Welcome to Our New President!

Wow—Summer has gone by so fast! I feel such gratitude to be able to serve among all of you as the TNLA President.

And that is one change in the mindset. We are moving from TLA to TNLA to match our website address and to reduce the confusion with another state’s library association. I’ve always called the Tennessee Library Association as TNLA, but I know for many it might be a tough thing to change.

I’m very excited about the theme for this year’s conference to be held in Memphis in April 2023. The Stars of TNLA!

Library staff members have a heart for service, we are a community of public servants. And we are stars in doing our work no matter where we are! In the public libraries, the school libraries, the special libraries, as trustees or friends, and the academic libraries. I want to celebrate our careers, our profession despite all the things said about libraries in the past 12 months in public forums.

A little about me because I might not be as well-known as previous past presidents! My first position on the TNLA board was the publications advisory board. But that lasted only a year as I was moved to Bylaws and Procedures where I stayed for many years. If you remember the huge restructuring of TNLA during Annelle’s last year as Exec Director, all those bylaw changes came while I was bylaws chair. Then I spent a year as newsletter editor—that is such a great position to have! The last year I served as vice president/president-elect and now on July 1st, president. I do bring in a lot of experience with non-profit management and non-profit advocacy working for other nonprofits in Tennessee. I am a librarian at Chattanooga State Community College. That makes two community college librarians back-to-back as TNLA president!

I invite you join me in celebrating our fantastic library staffs across the state—the Stars of TNLA!

—Dwight Hunter
TNLA President

Planning Inclusive Events

One of the many lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic is that the world could be much more accessible to people with disabilities, but not enough of us had put in the work to make it that way. Since its reformation in 2021, the University Libraries Accessibility Committee at the University of Memphis has been working to help make our library services and resources more accessible for our patrons. As part of that, the committee hosted the first-ever Accessibility Brunch & Learn the morning of Wednesday, July 13, offering two sessions of accessibility training for staff and faculty in the University Libraries. Both sessions were offered in a hybrid format, in-person in McWherter Library and through Zoom. Coffee, juice, and a spread of bagels, pastries, and fruit from Panera were available for those who attended in person.

The first session of the morning was on creating and remediating PDFs for accessibility, presented by Marie Peeples, Library Assistant II in the Government Publications Department. Marie started by taking everyone through the accessibility tools in Adobe Acrobat Pro, noting what the
Planning Inclusive Events (continued from previous page)

We decided to call it a Pop-Up because we’ve had to be creative in our sign placement and we’re not sure yet if it will be more than a summer event. Participants are being asked for feedback: should it be more permanent?

The first title went up in the beginning of June: And Then Comes Summer by Tom Brenner to celebrate the end of school. We did try boosting a Facebook post and reached 1300 people outside of our usual circle, definitely worth $10. We have been switching out titles every other week, to the delight of many (we hope)!

Our last title is “Octopants” by Suzi Senior; this is a fun book that promotes diversity and individuality. It has just gone up and I’m not sure if it or Super Bat (the previous title) is my favorite.

It is difficult to get accurate participation counts. We ask that folks tag us (if they post to social media) but that doesn’t really happen. If we see them, the patrons are counted but before we open or after we close, who knows? Ginger Graves from Smyrna PL says getting responses is spotty at best. Speaking of Smyrna, I have Ginger to thank for sharing prepped book pages with us and Kate Huddleston from SRRL for the seed of the idea!

Between the books from another branch’s SBW collection and our Friends purchasing the temporary signs, this was an easy and fun thing to try. Now I’m looking into grants and preparing for the future possibilities.

—Kathleen Tyree
Technology Engagement Center, Murfreesboro

Pop-Up Story Book Walk at the TEC

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The second session was on inclusive events, presented by representatives from the University of Memphis Disability Resources for Students (DRS) office. The Accessibility Committee has been working very closely with DRS since it reformed, including inviting representatives to meetings to discuss priorities and training possibilities, and their presentation at the Accessibility Brunch & Learn is an outcome of that partnership. The DRS representatives provided best practices that apply to all types of events, including how to include accessibility information and accommodation needs into marketing. They then talked attendees through the specific accessibility considerations of in-person and online events and modeled best practices for both throughout the presentation. 26 people attended the inclusive events presentation, with 15 in person and 11 attending online.

—Carl Hess
University of Memphis
The interesting years of 2021 and 2022 have brought many changes to the Tennessee Library for Accessible Books and Media, otherwise known as the LABM. First, in the spring of 2021, the LABM, along with the rest of the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA), moved into a brand new building on the Bicentennial Mall in downtown Nashville. Located at 1001 Rep. John Lewis Way North, the building is open for visitors Monday – Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Various sections of TSLA have different hours, so it’s a good idea to call before you visit if you wish to talk to staff in a particular space.

In addition, LABM and TSLA have gone through some exciting changes in leadership over the past several months. Maria Sochor, the former Director of LABM, was promoted to Assistant State Librarian in December 2021. We wish Maria well in her new role and are glad that she didn’t go too far!

Clayton Altom, who has been Assistant Director of the LABM since 2016, was named as the new Director following Maria’s promotion. He holds a Master’s in Library Science from the University of Tennessee and has 15 years of experience working in archives, public libraries, and special libraries. He is passionate about getting books to readers in whatever format they need and is excited about continuing to serve the community of Tennesseans who utilize our services. Clayton is a Texas native but has lived in Tennessee since 2007 when he followed a girl up here (they later got married). Clayton was an English major as an undergrad and still reads as much as his time allows. His reading tastes are broad, covering everything from literary fiction to urban fantasy to history, and his all-time favorite book is The Brothers K (available from the Library in audio format) by David James Duncan. He is married and has 3 sons under the age of 8.

Our new Assistant Director is Erin Lankford. Erin has spent the past 6 years serving as a LABM Reader Advisor and enjoying getting great books out to patrons and having such great chats with them all! She has her Master’s in Information Sciences from the University of Tennessee, where her favorite class was “Storytelling for the Business World.” Erin looks most forward to using her new role to create more programming for the LABM and helping continue the great sense of community among its patrons.

Erin is a proud lifelong resident of Tennessee who hails originally from Doyle. She actively supports the University of Alabama’s College Football program and will wish you a hearty “Roll Tide” during the football season. Erin’s favorite book of all time is A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini (available from the Library in audio and large print formats and can be downloaded in braille). She will buy every copy she comes across. She lives with her husband and the many homeless books they have adopted over the years.

In addition, the new TSLA building now houses several new spaces. One of them is the Early Braille Literacy Center (EBLC). The EBLC is the only room in the building designed especially for the younger crowd. Filled with tactile experiences like a texture board, a LEGO wall, and cozy reading nooks, this space is designed for children with no vision, low vision, and all other children. Adults are welcome, too, however!

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Erin Lankford
Assistant Director, Tennessee Library for Accessible Books and Media

Editor’s note: Watch for more about the Early Braille Literacy Center in the upcoming Fall newsletter!
Sharon Holderman has been an incredible Editor and mentor. When she decided to step away from the journal and suggested I apply for the Editor role, I felt inspired. What an incredible opportunity to build a team and continue Sharon’s legacy of seeking and publishing work that reflects our vibrant and diverse community.

It’s with a thrill that I introduce myself as the new Editor of Tennessee Libraries. I have a background in poetry writing and community development, as well as editorial work with the literary journal The Pinch. I started with Tennessee Libraries in 2018 as the Book Reviews Editor and in 2021 accepted the Associate Editor role, finding ways to boost the work I saw in my community, such as working with presenters from LIT and TNLA to publish work that I found interesting and useful.

Our Book Reviews Editor, Rhonda Tippitt, the Library Director of Sevier County Public Library System, has already approached her role with enthusiasm and a real drive to make the books available for review more interesting and diverse. And our incoming Associate Editor, Andrea Kincaid, Lead Public Services Librarian at Chattanooga State Community College, is well suited for a dynamic, flexible, and fun editorial role. I’m excited to work with them both.

We seek to publish a variety of forms of content from our vibrant, diverse, hard-working community, including, but in no way limited to:

- Case studies and narratives about censorship challenges in Tennessee
- DEI initiatives, recommendations, and opinions
- Writers, suggestions, and requests for regular columns
- Submissions for Peer Review (great for tenure and/or promotion!)
- Work from librarians outside of academia
- New peer-reviewers willing to read articles, not for money or fame, but because we appreciate you

Interested in submitting to the journal? See the Call for Articles or reach me at amroach@memphis.com or tnlibraries@gmail.com.