

# FLO RIDA LIBRARIES

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE FLORIDA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

FLORIDA LIBRARY  
ASSOCIATION

Volume 62, No.12  
Spring 2019

**Florida  
Libraries  
Make  
Communities  
Stronger**

**2019 FLA Award Winners**

**Q&A with Mary  
Alice Monroe**

**The Human Library**

**Getting to know  
Greg Forbes  
Siegman**

**Letters from the Inside**

2018-2019  
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## Mission Statement:

The Florida Library Association is a statewide organization that promotes excellence in Florida libraries by advocating strongly for libraries and providing high quality professional and leadership development for a diverse community of library staff, volunteers, and supporters.

## Vision:

The Florida Library Association champions strong, indispensable, user-focused Florida libraries that exceed the expectations of the communities and constituents they serve.

Lisa O' Donnell, CAE, Executive Director

Karen Layton, Membership & Events Manager/ *Florida Libraries* Designer

Melissa Stocks, Administrative Assistant

Jeanice Caskey, Meeting Planner

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*Florida Libraries* Copy should be submitted by email to [journal@flalib.org](mailto:journal@flalib.org). You are encouraged to include press-ready digital photos (300 p.p.i.) and graphics with your articles, which will be included on a space-available basis.

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# 8 REASONS WHY A COMMITTEE IS FOR YOU

**Have the Voice to Advocate for Libraries**

**Gain Invaluable Professional Experience and Learn New Things**

**Broaden Your Network with Like-Minded Professionals**

**Be Exposed to Industry Trends**

**Give Your Reputation a Boost Through Other Library Associations**

**Find (Or Be) a Mentor**

**It's Fun!**

**Make a Name for Yourself**

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Advocacy & Legislative

Awards

Conference Planning

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Finance

Florida Public Library Outcomes and Standards

Fundraising

Intellectual Freedom

Leadership Development

Library Career Development

Membership & Marketing

Planning

Scholarship

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# From Your President



Dear FLA Members,

It has been a great privilege to serve as your president over the last year! I have learned so much but more importantly, my time as president truly confirms what I have been saying since I became a member: FLA is the BEST Library Organization!

I would like to thank the board members, committee chairs and members, past presidents, and the FLA Office. All of you have made my job easy. The board members were a great sounding board and gave me sage advice on a number of issues including preventing privatization of libraries, supporting intellectual freedom, and moving forward with the FLA/FAME partnership.

Committee chairs and members are the heart and soul of the organization. We have 15 very active committees and I was honored to attend many of the meetings to learn about what each one is doing, including: planning the conference, advocating for library funding, leading webinars, providing mentorship, marketing the organization, updating standards, fundraising, selecting scholarship and award winners, and spotlighting FLA members.

The FLA Office – what can I say? Lisa, Karen, and Melissa were the guiding force behind every positive thing I did. They shared new ideas, kept me on schedule with a timeline, reminded me of things I didn't even know I had to do, and above all were a pleasure to work with.

As my tenure begins to wind down, I look forward to FLA's continued evolution with Eric Head at the helm of the 2019-2020 elected board:

- Vice President/President-Elect: Laura Spears, University of Florida
- Secretary: Sarah Divine, Nova Southeastern University - Alvin Sherman Library
- Treasurer: Donna Vazquez, Florida Gulf Coast University
- Region 1 Director: Ava Brillat, University of Miami
- Region 2 Director: Matthew Selby, Palm Beach County Libraries
- Region 3 Director: Christine Patten, Seminole County Public Library
- Region 4 Director: Cheryl Wolfe, Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library
- Region 5 Director: Heather Sostrom, St. Johns County Public Library System, SJ-BOCC
- Region 6 Director: Renaine Julien, Florida State University Libraries

I know FLA will continue to grow and evolve!

Many of you know I am quick to champion FLA and celebrate the work we do. In fact, I have been known to talk about how FLA is the best organization with strangers at parties, presidents of other state library organizations, and ALA members - basically with anyone who will listen. But the reason FLA is fantastic is because of you, the membership. Keep doing what you are doing and if you are not involved, do so today: join a committee, attend the conference, volunteer to lead a webinar, actively engage with elected officials for library funding, tell your friends about FLA and encourage them to join. Getting involved with FLA helped shape my profession and it will do the same for you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S J Hammill".

Sarah J. Hammill  
President  
Florida Library Association

# From Your Executive Director

by: Lisa O'Donnell, CAE

Ah, spring in Florida; a time that always seems to bring with it a sense of renewal, growth and potential. We know this because during Legislative Session, Tallahassee is blanketed in a thick layer of yellow pollen and the population of Tallahassee doubles in size. I'm sure I could find an appropriate metaphor that best describes the overwhelming sense of "purpose" that descends upon the Capitol this time every year, but I'll leave that to your own musings.

Kidding aside, the growth potential each spring in Tallahassee is genuine and for FLA, it comes in the form of important legislative priorities that seek to grow library funding in Florida. We take this time of year seriously as the outcomes have a very real impact on the more than 500 public libraries in Florida, not to mention the 16,000+ staff and millions of residents who rely on libraries for a myriad of needs. In this spirit, my favorite advocacy phrase serves us well as we work our way through Legislative Session: "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu."

FLA's government affairs team, including your Executive Director, the Legislative & Advocacy Committee and lobbying team at GrayRobinson, has been hard at work fighting the good fight for libraries across Florida. As of publication, both the House and Senate have proposed budget increases of an additional \$1.5 million and \$1 million over last year respectively to the State Aid to Public Libraries grant program. This is welcome news for many reasons, but notably, these increases reflect an understanding by legislators to fund this program at the maintenance of effort level required to draw federal LSTA funding.



Members of the 2018-2019 FLA Board of Directors at 2019 Library Day in Tallahassee, Florida. Pictured top left to right: Eric Head, Jorge Perez, and Sarah J. Hammill. Second row: Donna Vazquez, Phyllis Gorsche, Robin Shader and Heather Sostrom

You and your colleagues were incredibly important to this process and that was proven in February. On the 19th

of February, more than 70 FLA members traveled to Tallahassee to participate in the 2019 FLA Library Day. In a few short hours, FLA met with more than 40 state senators and representatives, including 15 legislators who sit on important appropriations subcommittees. Arguably, your conversations and meetings with legislators that day were heard and, so far, the House and Senate are pushing for increased funding for the State Aid grant program. There was a bit of time for fun...FLA members also enjoyed an interesting and engaging

tour of the Senate Chamber that, rumor has it, included a [mock] controversial bill reading and lively debate, but did not pass when put to a vote...! And, it wouldn't be Tallahassee without a friend in high places.



Pictured left to right: Heather Sostrom, Astronaut, Sarah J. Hammill, Renae Rountree and Vicky Stever.

Also in February, the FLA Board held its in-person meeting at Florida State University's Shores Building. FSU staff and faculty hosted an informative walking tour of the university's libraries including Strozier and Dirac. The day ended with a fun reception at the FSU Innovation Hub, showcasing the cutting-edge technology available. In coordinating efforts with our academic colleagues, FLA is looking forward to the opportunity of holding similar meetings at our universities, thus strengthening our relationship with not just faculty members, but also library students who are the future of the profession.

Advocacy work continued in February as Sarah Hammill and I traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in the ALA Capitol Hill Fly-in event. In an effort to advocate for federal funding in a targeted and systematic approach, ALA facilitated meetings between members of Congress and constituents from each state. Appointments were made primarily with those members of Congress who sit on the House Labor, Health & Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee, out of which comes funding for LSTA. With the recent successful reauthorization of LSTA in November, the ask was relatively easy: continue to fund LSTA at the \$232

*"FLA members and supporters showed an unbelievable amount of generosity in donating more than \$6,300 for storm relief."*



Pictured left to right: Sarah J. Hammill; Eduardo Sacasa, Legislative Aide to Sen. Rubio; Lisa O'Donnell, CAE.

million reauthorized amount. FLA leaders met with seven important Congressional offices including: Rep. Lois Frankel [FL-21]; Rep. Charles Crist [FL-13]; Rep. Frederica Wilson [FL-24]; Rep. Donna Shalala [FL-27]; Rep. Neal Dunn [FL-02]; Sen. Marco Rubio; and Sen. Rick Scott.

As you remember, last October we witnessed the pain and destruction caused by Hurricane Michael in northwest Florida. FLA members and supporters showed an unbelievable amount of generosity in donating more than \$6,300 for storm relief. In early February, a Disaster Relief Review committee met to assess the applications received. FLA is pleased to share that three deserving libraries in the Florida Panhandle received disaster relief money:

- For assistance in replacing projector technology and the children's computer damaged in the storm, a donation was awarded to the Gadsden County Public Library.
- To assist in repairs to flooring and library shelving, relief money was awarded to the Calhoun County Public Library.
- And, finally, one of the hardest hit libraries in Bay County suffered extensive damage to its roof and subsequently lost almost 5,500 materials due to the storm. The committee awarded relief money to the Parker Library in Mexico Beach.

In March, the FLA Board of Directors voted to significantly invest in the future of FLA by securing a professional Strategic Planning firm. Later this year, FLA leaders will meet for an intense planning session to best align the association's goals to those of libraries across the state. This planning session will open the door to many more programming opportunities for FLA, and in doing so, will strengthen our mission and reach in assisting member libraries.

So, maybe Spring does in fact bring hope and renewal! With all the exciting things happening with FLA, it's easy to see how our collective effort propels our association forward and radiates hope for that brighter future we strive for.

I look forward to seeing you at the FLA Annual Conference in May!

*We are still accepting donations for those impacted by Hurricane Michael. The recovery process will take years and our support will continue throughout this difficult time.*

[Click here to donate!](#)

# Conference Corner

by Alyssa Koclanes, 2019 Conference Planning Committee Chair

## Don't Gamble with the facts...Bet on your Library!

In less than a month, the 2019 FLA Annual Conference will take place from May 15-17th at the DoubleTree at Universal in Orlando, FL. This location is within walking distance to a variety of restaurants and shops, as well as a direct walkway to Universal City Walk! As chair of the FLA Conference Planning Committee, I know that the committee members have been working hard all year to plan an amazing conference filled with classic conference favorites as well as fantastic new offerings. With an exciting conference theme, Don't gamble with the facts...Bet on your library, selected by FLA President Sarah Hammill, next month's conference is one you do not want to miss!

The conference will kick off with an opening keynote by Mary Alice Monroe, a dynamic speaker and New York Times bestselling author of over twenty novels and three children's books. The coveted FLA Awards, with a new appearance by the Friends, Foundations & Boards Awards, presentation will follow. With over 40 breakout sessions throughout the conference on a wide range of topics including leadership, information literacy, professional & personal development, technology, youth services, administration & management, and technical services, there is something for everyone! Looking for something new? Attend the laughter yoga session on Thursday with Joy Steelman, a President's Signature Event.

There will also be ample time to meet with exhibitors and network with colleagues starting with the Exhibits Welcome Reception on Wednesday evening and throughout the day on Thursday, with more non-compete exhibitor time than ever before! While in the exhibit hall, you can also attend innovative poster sessions and meet with local authors. Download the conference app to easily access the schedule of events, view the list of exhibitors, and play the new app scavenger hunt game to win cool prizes throughout the conference. There will also be an opportunity to win FLA bucks in the exhibit hall to spend at the silent auction, organized by the Past President's Annual Scholarship Fundraising Campaign.

If your brain gets information overload from all of the fantastic breakout and poster sessions, there will be

plenty of opportunities to relax and have some fun with your friends and colleagues! Register for the after-hours networking event on Wednesday night to tour the Skeletons Museum of Osteology and enjoy drinks and appetizers at Uncle Julio's or relax back at the hotel and attend the film screening of I Know a Man...Ashley Bryan followed by a discussion lead by the film's director, Richard Kane. The President's Reception casino night will be rocking on Thursday evening with blackjack, poker, and roulette\* as well as the always exciting wine toss and silent auction finale supporting the FLA Scholarship Fund, you won't want to miss it!

Make sure you stay until Friday morning to attend the returning Mystery Writer's Breakfast, the always popular lightning round program with 10 fast paced presentations on a variety of innovative topics, or check out what's new at the TechZone, which includes makerspaces this year! The conference will conclude with a closing keynote by author and library lover Greg Forbes Siegman.

It has been a privilege to chair the FLA Conference Committee this year and work with such fantastic colleagues to plan an amazing FLA Conference, thank you to the committee members, conference sponsors, and exhibitors who helped to make the 2019 FLA Conference possible!



[Click here to Register](#)

\*Real money is not being used and gambling will not be taking place. This is for fun, so don't be afraid to go all-in!



# Conference Corner

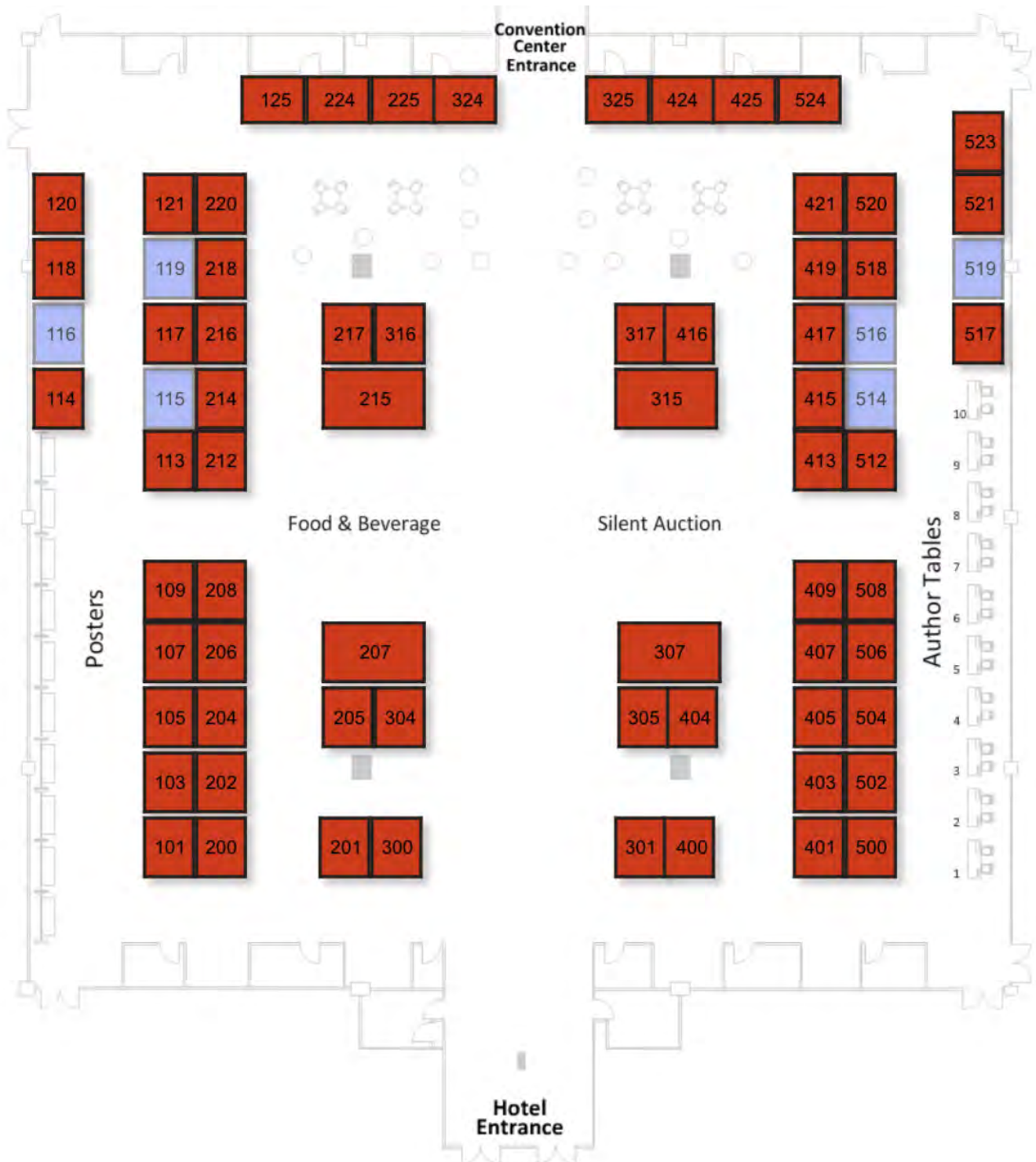
## 2019 At A Glance Schedule

Tuesday, May 14h	
1 pm - 5 pm	FLA Pre-Conference
5 pm -7 pm	Registration Open
6:30 pm - 8:30 pm	FLA Networking Meet-up
Wednesday, May 15th	
7:30 am - 7:30 pm	Registration Opens
8 am - 9 am	New Member & First Time Conference Attendee Orientation
9 am - 9:30 am	Coffee Break- <i>Sponsored by FACRL</i>
9:30 am - 11:30 am	Opening General Session- <i>Sponsored by Florida Department of State/DLIS</i>
12 pm - 1 pm	Friend's Lunch
1 pm - 5 pm	Break Out Sessions, FLA Committee and Member Group Meetings
1 pm - 4 pm	Performers Showcase
4 pm - 6 pm	Exhibit Hall Opens/Welcome Reception, Author Tables, Poster Session I
5:30 pm - 9:30 pm	After-Hours networking event
6: 30 pm - 8 pm	Alumni Receptions
7:30 pm - 9 pm	Film Screening and Discussion, lead by the film's director, Richard Kane
Thursday, May 16th	
7:30 am - 7:30 pm	Registration Open
8 am - 5 pm	Exhibit Hall Open, Silent Auction, Author Tables and Poster Session II
9:30 am - 4:30 pm	Break Out Sessions, FLA Committee and Member Group Meetings
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Lunch for purchase with Exhibitors, Poster Session III
4 pm - 4:30 pm	Final Refreshment Break with Exhibitors
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm	President's Reception- "Casino Night"- <i>Sponsored by HARRIS</i>
Friday, May 17th	
7:30 am - 12 pm	Registration Open
7:30 am - 8:30 am	Mystery Writers Breakfast
8 am - 9:45 am	TechZone
8:30 am - 11:30 am	Break Out Sessions
11:30 am - 1 pm	Closing Session with Lunch- <i>Sponsored by GALE</i>
1:15 pm - 3:15 pm	FLA Board of Directors Meeting

\* For a complete schedule, go to  
<https://fla.memberclicks.net/2019-schedule-of-events>

# Conference Corner

## 2019 FLA Exhibit Hall



# Conference Corner

## 2019 FLA Exhibit Hall Vendors

ABDO	512	Financial Ratings Series, Grey House & Salem Press	304	Playaway Pre-Loaded Products	206
Adrienne Floorcovering Inc.	413	FLD Solutions	521	PRIDE Enterprises	117
American Psychological Association	120	Florida Academic Library Services Cooperative	218	R. George & Assoc.	207
AtoZDatabases	103	Florida Association for Media in Education	404	Recorded Books	220
AWE LEARNING	113	Florida Humanities Council	403	ReferenceUSA	419
Baker & Taylor	215	Florida Multi-Type Library Cooperatives - NEFLIN, PLAN, SEFLIN, SWFLN & TBLC	204	Scholastic Library Publishing	405
bepress/Digital Commons	107	FSU School of Information	415	Sebco Books	524
BiblioCommons	224	Gale, a Cengage Company	305	Shepherd & Associates	121
Bibliotheca	401	Harvard Jolly Architecture	225	Showcases	118
Bound To Stay Bound Books	125	Ingram Library Services	201	SirsiDynix	205
Brainfuse	114	ITC Systems	301	T-Mobile for Government	109
Brodart Co.	101	Library & Information Resources Network	214	Taylor & Francis Group, LLC	300
ByWater Solutions, LLC	316	Library Interiors of Florida, Inc.	409	Tech Logic	508
Capira Technologies, LLC.	400	LibraryIQ	425	The New York Times	417
Children's Plus, Inc.	105	Lyngsoe Systems	216	ThriftBooks	506
CoLibri Systems North America, Inc.	317	LYRASIS	208	TLC - The Library Corporation	523
Comprise Technologies	202	Mackin	407	Today's Business Solutions Inc.	421
Cover One, Inc.	520	Magic And Mayhem Productions	424	Transparent Language, Inc.	502
Creative Arts Unlimited, Inc.	307	Midwest Tape	200	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services	518
Crowley Company, The	500	Niche Academy	517	University of South Florida	504
DLSG at Image Access	315	OCLC, Inc.	325	Wiley	212
EBSCO Information	324	OverDrive	416	Wolters Kluwer Health	217

# 2019 FLA Awards

Presented by the 2018–2019 FLA Awards Committee

## Overall Achievement

### *Librarian of the Year*

Kelvin Watson, Director  
Broward County Public Library

Innovative and inclusive, Kelvin Watson is an inspiring and visionary leader who has implemented a wide range of groundbreaking library services, programs and initiatives that have dramatically increased the door counts at Broward County Library locations and circulation of library materials.

Kelvin oversees almost 1,000 employees and 38 library locations. He employs a user-focused approach to leadership that has increased both visibility and usage of the Library's many services and resources. Since taking the helm less than two years ago, he has significantly increased in-person visits to the library, use of the library's physical and digital resources and new library card sign-ups. Innovative initiatives launched under his leadership have garnered awards on the state and national level. Hands-on and accessible, Kelvin maintains an open-door policy toward library team members and stakeholders, is visible at library and community events and is an active and valued member of professional and community organizations. Additionally, he creates, nurtures and leverages partnerships that benefit library users and the community.

### *Lifetime Achievement*

Dr. Barbara Stites, Interim Dean  
Florida Gulf Coast University

The library career of Dr. Barbara Stites began in 1985 and during her thirty-four years of service to Florida she has established a distinguished record of professional achievements and accomplishments. She has a unique experience with the broad scope of her experience with all types of libraries and professional associations including administration of two multitype Library Cooperatives (TBLC) and (SWFLN.) Her service, publications, mentoring, teaching and professional contributions have been exemplary in advancing the stature of libraries in Florida. She has been active in FLA for many years and has served as FLA President.

Dr. Stites has been responsible for forty grants totaling over four million dollars that were funded to implement innovative projects and develop significant changes for library services in Florida. The majority of these grants were designed to develop projects that would serve many libraries in a region and often with implications state-wide. Barbara has also been a facilitator for a variety of strategic planning sessions which focus on the future and innovative services. Her doctoral research on continuing education was innovative and in addition to her national and state publications, she has made presentations and implemented various teaching and training. By promoting innovation and participating in implementation of innovative ideas she has contributed to advancement of significant change of Florida's libraries and has been committed to supporting the next wave of library leaders and the next generation of librarians.

### *Library of the Year*

Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library

In 2018 Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library (THPL) reorganized its staffing model and eliminated overdue fines, yielding \$1 million in savings while increasing access to library resources and expanding opportunities for community engagement through unique, scalable programs. THPL welcomed back 15,000 customers previously unable to use library resources, and annual circulation of print materials increased for the first time in a decade. THPL's programs and initiatives have been recognized by Library Journal, the Urban Libraries Council, Ingram, and OverDrive, and shared widely on social media and by local news outlets including WFLA, WTTA, ABC Action News, and the Tampa Bay Times.

### *Outstanding New Librarian*

Adam Chang  
Citrus County Public Library

Adam Chang's contributions to the Citrus County Public Library system have had an obvious positive impact on technology classes in both growth and attendance. To date, Adam has developed over 30 new classes that are taught in all five of the county's library branches as well as to county employees and as a

method of outreach to local high schools

Since earning his MLIS in 2015, he has gone beyond as an instructional and research librarian by developing these new classes, sharing knowledge with regional and state-wide organizations through presentations, attending leadership training, innovative programming, and by writing grants to enhance library offerings.

He has presented at the Florida Library Association Annual Conference, two conferences held by TBLC, and one held at the American Library Association Annual Conference on the topics of technology, leadership, and career development. He has produced publications for the local newspaper and for the Florida Library Association, and is collaborating with other librarians in writing an upcoming book on technology programming. He has worked extensively with several FLA committees including Scholarship, Leadership and Development, Human Resources, and the Website Taskforce. He is also a member of the New Members Roundtable for the American Library Association and the Chinese American Library Association. Adam has been recognized for his leadership potential both at a state and national level.

### ***Outstanding Paraprofessional***

Raychell Harris  
Library Assistant II, Palm Beach State College

Library Assistant II Raychell Harris implemented, designed and produced a monthly web show called “In the Stacks.” Her popular three-minute segment, co-hosted by her colleague Kelly Keith, is dedicated to “giving you the inside scoop of the Lake Worth Campus Library for Palm Beach State College.” Raychell, a natural born leader and team player, utilized her technology and communication skills to not only promote professional growth and solidarity among her campuses’ library professionals and support staff, the web show has introduced the library and its services, tools and friendly staff to students who might not ordinarily become library users.

Raychell demonstrates her expertise in customer relations, digital literacy, social media and social networking. Her initiative has united library employees and created a fan base of students.

## **Embodiment of Values and Ideals**

### ***Library Innovation***

Technobus  
Miami-Dade Public Library System

The Miami-Dade Public Library System’s Technobus provides an invaluable service to the residents throughout Miami-Dade County. In response to the call for the Library to evolve and meet the digital information seeking needs of its residents, the Library created a mobile, innovative solution to meet those needs by bringing technology training and tools directly into the community it serves. The result is that the most disadvantaged have benefited. Seniors are staying connected, adults are finding employment and the youth are preparing to become producers, not only consumers in an increasingly connected world of technology and innovation.

Hesitant new customers quickly overcome their fear as they gradually embrace a world of new concepts and skills. Technobus users do not remain beginners for long. The Library’s Technobus has a high visibility factor. The vehicle’s wrap is a traveling billboard that brings awareness of the Library’s role as a place of digital innovation and learning to all corners of Miami-Dade County.

### ***Maria Chavez-Hernandez “Libraries Change Peoples’ Lives”***

Largo Public Library

Largo Public Library’s English Language Learning program began 11 years ago with one on one small group English tutoring. From those early days, the library expanded the program into a robust educational program that includes adult English classes in partnership with Pinellas County Schools, volunteer led Conversation Clubs, Citizenship and Naturalization preparation classes, and for the last two years the Welcoming Week refugee basket drive. Along with this, the library offers Career Online High School as part of the State Library of Florida grant. Roughly half the participants in that program started as English Learning Language program students.

## **Excellence in a Field of Endeavor**

### ***Library Web Presence***

Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library

HCPLC.org is more than a website – it is the 24/7 online library of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library where more than 3 million customers each year access the information they need from any device, anywhere, at any time. HCPLC.org was designed with a superior customer experience as its function and goal, and it serves customers who are connected to and engaged with technology while remaining accessible for users of all ages, needs, and

skill levels. Its pages are modern and simple, yet creative in the use of colors and themes consistent with the organization's logo and branding. With its thoughtful layout, contemporary design, and intuitive structure, HCPLC.org enhances the online experience for its users and serves as a noteworthy example of effective library web presence.

### ***Betty Davis Miller Youth Services Award (Early Learning)***

Seminole County Library: Sensory Lab

The Sensory Library Lab is a unique installation that facilitates learning and literacy through activities involving sight, sound, touch and even smell. Featured in Lake Mary Life Magazine and praised by the Central Florida Autism Community group, the lab has been open for 74 sessions that saw 2093 attendees since its debut in June 2018. A significant increase in attendance at Sensory Storytimes since the lab's debut suggests a possible increase in library usage by children with special needs and their families. Lastly many activities from the Sensory Library Lab will be sent around on a rotating schedule to the Library's smaller branches this summer, so that even more children can benefit.

### ***Betty Davis Miller Youth Services Award (Teens)***

Orange County Library System:  
Hero Spark After-School Adventures

Hero Spark provides tutoring and gaming programs to 11-18 year olds. Their primary program, After-School Adventures, blends homework help and gaming in a unique way that makes for a fun and engaging after-school experience. The program has resulted in a measurable increase in library use, seeing 12-24 students participating daily. In 2018, students participated in 2900 hours of homework help and face-to-face tabletop gaming, and Hero Spark served 108 unique participants at the Orlando Public Library alone.

### ***Excellence in Marketing and Public Relations***

Broward County Library

Broward County Library's successful marketing/public relations campaign to raise awareness and usage of the library's electronic resources including music, movies, TV shows and eBooks utilized print collateral pieces, social media and electronic communications to spread the message to the community. The entire campaign was produced and created in-house by library marketing staff. Within a year, circulation statistics for those items increased 38.8%.

### ***Exemplary Instructional Programs or Services***

Instruction & Research Team  
Citrus County Library System

The Instruction and Research team continually strive to expand and develop creative technology classes that enhance life for all demographics using a wide variety of instructional methods. Curriculum changes have been the key factor in increasing the number of patrons attending the classes as well as allowing them a tactile hands-on experience. They successfully provide an avenue for lifelong learning. The classes are flexible, can be held in any location, and focus on using the patron's own devices and equipment. The changes positively impacted attendance and feedback; the system has seen an average increase in technology program attendance of 25% each year.

### ***Outstanding Scholarly Contribution***

Douglas Crane, Director  
Palm Beach County Library System

Douglas Crane's article, "Efficient Librarianship: A New Path for the Profession" (Public Libraries Magazine, Nov/Dec 2017) explores the intersection between personal productivity and knowledge management practices within the field of librarianship. The article examines how librarians are uniquely suited to be excellent knowledge workers through the combination of librarian skill sets with best productivity and efficiency practices. It further argues that through these skills and practices, the "Efficient Librarian" becomes a powerful consultant and decision maker. In addition to this article, Doug Crane blogs on his "Efficient Librarian" website and conducts related training.

## **Outstanding Citizen**

### ***Friends, Foundations & Boards Outstanding Member***

Sandra Price  
Board Member, Friends of Central Ridge Library  
Citrus County Library System

Sandra Price has been a vital advocate for the Citrus County Library System since 1996, serving 23 years. She is very engaged with the libraries and inspires others to do the same. The staff are proud to work side by side with her. Her leadership, contributions and accomplishments make Sandy truly deserving of recognition. In addition to leading the bi-annual MegaBook Sales, Sandy was the inspiration and lead behind starting and continuing the "Love Your Library" event, now in its 9th year. Bring together the five Friends of the Library group, she has been instrumental in the event raising over \$100,172.

## Outstanding Business/Media Partner

WTTA News Channel 8 working with Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library (THPL)

Tampa Bay news station WTTA Great 38, sister station of NBC affiliate WFLA News Channel 8, has been a champion for library services and an influential media partner for THPL. WTTA features THPL resources on its morning show each month, allowing library staff to guide the topics while showing genuine enthusiasm in each segment. These promotional spots reach thousands of homes in the Tampa Bay area, totaling in-kind value of \$20,000 since January 2018. After being highlighted by WTTA, THPL's HCPLC Music Video received more than 3000 views and their Passport Fair received 156 passport applications from 500 attendees, resulting in \$5,500 in library revenue.

# Friends, Foundations & Boards Awards

Presented by Friends, Foundations & Boards Member Group

## Outstanding Program Award

Friends of the Murray Hill Library

Friends of the Murray Hill Library (FMHL) planned a dual-purpose event combining the library's milestone 50th anniversary with the re-dedication/renaming of the branch in honor of the late Bill Brinton (1959 – 2017), one of the library's staunchest supporters and founder of the FMHL.

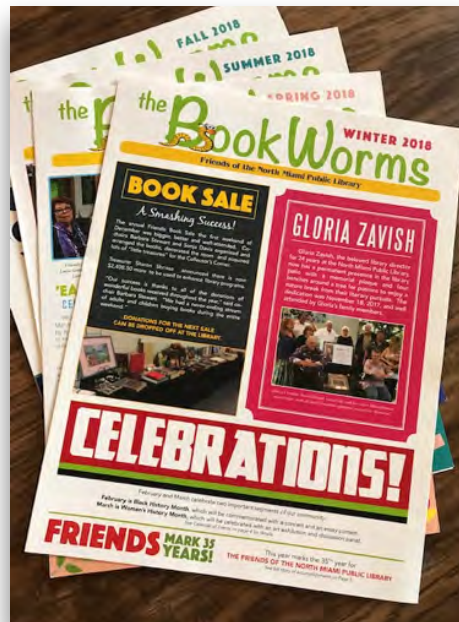
An active advocacy volunteer group that supports the 21-branch Jacksonville Public Library system and specifically its neighborhood branch in the close-knit Murray Hill area, the FMHL tirelessly planned, researched, and worked closely with library administration, staff, public officials and community sponsors to make the event a fun, inclusive, educational and meaningful experience. The celebration turned out to be a heartfelt tribute that made a powerful and lasting impact on the entire community.

## Friends Newsletter of the Year

Friends of the North Miami Library

The BookWorms is a quarterly publication with bright colorful graphics put together by the members of the Friends of the North Miami Library under the direction of Susan Neuman.

Each issue includes a message from the Friends president and a message from the Library Director. Hard copies of the newsletter are available at the



library and given to members to distribute to community shops, restaurants and other businesses, as well as various city departments. The Friends are ensuring maximum exposure of their activities with this distribution strategy.

## Friends Website

Friends of the Boca Raton Public Library

The Friends of the Boca Raton Public Library's website highlights their independent bookstore, art gallery and book clubs, as well events. The website was designed to promote each of these endeavors, as well as provide information about Board members and other key

personnel, and the funding provided to the Boca Raton Public Library. The book club page lists

upcoming book club selections, while the art gallery page displays information about the current exhibit and art gallery exhibitor application information. The membership page allows new and returning members to sign up to pay annual dues. The blog postings include volunteer interviews, bookstore information and event news. The website does an excellent job of keeping the community informed about the large variety of activities in which the Friends are involved.



\*Special thanks to FF&B member Joun Touzin for coordinating these awards.

# Q & A with

# MARY ALICE MONROE

by: Sarah J. Hammill, FLA President

We are thrilled and honored to have Mary Alice Monroe, *New York Times* bestselling author of over twenty novels and three children's books, including her upcoming novel *THE SUMMER GUESTS* (June 2019), as our keynote speaker for the Opening Session of our 2019 FLA Annual Conference. She is a phenomenal speaker and will be sure to energize us and provide a wonderful start to our conference! I recently had the opportunity to ask Ms. Monroe a few questions and to tell us a little of what we can expect in May.

## Tell us a little bit about how you came to be a writer.

**Mary Alice Monroe (MAM):** I am one of ten children, the third eldest. My happiest childhood memories are rooted in story. Reading and re-reading great tales like Peter Pan . . . acting made-up theater performances with my siblings . . .



. . . spending time alone writing private thoughts in a journal. . . singing naptime stories to my younger siblings. These remain as vivid memories for me and the roots of my writing career. I just didn't know what to call those desires in those early years.

Fast forward to my third grade year in Mrs. Crawford's class. A cherished teacher of mine—I've never forgotten her name. She said to me after reading some of my classwork, "Mary Alice, did you ever think you might want to be a writer when you grow up?"

A writer? You mean, that was a job? It was an enlightening suggestion to eight-year-old me. Mrs. Crawford had named my desires. Little did I know (and Mrs. Crawford too) that the simple remark planted the tiny seed of possibility that would slowly grow and blossom into a lifelong career.

## How do you come up with subjects for your books?

**MAM:** I made a decision a long time ago to write novels that would be a force for good. It started with my novel, *THE BEACH HOUSE*, published in 2002, which included environmental issues surrounding the loggerhead sea turtle, an endangered species that nests on the beach I call home, the Isle of Palms, in South Carolina. That resonated strongly with readers. So many commented about the parallels I wove between the characters and the animal. Since then, I have continued to weave environmental issues and endangered species into my novels. Other than the sea turtles, I've brought to light the dwindling numbers of shorebirds, the catastrophic decline in monarch butterflies, the issues facing the beloved bottlenose dolphins, and the continued pollution of our natural water. I do this not through non-fiction or proselytizing, but through the power of story. Nature is my source of inspiration

For the story to come to life, I dedicate countless hours of research, volunteering, and meeting the experts involved in the story world I'm creating. I am an intuitive writer. I do not have a plot when I begin the book. As I work with the animals, an image, sound, experience will inspire a character, a scene or a plot twist. I like to say the animals tell me the story.

## Tell us about how you approach writing a book. Do you force yourself to write for a set amount of time or do you just jot down the thoughts as they come up?

**MAM:** I show up at my desk every day but the hours vary depending on what stage of the book I am in. During research, I spend a lot of time in the field and doing interviews. I may not be writing pages for the book, but I am present to the work.

Once my story clicks in my head, I am a very fast and focused writer. I call it "projectile writing" because I



write from the gut – it's very intuitive. The story is in my head and gushing out. During these times I write from the moment I wake up until I fall asleep. That's the first draft! Once I get that down, I spend long days at the desk with subsequent drafts. This is the craft process. I love the revisions, working with my editor. Creative ideas spark, and we work together to make sure the book is the very best it can be.

## What advice would you give to someone interested in writing novels?

**MAM:** The writing life isn't for the faint-hearted. Putting yourself out there and facing rejection are a part of the journey. Here are a few truths I've learned along the way that I hope encourage others on their own writing journey:

- You are a writer because you are writing. Being published or not published doesn't define you as a writer.
- Write as much as you can, as often as you can. Join writers' groups. Attend writing workshops and conferences.
- Stretch your writing muscles, challenge yourself, enter writing contests. Keep putting your work out there to be reviewed and judged. You'll hone your craft. I still do this more than 25 years into my career. And I still feel anxious when my work is reviewed. Accept it as part of the creative path.
- Read! Read books and magazines. Read all genres—a benefit of book clubs. Know your classics and catch up with contemporary authors.

## Tell us what libraries mean to you.

**MAM:** Libraries are places of solitude, refuge, support and education. They have transformed over the years into bustling community hubs vital to its citizens of all ages. Libraries provide far more than a place to read books. I remain a grateful, staunch advocate/supporter of libraries. As for librarians they are my partners in educating readers about the species I introduce in my books. As a novelist, I capture the reader's imagination and emotion as I gently bring awareness about an animal. I hope that the inspired reader will then go to the library to find non-fiction books on the animals to learn more. Together we work to educate readers to care—and take care.

## What is your favorite library memory?

**MAM:** My first memory of visiting the library was when I was six years old and my mother took me to our local library for the first time. It was a small, red brick building with wooden card catalogues, three rooms and an imposing checkout desk. My mother left me alone in the children's section while she searched out a book. I can still recall being spellbound at the sight of so many books, and a bit intimidated. I stood staring, afraid to touch the books. The librarian came to me and told me I could choose any book I wanted. As many as I wanted! It was like being in a candy shop with treats for the imagination. I carefully selected a few and went to check them out. The librarian smiled at me and discussed my choices, then she presented me with my very own library card. Oh, how I treasured that card!

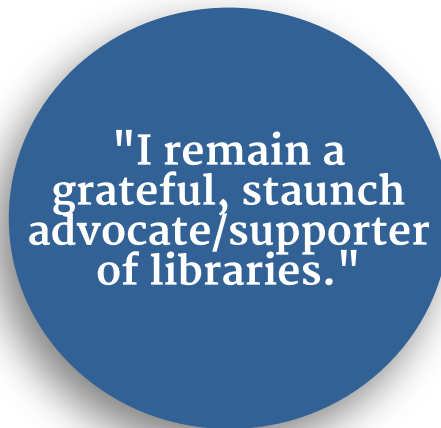
## What is your favorite childhood book?

**MAM:** One of my favorites is Peter & Wendy by J.M. Barrie. I've subsequently written a follow up to the book (it's still not finished) and I was inspired to write *Second Star to the Right*, a fantasy novel about a ninety year old woman in London who believes she is Peter Pan's Wendy!

## Can you give us a teaser of your upcoming appearance at our 2019 FLA Annual Conference in May?

**MAM:** First, thank you for the invitation to speak! Climate Change is the hot topic of conversation today—pun intended. Denial of climate change, though it still exists, is generally recognized as akin to thinking the earth is flat. The source too often reflects selfish interests rather than hard science. In Science, the facts are clear: Climate Change is real. It's happening now.

Libraries are one of the most trusted resources available. Libraries make the facts and opportunities for research available to the public, they offer educational programs for children and adults, they help the public evaluate information with reason, and they provide forums for the sharing of ideas and possibilities that can engage and excite the public.





## Meet our Closing Session Speaker: Greg Forbes Siegman

**O**n May 17, author Greg Forbes Siegman will serve as closing speaker at Florida Library Association's 2019 Annual Conference. His book, *The Silhouette Man*, was honored in Canada as a book that celebrates the wisdom of seniors. The student edition, *The First Thirty*, was NSDLA Multicultural Relations Book of the Year. His next book, *The Milkshake Man*, is an illustrated version of the story – geared toward kids between kindergarten and 4th grade. In advance of our event, he took part in a Q&A with questions compiled by student Charlotte Masters.

### If you could exist in the world of any book, which would you pick?

That's a tough one. I'd probably go with Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl.

### Your favorite quote from an author or a book?

I think there's lots of truth to Mark Twain's quote: Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness.

### Do you have a favorite memory from previous trips to Florida?

Thanksgiving 2012. In the morning, I did a sprint triathlon. It was three years after I had spinal surgery. Knowing what I went through, it was a great feeling to participate in that race and cross that finish line. And then, that night, a local family invited me over for Thanksgiving dinner. They were really nice, and it was a lot of fun. So, from start to finish, that was a memorable day.

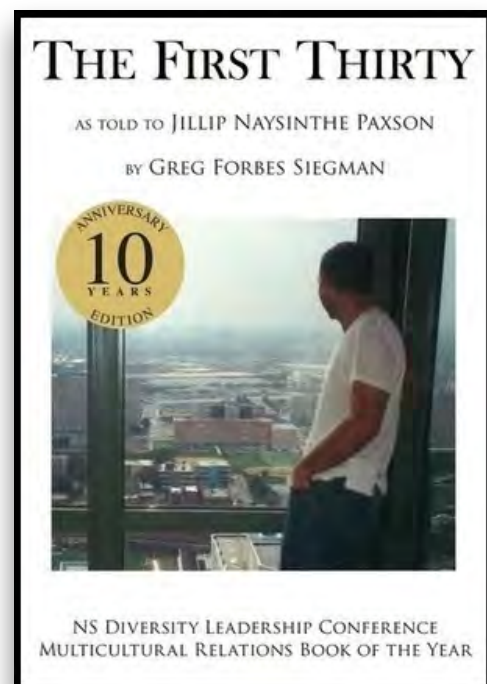
### You grew up in a suburb and have lived your adult life in urban cities. How did you get interested in farms and what do you like about them?

I had an intern who grew up on a dairy farm. Her enthusiasm for farms inspired me to want to learn

more about them. Since then, I've had the chance to spend more time around farmers, and I spent a few days working on a farm. I admire farmers' work ethic, wisdom, resilience, resourcefulness and sense of community.

### Until her passing in 2002, your grandmother was your mentor. Is there a particular piece of advice she gave that has stayed with you?

Definitely more than one. The first that comes to mind, she frequently said: 'If you don't believe you belong in the room, nobody else will'. As a kid who struggled with self-confidence, that outlook has helped a lot.



To get copies of *The Silhouette Man* or *The First Thirty*, use the link <http://www.gregforbes.com/store.html> **Between April 18th and May 1st – 10% of your purchase will benefit Florida Library Association** (as long as you reply to the email you receive after you order asking you to confirm your FLA affiliation).

# Thank you to our 2019 FLA Annual Conference Sponsors

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# The Human Library: Challenging Stereotypes and Prejudices One Conversation at a Time

by: Kim Copenhaver and Alyssa Koclanes

The Human Library provides an alternative format for individuals with differing beliefs to learn about new perspectives through genuine dialogue combating issues of social justice in our communities. As a living, breathing library where humans are the books and the stories are their lives, readers browse the catalog of human books and check out a living book for a 20-minute conversation. The Human Library provides a positive framework designed to challenge stereotypes and prejudices through genuine dialogue. Difficult questions are expected, appreciated, and answered for the purpose of sharing stories to forge new connections, enhance understanding, and dissolve the barriers that separate us from one another.

## Background

The original Human Library was held in 2000 at the Roskilde Festival in Copenhagen, Denmark created by Ronnie Abergel, spanning eight hours a day for four days and provided readers with over 50 different living books challenging stereotypes and prejudices.<sup>[1]</sup> Following the inaugural Human Library, Ronnie Abergel founded the Human Library Organization, traveling around the world to train new local organizers and help launch other Human Libraries.<sup>[2]</sup> The Human Library is now worldwide, occurring in over 70 countries and in hundreds of cities and towns

around the world. Human Library participation in the United States has increased in recent years and reflects the individual needs of a particular community, making each instance of the Human Library unique.<sup>[3]</sup> A review of the literature found that both public and academic libraries organized many of the human libraries in the United States and that the Human Library programs exceeded the organizer's expectations. The Surrey Libraries in British Columbia found their inaugural Human Library to be so successful that they decided to host one biannually.<sup>[4]</sup>

At the Human Library organized by the Rochester Public Library, organizer Rebecca Fuss selected living books that were representative of the Rochester community and allowed the books to write their own titles instead of using the titles suggested by the Human Library.<sup>[5]</sup> While each Human Library is unique, one commonality is the breadth of stories and topics represented by the living books. Examples of the living books at the Human Library organized by the Toronto Public Library included a former sex trade worker turned writer and businessman, a gay youth who spoke on the impact of bullying, a former politician from Rwanda who fled persecution, and a soldier who served two tours of duty in Iraq.<sup>[6]</sup> As "human books are not experts in their topics, but rather in their experiences with their topics," each conversation is different based on the individual interests

and personalities of the book and reader.<sup>[7]</sup> The Human Library provides an opportunity for people to learn about the experiences of others in their community in a neutral environment, which allows for an open dialogue between the living book and the reader.

## Goals

The main goals for the Human Library at Eckerd College were to raise awareness of social justice issues and to expose students to the issues present in our local community. Individuals recruited to serve as living books shared their personal stories and experiences with attendees who were interested in understanding and learning more about the issues or experiences represented by their book. Attendees of the event participated by checking out the living book to have a 20-minute conversation and share in dialogue regarding that individual's experience or story. Living books are individuals from all walks of life who have experienced discrimination based on race, religion, sexual preference, class, gender identity, sex, age, lifestyle choices, disability, or other aspects of their life. The Human Library provided the opportunity for a member of the Eckerd College community to listen and learn more about the experiences of others in their community. Most importantly, attendees walked away with a mutual understanding of being human beyond a single identity.



Small group conversation between a living book and attendees during the Human Library at Eckerd College in April 2018. Created by Jennifer Kuhlthau / CC BY 2.0.

## Collaborations

Libraries are experienced community builders and often have pre-established networks to support the development of social justice programming. Leveraging existing community partnerships is extremely beneficial when planning the Human Library. The Eckerd College Library utilized community referrals from faculty and staff as well as on campus partners during the organization of the Human Library at Eckerd College. Campus partnerships included the Academy of Senior Professionals at Eckerd College and the English Language Center, as well as faculty, staff, and students serving as event volunteers or as living books. Community partners included the Disabled American Veterans, DayStar Life Center, Inc., and the Pinellas Ex Offender Reentry Coalition. The combination of local community members along with members of the campus community helped create a diverse collection of living books enhancing the experience for readers.

## Event Management

The Human Library is a registered trademark of the Human Library Organization (HLO) and may only

be used for non-commercial purposes and only with written permission from the Human Library Organization. As a result, it is essential to contact the HLO to request the use of the name, logo, and concept in advance of scheduling an

event. The HLO typically processes licensing applications within 1-2 weeks. Officially recognized local events benefit from marketing support from the HLO, event planning tip sheets, and event management software.

The recruitment and training of event volunteers and the creation of an environment conducive to intimate conversations is critical to the ultimate success of the Human Library event. Initiating event planning at least three to six months prior to the scheduled event is recommended to ensure



Attendees waiting to checkout a living book during the Human Library at Eckerd College in April 2018. Created by Jennifer Kuhlthau / CC BY 2.0.

adequate time for the selective recruitment and screening of volunteer participants.

Collection assessment is critical when building the library of living books for the Human Library.

Selecting diverse topics of focus and then brainstorming potential community organizations that might connect you with individuals willing to serve as living books is a time consuming but essential task. It is helpful to have living books that are experienced with the emotional investment of sharing their story, but not essential as long as pre-event training is provided. Event organizers should be prepared to screen self-nominated volunteers to ensure that their participation is in concert with the mission of the HLO and not to advance a specific agenda.

With the above in mind, it is helpful to offer communication training for living books in advance of the event. Training topics include the history and mission of the Human Library, education on the art of genuine dialogue, tips on perceiving questions from a place of inquiry and not judgment, and guidance on how to end a non-productive conversation. It is also a good opportunity for the living books to familiarize themselves with the event space and to express any fears or concerns that they may have in advance of the event. It is important to recognize and honor the courage required by each living book to share the details of their life journey with a stranger. It is a gift they give to others in the hope to enlighten and shift perspective in the community.

Attention to ensuring the comfort and safety of living book participants is necessary to ensure a positive and productive experience for both books and readers. Organizers can mitigate the anxiety of participation by

providing a lounge area with seating and snacks for books to recharge in between checkouts or to chat with one another while waiting for selection. A book concierge to attend to the needs of living books and to keep a watchful eye on conversations and signs of distress ensures additional support and security for living book participants.

During the event, volunteers assist with event management. A volunteer coordinator assists with participant check-in and task assignment. Circulation clerks greet readers upon arrival, distribute the printed catalog of living books for review by the readers, and explain the format of the event. Volunteers also operate the software provided by the Human Library Organization to facilitate check-in and checkout of the living books. Following book selection, library pages collect the living book from the waiting area and introduce them to the reader. Due to the sensitive nature of some topics, conversations can become emotional. Scheduling breaks for books and volunteers will ensure staff remains upbeat and ready for the next conversation. Also of importance is scheduling a photographer to capture the unique nature of the event and the exchange of ideas between individuals trying to come to terms with their differences. Guidelines regarding observing and capturing these images without detracting from the intimacy of the conversation are essential.

Collaboration with the official Human Library Organization allows local events to benefit from global marketing initiatives provided by the HLO, expanding the awareness of the event beyond the local community. The official HLO designation also ensures legitimate use of the Human Library logo on social media posts, flyers, and press releases that may



A human library reader greeting the living book they selected during the Human Library at Eckerd College in April 2018. Created by Jennifer Kuhlthau / CC BY 2.0.

be used to market and promote the event in local areas. Many people may still be unfamiliar with the Human Library concept. As a result, marketing materials should include some explanation of event goals in addition to examples of the topics available for exploration. Providing contact information on all promotional content ensures potential attendees with questions can seek answers prior to the actual event, mitigating misinterpretations of the event purpose or format.

## Assessment

Eckerd College recognized the Human Library program as a College Program Series event heightening the prestige and widening the market for participants beyond the college into the local community. In just two short hours, Human Library volunteers engaged 177 unique readers and recorded 77 checkouts of 19 living books in the art of genuine dialogue to bridge differences in our community. Post-event assessment noted that 95.9% of Human Library readers strongly agreed that the event was a valuable addition to college programming. Suggestions for improvement included a request to host the Human Library multiple

times per year, to lengthen the time the Human Library was open, and to record the stories of living book participants to make them available post-event for students unable to attend.

Living book participants also reported a rewarding experience post-event, with 100% indicating they would

participate again if asked. They also confirmed their support of the Human Library concept following their participation, with 100% agreeing that dialogue creates understanding and acceptance, combating prejudice, myth, and stereotype. Suggestions for improvement received from living books included a request to build in an opportunity to decompress after the event, noting that the experience is an adrenaline rush followed by a crash and that the living books would benefit from a period of reflection prior to departure.

## Conclusion

The Human Library at Eckerd College provided opportunities for the library to bridge the gap of understanding between individuals with differences, but also between the institution and the local community. The unique nature of the program engaged multiple segments of our college community with broad participation from staff, students, faculty, and members of the public. The relationships created and civic partnerships developed were unexpected program benefits that will have a lasting impact on our community. Libraries foster the exchange and discovery of

information among disparate members of respective communities. Innovative library programming, such as the Human Library, can serve to bridge the gap between us, facilitating progress toward understanding and acceptance of our differences.

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#### Contributing Authors

Kim Copenhaver, Associate Professor, Reference, Instruction, & Access Services Librarian, Eckerd College

Alyssa Koclanes, Associate Professor, Technical Services, Serials & Instruction Librarian, Eckerd College

#### Notes

[1] "The Origin of the Human Library," Human Library, accessed March 14, 2019, <http://humanlibrary.org/about-the-human-library/>.

[2] "The Origin of the Human Library."

[3] Amanda Calderon, "The Human Library's Many Books," Poets & Writers, (2014), [https://www.pw.org/content/the\\_human\\_librarys\\_many\\_books/](https://www.pw.org/content/the_human_librarys_many_books/).

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[5] Amanda Calderon, "The Human Library's Many Books."

[6] Lian Sze, "Inaugural Human Library Event a Success," Public Libraries 50, no. 1 (2011): 10-13.

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Are you ready to find out *The ONE Thing* that will make your life easier? Gary Keller and Jay Papasan provide the surprisingly simple truth behind extraordinary results. Join in on this year's 2019 One Book One State: *The One Thing*. FLA President, Sarah Hammill, has created discussion questions that will inspire you to focus on what matters most!

# Letters from Inside: Reference Services for Florida Inmates

## A personal account of the Prisoner Letter Program

by: Karlen Harrison-Kane

*“When the prison gates slam behind an inmate, he does not lose his human quality; his mind does not become closed to ideas; his intellect does not cease to feed on a free and open interchange of opinions; his yearning for self-respect does not end; nor is his quest for self-realization concluded. If anything, the needs for identity and self-respect are more compelling in the dehumanizing prison environment.” ~Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall*

The librarians at the Clearwater Public Library System (CPLS) are accustomed to random questions. Just this week, we’ve answered questions about currency codes, Rihanna, West African tribal deities, motorcycle repair, and super telescopes. What makes these questions somewhat unusual is the fact that they came to us through handwritten letters, and these letters were mailed by Florida’s incarcerated.

“I would like to take the time to thank you for taking your time in assisting all of us in our quests for knowledge. There aren’t many individuals who wish to assist us in such matters so once again thank you.” ~Anthony, Florida State Prison

In an effort to provide better information access to inmates in Florida’s correctional system, CPLS has developed a Prisoner Letter Program through which prisoners can submit questions and receive reference services by mail. According to Dean Peterson, Library Services Administrator for the Florida Department of Corrections (FDC), Florida prisons do not have full-time libraries or degreed librarians. Prison libraries, when available, are staffed by part-time workers with minimal training. The staff is limited in both time and resources as they attempt to provide the most basic services to Florida inmates.

CPLS’s Prisoner Letter Program functions as a voluntary supplement to the services provided by the FDC to incarcerated persons. Inmates have the opportunity to ask questions that prison library staff simply do not have the time or resources to research. In this way, CPLS performs outreach to a severely underserved population in an effort to promote access to information for all in Florida.

The Florida Department of Corrections encourages the efforts of CPLS to provide assistance to inmates in an unofficial capacity. When answering letters, we utilize a set of rules from the FDC that details appropriate materials and procedures concerning prison mail. Each month, a team of librarians from Clearwater Library answer letters from inmates with the best information that our resources and the rules allow. Responses are sent anonymously from the library; staff members are not identified. This service is provided entirely at the library’s discretion and to the extent that administration deems appropriate.

What started with a few occasional letters addressed from one or two prisons has, in the last three years, grown dramatically to between 50 and 80 letters received every month from more than 30 State Correctional Facilities. The program continues to grow by word of mouth among the inmates. They have been pleased with our responses and often tell us how much they appreciate the time and resources we use to help them access basic information.

Many of us on the outside take this access for granted. How often do we turn to readily available books or technology to find information vital to everyday life, or to simply satisfy idle curiosity? If we were unable to easily consult a trove of books or an internet-ready computer, what could be done? As these inmates have demonstrated, write to the library.

“I would like to thank you, first and foremost, for your services with reference materials. It is extremely difficult to acquire information while in the custody of F.D.O.C.: but your services alleviate a lot of the hardship associated with that endeavor.” ~James, Columbia Correctional Institution





The inmates' questions are as varied as the people who ask them. Many of the questions we receive are in regard to post-release services, work release programs, educational opportunities, and other subjects that may help with rehabilitation and life after release. Many inmates are looking to improve upon or learn new skills, such as foreign languages or computer programs, in an effort to better themselves as they serve their sentences. In addition to the necessities of life, they are often interested in creative pursuits. An inmate may request information relevant to a book or story they are writing. They have requested information about poetry, music, general publishing, audio production, drawing, painting, and industrial design. Some are looking for puzzles or games; some are attempting to research their heritage, and frequently, many inmates simply desire to read the lyrics to their favorite songs. We also receive questions about history, requests for biographical information on important figures, interests in foreign countries, sports, news, and various religions.

"I am writing to first let you know that your generosity is very much appreciated, and that we who are incarcerated thank you for the personal time that you take out of your daily lives to assist us with our questions and favors. We realize that you are not obligated to do things that we ask and we are very much appreciative of your kindness."  
~Raymond, Okaloosa Correctional Institution

We believe that the services we are providing to inmates are worthwhile. If an inmate has an eye to their future and wants to spend their time while incarcerated learning new skills or gleaning new information, we want to help. We know that inmates share the information we provide with each other, and often a response to one inmate will spark interest in others who will write to us for additional information.

A number of requests have been repeated so often that our team has created a resource folder of frequent requests. This folder includes information on organizations that provide books for prisoners, pen pal programs, and post-release bonding programs and financial assistance programs. We have also included contact information for various legal resources and law libraries, NFL and NBA schedules, and biographies. Furthermore, speeches from those of Dr. Martin Luther King to Mahatma Gandhi can be found as well. As this program continues to grow, our team of library professionals continues to develop other such workflows to improve response frequency and accuracy of answers to reference requests.

"...I just wanted to say thank you! I strongly believe that what you guys are doing is amazing, the help I was able to get through your resource program. So I just wanted to let you all know that I appreciate it, and to please never stop what you're doing. There are many of us in this state that really appreciate all your help... Thank you for remembering the forgotten, thanking you for all who can't or won't."  
~Christian, Santa Rosa Correctional Institution

Studies have proven a correlation between increased literacy rates and decreased recidivism rates<sup>1,2</sup>, so at the very least, our responses can be viewed as reading practice for inmates who may otherwise not engage with printed material, and we always hope that our small contribution may lead to further improvements in the inmate's life, encouraging them to be productive, law-abiding citizens if or when they rejoin society.

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#### Contributing Author

Karelen Harrison-Kane  
Librarian I  
Clearwater Public Library System

#### Notes

1. Hendricks, Cindy, James E. Hendricks, and Susie Kauffman. "Literacy, criminal activity, and recidivism." *Multiple perspectives in the millennium* 21 (2001).
2. Music, Emily. "Teaching Literacy in Order to Turn the Page on Recidivism." *JL & Educ.* 41 (2012): 723.

# Membership Matters

## 2019 FLA Organizational Members

Ana G. Mendez Library  
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Charlotte County Library System  
Clearwater Public Library System  
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Clearwater Public Library System

Paul Wartenberg  
Bartow Public Library

Paula Knipp  
St. Petersburg College

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Peter Spyers-Duran  
University of Central Florida

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Phyllis Gorshe  
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Portia McQueen  
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Priti Bhatt McNutt  
Union County Public Library

Rachael Fillingame  
Bay County Public Library

Rachel Bowden  
Haines City Public Library

Rachel Cooke  
Florida Gulf Coast University

Rachel Edford  
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Renee Montgomery  
UCF Libraries

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Robin Henderson  
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Sally Ramsey  
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Samantha Gay  
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Samantha Roll  
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Samma Fagan  
Palm Harbor Library

Sandra Grutter-Allgood  
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Sandra Newell  
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Sandy Avila  
University of Central Florida

Sandy Mayer  
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Sara Nelson

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