

**American Library Association (ALA)
President's Report
Sam Helmick
9 December 2025**

As President of the American Library Association, it is a privilege to serve our members and the broader library community. Since assuming the presidency, my focus has been on advancing ALA's mission, supporting governance and committee work, and engaging in public advocacy to highlight the transformative role of libraries in society, and to ensure that the value of our work is recognized and supported by communities, policymakers, and partners. This report outlines activities from the last quarter, reflects on the connective role of the President, and highlights upcoming opportunities for member engagement.

The Role of the President

The President of ALA serves to connect, support, and represent the profession to colleagues, students, partners, and the public. Each engagement is an opportunity to elevate the voice of libraries, strengthen community connections, and demonstrate the value of our work to policymakers and the public who support libraries through funding and advocacy. Whether meeting volunteers, moderating panels, speaking with authors, or engaging in legislative discussions, the ALA President amplifies the impact of our profession.

Committee and Governance Support

- Supported the appointment of the IT Policy Task Force, guiding ALA in addressing emerging technology issues in libraries.
- Continued to support the Nominations Committee, promoting clear expectations and preparing future leaders for service.
- Receiving tremendous guidance, insight, and support in shaping the priorities of this presidential year from my Presidential Advisory Committee.

Presentations, Advocacy, and Public Engagement**September 2025**

Sept 6 – Attended and volunteered at the National Book Festival, Washington, D.C., engaging with volunteers and the public

Sept 9 - KTVU Channel 2 interview

Sept 12 - Ohio Journal interview

Sept 13 – ALA President Sam Helmick Podcast with the Interfaith Alliance – Libraries and Religious Freedom

Sept 17 – ALA Town Hall: How to Build Strong Library Communities

Sept 18 - Midtown Gazette interview

Sept 19- CUNY interview

Sept 23 – Library of Congress Gathering with IFLA and OCLA – Reimagining Terminology: Building a Sustainable Foundation

Sept 25 - Iowa League of Women Voters virtual keynote

Sept 26 – Long Island Librarians gathering – special preview of Ken Burns' The American Revolution

Sept 26- WCPT 820 Radio interview

Sept 29 - The Allusionist interview

Sept 29 – Road Trip National Podcast Recording – Iowa City Public Library Bookmobile

October 2025

Oct 1 - Iowa City Freedom Rally speaker

Oct 2 – Addressed the Iowa Library Association Conference

Oct 3–5 – Attended the Common Ground Intellectual Freedom Gathering, Arkansas

Oct 6 – Introduced honorary Banned Books Week chair George Takei at Unscripted: A Night Against Censorship, Brooklyn Public Library

Oct 6 - NPR interview

Oct 6 - Australian Times interview

Oct 6 - WPSD TV interview

Oct 7 - Moderated panel for The Librarians film, Des Moines

Oct 8 - WPFW Radio interview

Oct 8–9 – Presented at the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services, St. Louis

Oct 12 - Keynoted the PFLAG Conference, Chicago, launching their national book club

Oct 14–17 – Presented at the North Carolina Library Association Conference

Oct 22 - DITV interview

Oct 25 - Wilkes University interview

Oct 24 – Keynoted the Sustainability Libraries Conference, New York

Oct 30 - WNYW interview

November 2025

Nov - ASU interview

Nov 4 – Moderated panel for The Librarians, Chicago

Nov 4 - ESU interview

Nov 5 - Carolina Press interview

Nov 7 – Recorded Book Flood Podcast

Nov 10–14 – Presented at ALA CORE Forum

Nov 12 - CSPAN interview

Nov 18 – Presented to the Westchester Library System

Nov 20 – Attended National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) Annual Benefit, Celebrating Free Speech & Its Defenders

Nov 28–Dec 2 – Attended the Guadalajara International Book Festival

December 2025

Dec - NYT interview

Dec 1- NPR interview

Dec 5 – Keynoted the Gather and Grow Virtual Conference

Dec 9 - Real Simple magazine interview

Each engagement required a significant investment of time, care, and energy to represent the profession on a global scale, especially in these challenging times for the field. I am deeply grateful for the generosity, grace, and support of our members as I strive and continue to learn how to balance the responsibilities of leadership with my work as an active practitioner.

Maintaining regular Bookmobile shifts, attending staff meetings, and leading outreach programs allows me to stay connected to the day-to-day work of the libraries I represent, while providing professional and social fulfillment that informs my advocacy, decision-making, and engagement on behalf of our entire membership.

Upcoming Opportunities for Members

I encourage members to actively participate in upcoming ALA events, which provide opportunities to learn, network, and advocate for libraries:

Youth Media Awards – January 26, 2026

Celebrate excellence in youth literature and media while connecting with authors, publishers, educators, and fellow librarians.

Recharging in Challenging Times: An ALA Virtual Event – February 10, 2026

A virtual opportunity for professional reflection, development, and community-building in a time of increasing challenges for libraries.

Public Library Association (PLA) Conference 2026 – April 1–3, 2026

Offers workshops, panels, and networking tailored to public library staff, strengthening local advocacy and collaboration.

ALA Annual Conference 2026 – June 25–29, 2026, Chicago, Illinois

Annual is a cornerstone event for learning, networking, and advocacy. Participation provides opportunities to engage with peers, share expertise, and influence the future of libraries.

Opportunities and Challenges for the Profession

The library field continues to face both significant opportunities and pressing challenges.

Opportunities:

- The IMLS win this year demonstrates the impact of coordinated advocacy and underscores the power of librarians, staff, and members working together to secure federal support for libraries. This victory reinforces the importance of public investment, partnership, and professional advocacy.
- Expanding the role of libraries in digital equity, lifelong learning, and community engagement continues to open avenues for libraries to serve as essential civic and educational institutions.
- Ongoing collaboration with authors, publishers, community organizations, and policymakers strengthens public awareness of libraries' value and advances access, intellectual freedom, and inclusion.
- National and international events, panels, and conferences provide platforms to share expertise, elevate the profession, and connect with communities worldwide, reinforcing the global reach and influence of libraries.

Challenges:

- Despite victories, the profession continues to face threats from censorship, funding pressures, workforce shortages, and sociopolitical pressures. Rapidly evolving technology, changes in federal and state priorities, and emerging policy challenges require vigilance and proactive advocacy.
- Balancing the demands of leadership with day-to-day library service is an ongoing challenge, requiring careful stewardship to ensure that advocacy and policy engagement are informed by the realities of frontline work.
- These opportunities and challenges underscore the importance of active engagement, thoughtful leadership, and the collective voice of our members. Together, we can safeguard access, intellectual freedom, and the public value of libraries while expanding the profession's impact locally, nationally, and globally.

Acknowledgments

I wish to express deep gratitude to ALA President-Elect Maria McCauley, Treasurer Larry Neal, and the ALA Executive Board for guidance and collaboration. I also extend special thanks to Deputy Director Melissa Walling for her excellent leadership during the transition between Interim Executive Director Leslie Burger and Executive Director Dan Montgomery.

Thank you to Dan Montgomery for his constant availability and thoughtful support as he transitioned into his role, balancing professional and leadership responsibilities. We are delighted to have him join the team.

Conclusion

Serving as President of ALA is both an honor and a responsibility. Each engagement, whether a panel, keynote, or podcast, is an opportunity to support and represent our members, advocate for libraries, and connect with the public. I am grateful for the dedication of our members, staff, and

partners, and I look forward to a year of continued collaboration, advocacy, and growth for our profession.

With gratitude,

Sam Helmick