference Report – 2023 ALA Conference & Exhibition  
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1. Please highlight three sessions from the conference.

- GNCRT Comics Friday Discussion Forum

- Moderator: Matthew Noe/Harvard Medical School
- Moderator: Soline D. Holmes, MLIS, JD/Academy of the Sacred Heart
- Presenter: Author Natalie Norris/Fantagraphic Books
- Presenter: Author Elizabeth Trembley/her recent memoir, *Look Again*, follows her various versions of her experience finding a dead body in the woods and the mental companions she has along the way.
- Presenter: Author Jarrett J. Krosoczka/Scholastic/Graphix
- Presenter: Carla Riemer/ALA's Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table's Addressing Challenges Committee
- Presenter: Author Ryan Estrada/Iron Circus Comics
- Presenter: Author Hyun Sook Kim/a member of an underground illegal reading club under a dictator in 1980's Korea and wrote about the experience with Ryan Estrada in the graphic novel, "Banned Book Club"
- Presenter: Author Jerry Craft/HarperCollins Publishers

- Panel #1: Graphic Medicine & Mental Health

- A panel of graphic novel creators moderated by a Harvard Medical School Librarian talked about why graphic novels work so well for discussing mental health and how graphic medicine gives children, teens, and adults a way to discover the effects of trauma on mental health.
  - **Why was this session meaningful?** This session provided me with information about graphic novels that I had not considered previously. This panel shared that the format of graphic novels/comics helps with memory recall and brings clarity, allowing for connections that can be used as a form of medicine for mental health providers. They also help to create self-coping mechanisms and remove the stigma associated with talking about mental health. I attended this forum because so many people still don't consider graphic novels as a format. So often I have heard parents tell children, "Okay, you can get a graphic novel, but get a real book, too.", and I thought this session would provide me with more information to enlighten parents and, everyone, as to the value of this amazing format of literature.

- Panel #2: Challenges & Bans
    - A panel of graphic novel creators talked about the rise in challenges and bans across the country and the impacts it's having on library staff, patrons, and the creators themselves. The GNCRT is working to help by providing resources for libraries to help support them.
      - **Why was this session meaningful?** This session was meaningful because it showed another side to challenges and bans. We all know the impact that this is having on library staff, but it's also important to remember that challenges and bans disrespect readers and authors, offend diverse populations, and hide the truth. In addition, it also highlighted the fact that graphic novels are more open to attack because images can be isolated and taken out of context.
- A Bridge to Parent Engagement in School Partnerships
  - Presenter: Kelly T. Behle/Simi Valley Public Library
  - Presenter: Katey Dager/Simi Valley Public Library
  - Presenter: Kelly Tinker/City of Simi Valley, CA
    - This session was based on a program called "Meet [Me] at the Library" created in Simi Valley, CA. It is a low-cost evening program designed to create a connection between the school and their families and the public library to inspire families to use library services that support student success. The format is simply a school personnel-lead tour of the library, lasting about 1 hour. Having school personnel (e.g., teachers, librarians, principals, etc.), trusted by students and families, to lead the tour is key to the event's success. The panel talked about the collaboration between the two entities and how the event continues. The takeaway is that when parents come to the library with their students, those families are more likely to become regular library users in their quest for educational support. Parents and caregivers have said they brought their children to the public library for the first time because the students love their teacher, librarian, or principal.
      - **Why was this meaningful?** I went to this session because I am always looking for ways to bring more families to the library. I do outreach to several classes at the schools and other places, but that doesn't involve parents. I love the idea of having a trusted school person come and partner in this activity. It creates a community partnership and encourages families who might not have otherwise considered going to the public library as part of their child's education. I plan to reach out to a contact at our school district to discuss the possibility of creating a "Meet me at the Library" event together.

- Reimagining School Readiness Toolkit for Libraries
  - Moderator: Michelle D. Weissman Randall, PhD/Bay Area Discovery Museum
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  - Presenter: Kathleen Campana, PhD/Kent State University
  - Presenter: Amy Olson/Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives
  - Presenter: Julia Shaheen/Stark Library
  - Presenter: Celeste Swanson/Lane Libraries
  - Presenter: Penelope Shumaker/State Library of Ohio
  - Presenter: Pamela Brockway/The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County
  - Presenter: Betsy Diamant-Cohen, DCD/Mother Goose on the Loose
  - Presenter: Kymberlee Powe/Connecticut State Library
    - This session gave an overview of the “Reimagining School Readiness Toolkit” – a suite of free research-backed online resources created for librarians to help families prepare children aged 0-8 for success in school and life. The panel discussed the research behind the toolkit. The resources available in the toolkit, and practical tips from librarians who have used the toolkit. It was created so that it can be used easily by both veteran and early-career library staff.
    - **Why was this meaningful?** I attended this session to find out how I could use this toolkit to provide help to parents/caregivers in preparing little ones for school. Tools that remind or inform them that not only reading, but also providing ways for them to encourage play, spark wonder, and create joy as their little ones make the neural connections which are the building blocks to early literacy. We were told that Wisconsin is one of the states who participate in this, but I hadn’t heard about it until seeing this session offered. I plan to explore this further and try implementing some of the tools. They stressed that there are ways to incorporate the tools into existing programs.

2. Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session.

- This is such a difficult question because there were so many highlights beyond the amazing sessions that were offered. It was a pleasure to meet Leah Giordano, my scholarship partner. We had several meals together and many great conversations. Leah and I attended the opening session (Judy Blume!!) with WVLS Board of Trustees members, Sonja Ackerman and Kari Sweeney. I have known Sonja for some time, and it was very nice to meet Kari. I talked briefly with two of my library idols, Sue Abrahamson and Marge Loch-Wouters. I wish I had had more time with both as they are so inspiring and fun! I met librarians from Georgia and Michigan on the bus to and from “Library Night at the Museum”, sponsored by OCLC. It was interesting to talk with them and the event was beautiful. In the early morning hours

prior to the start of the conference, I took a several morning walks and runs (I did check at my hotel front desk to be sure it was safe) and found my way through the beautiful Prairie District of Chicago and on to the Lakefront Trail past Soldier Field and up through the Museum Campus. I think it's very important to make time for some self-care.

3. Two things I plan on implementing in the next six months.

- Referring to the first question and the session "Bridge to Parent Engagement in School Partnerships", I plan to reach out to someone who has been a teacher in our school district for many years and this fall will be in a newly created position as Dean of Students. She is an avid public library user and a trusted educator in our community, what I feel would be the perfect person to represent the school at a "Meet me at the Library" event.
- Referring to the first question and the session "GNCRT Comics Friday Discussion Forum", I will be using the information from this session to help with my collection development practices for graphic novel selection and to help with my explanation to patrons about the value of graphic novels as another literature format.

4. What support do I need to implement these two things?

- I will need to discuss creating a "Meet me at the Library" event with our library director and then talk with the person from the school district that I feel will be a great choice as a partner in this event.
- As far as the graphic novel forum, these are things that I will talk about with our library director but will begin to put into practice immediately.

5. How might my conference experience have been improved?

My conference experience was amazing. I loved every part of it. The only way it could have been improved is if I could have been in two places at once. There were so many wonderful sessions offered that I couldn't get to because of the timing, but I feel that's to be expected at a conference of this size. I've worked at the library for over 21 years and have been fortunate to attend many state conferences and I never thought I would have the opportunity to attend a national conference. Thank you!

## WVLS Post-Conference Report

*Please note: This report will be shared with the WVLS Board of Trustees and posted on the WVLS website in an upcoming board meeting packet.*

1. Please highlight three sessions from the conference.

What were the session topics? Who presented them? What made these presentations effective and meaningful to you?

There were so many sessions and great information at all of them! I will choose to highlight a selection of sessions I attended that are very different from each other:

*Exploring Entrepreneurship: Engaging a New Generation in Small Business Development* presented by Kristin Linscott of the Plano Public Library and Karly Feinberg of the Baltimore County Public Library.

This session really inspired me to target that ever elusive demographic in our community, the young professional. Of all the sessions I attended, I found this one to be the most motivational and practical. The presenters shared great ideas on creating library spaces for early stage entrepreneurs to explore their ideas, providing online resources, working and engaging with business organizations in the area, as well as tailoring programming and events to support those efforts.

*Frame the Debate, Fill the Seats, and Create Connections: a United for Libraries President's Program* presented by Emily Amick.

Emily Amick is a lawyer and former Counsel on Capitol Hill who presented a really lively and engaging session on the current state of today's culture war issues and how the recent national wave of book challenges fits into the bigger picture. She spoke at length about narrative, messaging, the challenges of disinformation, and which groups are active and rallying people to the issue. Overall I found it to be comforting to be reminded that this is playing out all over the country and helpful to learn how others are navigating the situation.

*Main Stage Speakers: Rick Riordan and Mark Oshiro*

This was a highly entertaining session where the co-authors of *The Sun and the Star*, an offshoot adventure from the world of Percy Jackson interviewed each other for the audience. New York Times bestselling author Rick Riordan went into details about creating the world of Percy Jackson and his desire to bring in a new author with a unique voice to take the story to its next iteration. He also provided information about upcoming authors and books related to the mythology of different cultures through his Disney-Hyperion imprint "Rick Riordan Presents". His co-author, Mark Oshiro, spoke at length about his excitement in being a part of the Percy Jackson world and the nerves that came with the pressure to honor the work that has been done before him.



2. Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session. Did you talk to someone you didn't know at a session? Sit next to someone at a luncheon and have a meaningful conversation? Visit with an exhibitor? How did **this** experience affect your overall outlook of the conference?

A non-session highlight of the conference was attending the Public Library Association's *Welcome to Chicago* reception. At this event, Annette and I were able to mingle with and 'talk shop' with a host of incredible people in the library space, including the Milwaukee Public Library Director Joan Johnson and ALA Executive Director Tracie Hall (see photo below). Despite the differences of our unique libraries, locations and specialties, it was really unifying to realize that we all are working through similar challenges related to workforce, budget and other issues of the times.



3. As a result of attending this conference, what two things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?

One thing I've already spoken to my management team about came from the 'Exploring Entrepreneurship' session, was the possibility of rebranding some of our spaces to appeal to the young professional. For example, instead of 'study rooms', these same spaces could be identified as 'co-working' spaces or similar.

Another concept we are exploring from the same session revolves around creating an online resource page and programming to support the 'early stage entrepreneur'. These library resources could help people who are interested in starting a business but are not yet at the stage where they are looking for business loans or brick and mortar work spaces.

Possible future programming ideas include: an entrepreneur academy, mentoring appointments and lectures with area business leaders, pop-up shops, networking groups, and entrepreneur programming for teens.

4. What kind of support is needed for you to implement these two things? Support from your staff? Your Board of Trustees?

Staff support and buy-in to create a resource on our website with information and links for early stage entrepreneurs, and eventually to plan related programming or events to benefit this segment of our community.

5. How might your conference experience been improved to be more beneficial/impactful to you?

Aside from some technical hiccups related to schedule and stipends, the experience was wonderful overall and I'm better for attending. It was my first experience at an ALA conference, and there was so much to learn and absorb. Many thanks to WVLS for offering a scholarship to this incredible experience!

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Marathon County Public Library