

From the Guest Editor



APRIL SPISAK

The Albany Public Library has an incredible staff, a fabulous collection, and summer reading stats that will knock your socks off. April Spisak is quite happy to be part of it all as Head of Youth Services. Given that her only skills are all word related, it is quite fortunate indeed that her dream job uses so many of them in myriad ways.

I learned to read from Mrs. Augusta Baker, the children's librarian.... If that was the only good deed that lady ever did in her life, may she rest in peace. Because that deed saved my life, if not sooner, then later, when sometimes the only thing I had to hold on to was knowing I could read.

—AUDRE LORDE

First, a tip of the hat to the extraordinary storyteller, educator, and librarian, Augusta Baker, who is shown captivating an audience on the cover of this issue. I love listening to and telling stories, and my well-worn copy of her remarkable book *Storytelling: Art and Technique* sits proudly on my professional development shelf. She was a tireless advocate for positive representation and inclusion of diverse literature in libraries, even to the point of pushing authors, illustrators, and publishers to do better in addition to curating the collection in her library. For me, though, it all comes down to her unwavering confidence that children can be inspired and spell-bound without a single prop other than a voice. A story well-told with energy, enthusiasm, passion, and dramatic control can reach any child in any situation. I've found myself in countless moments as a librarian, parent, or even just community member where I didn't have a book, puppet, screen, or any of the usual tricks, but I certainly had a dozen memorized stories and a well-trained voice. Every single time, I think of Augusta Baker.

The convergence of all good things happened when I finally realized, after getting a relatively unusable BA, that I should be a youth services librarian. Working with librarians, parents, literature, and, of course, young people themselves has been the core of my life for over 20 years now. I am inspired daily by youth services librarians and what we are each doing in our own little corners of the world, and I've been a participant as a librarian, educator, reviewer, researcher, and even as a parent so I've seen the work from diverse perspectives.

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This issue fulfills a goal to highlight youth services librarianship in Oregon, and to dedicate one full volume to celebrating what we are doing now, what we hope to do in the future, and ways that we are changing the emotional, intellectual, and literary landscape of the lives of children and teens. It's a great mix of articles, and I'm proud of each of the authors. I appreciate their time and efforts, both in their daily work and in their contribution to the written field of librarianship practices and philosophy.

We are practicing all the good stuff of librarianship: programming, collection development, readers' advisory, activism, reference assistance, and engagement that is all combined into the important work every librarian does. Add in the elements of intellectual freedom (which are, of course, also of note for non-youth services librarians), privacy rights for patrons under the age of 18, the programming fun and challenges of working with youth, and code-switching to connect with kids, tweens, parents, educators, and our own non-youth oriented librarian peers, and you've got the quintessential youth services librarian. You'll find each of those features represented in this issue.

Even within the drastically limited scope of eight articles written by Oregon librarians, there is a remarkable range of representation of our work and roles.

Theresa Misenti and Alec Chunn explore what is happening with library space, participation, and programming. Finding the gaps in what we offer and exploring ways to fill those gaps is hard to do when our schedules are full with the populations we already actively serve, and we are sometimes unable to see our own physical spaces and how they can be updated and improved to meet the needs of our patrons. Taking a step back to reflect and enact change is represented in each of these pieces.

Outreach and meeting folks where we find them are explored in the articles by Jaime Thoreson and Amy Wyckoff. In some cases, this involves seeing our regulars in different places and locations other than your library. In others, this can mean reaching potential patrons who either don't know what we have to offer or don't have a way to get to the library. Embracing the idea of beyond four walls librarianship is key to the mission of libraries.

In two contemplative pieces, Brystan Strong and April Witteveen examine how we view ourselves independently and within a larger whole (a library system, for example, or the wider field of youth services librarianship). These articles represent more of that big picture consideration that feels like a luxury, but is, in fact, a key element in remaining relevant and engaged.

Finally, Sabrina Tusing and Barratt Miller, in their joyful and informative co-written article about an LGBTQ Collection, and Jen Ferro in a fiery piece are all exploring activism. This is sometimes as simple as the radical act of making sure that representation is happening, and other times requires courage and direct action that may be outside of our own comfort zones. Jen's article takes an unorthodox approach in that it seems to bury the lead of libraries and youth services; as a foundational piece on climate change and youth involvement, however, it is deeply relevant. I admit freely I'm one of those people that thinks if we can move worlds, why wouldn't we? I am passionate about librarianship and libraries and I am inspired by their articles. "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity," the remarkable quote by Horace Mann, hangs on my office door and it's how I move through story times, programming, collection development, and readers' advisory services.

I believe that expressed gratitude is vital, and I request your indulgence in this brief paragraph. I also encourage readers to make their own lists and let those folks know. We see librarians lament about feeling isolated, underappreciated, misunderstood, or limited by forces out of their control. Let's at least tell some of them thank you! First, I thank my parents for a strong literacy core, the late Joseph J. Cali who was my personal patron saint of librarians, the hilarious and talented Sally Rizer who was my first supervisor as a librarian, the incomparably brilliant editor and mentor Deborah Stevenson, Amy Thomson who lets me keep talking about libraries and who was a better librarian than I fear I ever will be, the Albany Public Library staff who are, bar none, incredible stewards of the library, and OLAQ Coordinator Charles Wood, who helped me shepherd this issue from a germ of an idea to a polished presentation.

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