HOPE AND A FUTURE

ADVANCES IN LIBRARIANSHIP

ADVANCES IN LIBRARIANSHIP VOLUME 48

HOPE AND A FUTURE: PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPACT THAT LIBRARIANS AND LIBRARIES HAVE ON OUR WORLD

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

This book is dedicated to my parents, Anthony and Faye Franklin, who believed in me before I was able to. Words do not exist that allow me to express the depth of my love and gratitude.

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CONTENTS

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Conrad Pegues is Assistant Professor/Public Services Librarian in the Paul Meek Library at The University of Tennessee at Martin, where he supports students, faculty, and staff with their information and research needs. He has an MLIS from Kent State University and an MA in English from The University of Memphis focused on African American literature. Currently, he is working on an MFA in Fiction at Lindenwood University. His research interests include social justice and information access as well as the conflict between race and identity politics. He has published work in the area of gender, sexuality, and black male studies. He is chair of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee of The Black Caucus of the American Library Association. He is a member of the American Library Association's Social Responsibilities Round Table and its Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Assembly.

Sophia Sotilleo is an Associate Professor and the Access Services Librarian at Lincoln University Langston Hughes Memorial Library. In this capacity, she has the privilege to teach information literacy across all subject areas and the First Year Experience course. In addition to teaching courses, she serves as an Adviser for first year students. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Business Management with a minor in Information Technology at Lincoln University. She earned her MLIS at Drexel University with a focus on Academic Librarianship. She also received a post-graduate certification at the Harvard Graduate School of Education for the Leadership Institute for Academic Librarians. Her current area of research and interest is in Embedded Librarianship, with a focus on

access, advocacy, and leadership in the field of librarianship. Along with having a passion for introducing and teaching about the library to everyone she meets, she is passionate about programs that empower, educate, and encourage women to explore different ways to enhance and reach the goals they desire.

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Vikki C. Terrile is an Assistant Professor at Queensborough Community College, the City University of New York, where she serves as the Public Services and Assessment Librarian and Co-Coordinator of Information Literacy. She earned her BA in English from Wells College, MS in Library Science from Long Island University, MA in Urban Affairs from Queens College (CUNY), and is currently a doctoral student in education at SUNY, the University at Buffalo. Her research interests include the literacy practices of children and parents experiencing homelessness, the information behaviors of Renaissance Faire performers and artisans, the role of academic libraries in addressing student food and housing insecurity, and how home is depicted in children's picture books. She is currently exploring how youth-serving librarians understand their work with children and families experiencing homelessness.

Jaime Valenzuela joined the Daniel F. Cracchiolo Law Library in February 2016. He holds an MLIS and a BA in Creative Writing from the University of Arizona. In pursuing his graduate degree, he held a Graduate Assistantship at the UA's Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research where he helped build a functioning library. He has also worked and volunteered in various library settings which include the UA's Egyptian Expedition, Freeport McMoran Inc., the Arizona State Prison Complex in Tucson, and the UA Poetry Center. He is a Knowledge River Scholar (Cohort 12) and is committed to serving the underprivileged populations of the Native American and Hispanic communities.

Adriana White is an Autistic School Librarian in the South San Antonio Independent School District. Prior to this role, she worked as a Special Education Teacher for five and a half years. She also leads professional development sessions and focused on what teachers and librarians can learn from autistic and neurodiverse adults. She earned a Master's degree in Education, with a concentration in Special Education, from the University of Texas at San

Antonio. She earned an MLIS, from the University of North Texas, along with Graduate Academic Certificates in Storytelling and Youth Services in Libraries. Her work will also appear in the upcoming second edition of the American Library Association book, *Programming for Autistic Children and Teens*. She has contributed selections on the topics of Universal Design for libraries, autistic authors, and intersectionality. She is committed to the development of autism-friendly schools and libraries, and believes that accessibility and universal design are critically important issues that we all must support and promote. She also advocates for diverse books, especially #OwnVoices titles by autistic and neurodiverse authors. Additionally, she writes a column on the topic of autistic books for the nonprofit organization Geek Club Books.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Dr. Renee F. Hill is Principal Lecturer and Diversity and Inclusion Officer in the University of Maryland's College of Information Studies. She teaches courses and provides guidance that prepare graduate students to become information specialists who serve all information seekers.

Renee earned a Bachelor's degree in Exceptional Student Education at Florida Atlantic University. Her Master's and Ph.D. were earned in Library and Information Studies at Florida State University. Renee is passionate about and committed to researching and teaching about issues that involve examining methods for increasing understanding of diversity issues in Library and Information Studies. Her research focuses on examining information needs and information access as they relate to diverse populations (e.g., members of various racial/ethnic groups, individuals with disabilities).

Renee was awarded the LJ/ALISE Teaching Excellence Award in 2017.
She is married to Thomas Hill; they have five children ranging in age from 7 to 28.

FOREWORD

So much of what libraries do now – and have done historically – may not be well known to people who love and regularly use their local library. The family attending children's story time and spending time in the community garden every week might not even know about the computer literacy courses for older adults being offered daily or the collection of resources for small businesses that library brings out together to help economic development in the community. The faculty member who regularly visits the special collection for their research and frequently orders rare books through interlibrary loan in an academic library may not know about the wide range of information literacy courses for students or the wide range of teaching resources for faculty that the library also offers. Libraries do so much for their communities in such a wide range of areas that the most impactful and innovative activities of libraries are often unknown to everyone except those people participating in the activities.

Too often, these great innovations are invisible even within the profession, especially historical contributions. For example, while you were getting your MLIS, did you learn that:

- Libraries regularly began serving patrons with print disabilities more than a hundred years before the US government granted disabled people civil rights?
- Children's story time was originally created as a way to teach English to immigrant children and to provide time for their parents to take classes in the library to learn English or gain skills for employment?
- In many big cities, the public libraries were the first government agencies to adopt inventions, such as air conditioning, that improved health and sanitation for those using their buildings?
- Censorship of reading materials – what is in library collections and what was sold in bookstores – was common in communities around the United States until librarians directly challenged these practices and publicly codified their anticensorship stance with the 1939 Library Bill of Rights?
- During the Jim Crow era, "freedom libraries" were created in many segregated communities to ensure that nonwhite community members still had access to resources when they were not allowed access to the public library?
- When the George W. Bush administration launched the War on Terror after 9/11, the only profession that collectively stood up to the ensuing infringements on freedoms of expression and access were librarians?

The past, present, and future of modern library history is a continuous – if sometimes messy and bumpy – journey of creativity and determination in trying to make the communities we serve more equitable and more inclusive.

Not all of our institutions have always been on the right side of history for every issue, but we have collectively done better than any other institution at pushing society toward being more fair and more just for more people. Building a library and opening its doors each morning is a statement of hope that doing so will serve to further enrich the lives of the members of the community.

Yet, the stories of what our institutions have done and do now are not well known. As a result, a great many people take libraries for granted without really knowing what they are doing. Worse, many people who don't know what libraries do assume that they are no longer needed simply because they don't personally use them.

As she details in the introductory chapter, the editor of this book, Dr. Renee F. Hill, was inspired to bring this collection together by a 2018 statement from a writer for *Forbes* that Amazon had made libraries completely irrelevant. Baked into the statement was a dizzying mix of privilege and cluelessness (Amazon charges for things; libraries do not) and clearly lacking sense of the ways in which libraries contribute to their communities. But it is a sentiment you do encounter with surprising regularity, including from people who write for *Forbes*, a publication that really hates it when the government spends money to help people who aren't already wealthy.

One of the best ways we can counter assertions that libraries are no longer needed is by telling the stories of what they do, especially the ways that they help communities being otherwise underserved or ignored. And Renee has done a magnificent job bringing together 15 chapters of these exact stories – librarians and libraries changing their communities for the better, creating and implementing innovative services, collections, resources, and programs, and reaching populations who really need help. No one who reads this book will ever again wonder why we still need libraries.

It is most appropriate that a book on this topic would be Renee's first book. We first met as MLIS students and have known each other basically our entire adult lives. I have also had the honor of being Renee's colleague at two different institutions, seeing first hand over the course of the better part of two decades her enormous talents as an educator of future librarians. She is uniquely skilled at conveying the power and the beauty of libraries, inspiring students to envision how they use their careers to deliver hope to the communities that they will work with. The chapters in this book provide perspectives from a range of types of libraries in many different places, each thoughtful and often personal account offering its own unique example of the ways that libraries have been, are, and will continue to be institutions of equity, inclusion, and, perhaps most importantly, hope.

Paul T. Jaeger

Paul T. Jaeger, PhD, JD, MLIS, MEd, is Professor in the College of Information Studies and Co-Director of the Information Policy & Access Center at the University of Maryland. He is Co-Editor of *Library Quarterly* and Editor of

the Advances in Librarianship book series. He is the author of more than 200 journal articles and book chapters, as well 18 books. He is the founder of the Conference on Inclusion and Diversity in Library & Information Science and co-founder of the Disability Summit. In 2014, he received the LJ/ALISE Excellence in Teaching award.Too often, these great innovations are invisible even within the profession, especially historical contributions. For example, while you were getting your MLIS, did you learn that:

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to my amazing husband and children who love and support me in everything I do.

Thank you to Dr. Paul T. Jaeger, who never gets tired of reminding me what I'm capable of and has been the truest of friends and most encouraging of mentors.

To all of the chapter authors who trusted me with their work: Thank you! This has been a beautiful and fulfilling journey.

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INTRODUCTION: THERE IS HOPE FOR OUR FUTURE!

Renee F. Hill

HOW THIS BOOK CAME TO BE

In July 2018, *Forbes* magazine published a short (and quickly retracted) opinion piece written by an ill-informed economist who suggested that libraries should be replaced by Amazon in an effort to help taxpayers save money. People across the globe chimed in to share an important message: We NEED Libraries!

Inspired by the fact that the masses continue to believe in the value of and necessity for libraries, librarians, and the services they offer, I set out to bring together a variety of voices and perspectives to shed light on the essential and varied roles librarians and libraries play in our world.

THE CHAPTERS IN THIS BOOK

This book contains 15 chapters written by researchers and practitioners who have committed their careers to librarianship because they believe in its transformative power. Each offering contains a message that convincingly expresses how libraries serve as information centers, community hubs, and, sometimes, lifesavers.

The book's first section "Hope is Part of the Plan" begins with a chapter written by *Vikki C. Terrile*, which aptly addresses the theme of this edited volume with its strong reference to Emily Dickinson's poem *Hope is the Thing with Feathers*. Throughout the chapter, Terrile recounts experiences that illustrate the many ways that libraries and librarians positively impact information seekers. Next, *Donna Mignardi and Jennifer Sturge* collaborate to explain the power K-12 school librarians have to expand the concept of information literacy by teaching students how to recognize their own implicit biases. Following Mignardi's and Sturge's youth-focused chapter, *Aryssa Damron's* writing outlines how the public library can be a source of hope for students who need assistance with achieving their college admission goals.

The second section, "Diverse and Inclusive," presents perspectives on the myriad ways the people, services, and programs offered through libraries help information seekers feel welcome. First, *Paolo P. Gujilde* challenges academic librarians to move beyond buzzwords and be inclusive and intentional when planning services for diverse populations. *Sophia Sotilleo* considers the ways in which

academic libraries can embrace all users by treating them like honored guests. *Jia He's* research shares the processes that her university's library engages in to fully include international students. *Kayla Kuni* offers personal reflections and best practices for serving adults with developmental disabilities who visit the library. The section concludes with *Jewel Davis's* chapter highlighting strategies that can be implemented to build collections in K-12 libraries and classrooms that reflect and promote diversity in youth literature.

The book's third section, "Creating Community," contains chapters that focus on the impact libraries have on the communities in which they are positioned. The section opens with *Conrad Pegues's* work which focuses on the role of urban libraries in addressing the problem of information access deserts. The second chapter in the section was written by *Caley Cannon* who presents libraries as public spaces that have a number of dynamic capabilities, including as venues where community members can participate in visual and performing arts programs. *Adriana White* positions libraries as important spaces for adults with autism – those who are patrons as well as those who are information providers.

The fourth and final book section, titled "The Future is Waiting," places emphasis on the idea that partnerships between libraries and community members can and should be in a state of constant expansion and evolution. In the first chapter in this section, *Jerry Dear* sheds light on the bridges that can be built when public libraries engage in multi-institutional collaborations. Next, *Jaime Valenzuela* outlines his experiences with digitization projects and encourages library professionals to seek opportunities that allow them to chart their own path for career success. *Angiah Davis* then shares examples of how librarians and libraries have the power to transform people and, through that positive impact, entire communities. The book closes with *Meghan Moran's* uplifting chapter that encourages librarians to become involved in their communities in order to impart forward thinking ideas that ensure information (and other) needs are met and that libraries will be viewed as essential spaces.

At its core, this book is meant to be positive, uplifting, and joyous. It celebrates a much beloved institution and honors people who have dedicated their careers to serving others through excellence in information provision. Most importantly, this book encourages all information specialists to always remember their "why" as they consider what inspires and motivates the authors of the chapters that follow.

SECTION 1

HOPE IS PART OF THE PLAN

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CHAPTER 1

THE THING WITH FEATHERS: SMALL MOMENTS, HOPE, AND PURPOSE IN A CAREER IN LIBRARIES

Vikki C. Terrile

ABSTRACT

This chapter looks back over my more than 20 years as a librarian, considering how the often unexpected opportunities I've had to work with youth and families have been centered in connectedness, hope, and love. As a youth services librarian working in the library with families or providing outreach to the most vulnerable members of the community, and currently as a community college librarian, I can think back over my career in libraries, the people I've met, the experiences I've shared, and feel blessed. But there are also times I feel like Sisyphus, pushing the rock that continues to roll back on me. It is disheartening to see the same struggles getting worse in our communities, to have to fight to keep our doors open every time there is a budget crunch, to hear our work diminished by others. But I have come to understand that having hope doesn't mean not understanding how trying times are or passively accepting the ways things are until they magically change. Hope means pushing through anyway, stubborn in our love for our patrons and our peers, in our belief that books and reading can help us through, in our faith that the world needs libraries.

Keywords: Connectedness; library users; outreach; reading; community; love

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"Hope" is the thing with feathers –
That perches in the soul –
And sings the tune without the words –
And never stops – at all –
–Emily Dickinson (1891)

CONNECTIONS

It is perhaps oversimplifying things to say that we live in trying times; you'd have to have been living under a rock to have missed that. If nothing else, these are also paradoxical times, with huge gaps in equality, opportunity, and even our involvement with others. For libraries, librarians and other library workers, we have the privilege and the challenge of having a front row seat for these times. Only we're not sitting, we're there, standing shoulder to shoulder with our patrons as they endure political and personal upheaval. Often while traveling throughout the United States, we will visit the local public libraries. Once, outside a small library in California, a man who had just left the library chatted with us for quite some time while we were sitting on a bench out front. When we left him to head to dinner, I commented that I was sure every staff member in that library knew this man well, that he was one of the many for whom the library becomes a key source of human connection. I am not sure when I understood that libraries could and do play this role. As a frequent user of the public library as a child, I rarely interacted with the librarians (who seemed terrifying) or other staff (who seemed judgmental about my book choices), especially when self-check-out became a reality. For me, a shy avid reader, the treasure of the library was being able to wander around on my own, essentially ignored by the staff, find an armload of books, check them out and leave. Even now, my trips to my local public library branch look similar. I retrieve my reserved materials from a wall of books, use the self-check machine to borrow them, and do not ever have to interact with a human being. Yet we know that most of us often prefer to get our information from other people, a truism supported by a wide range of literature in information behavior (see, e.g., Genuis, 2015; Lloyd & Olsson, 2019; McKenzie, 2003; Zimmer & Henry, 2017). A study I conducted recently with community college students indicated that while they were constant users of "Mr. Google" (as one student described it), they were nearly as likely to ask friends, classmates, or authority figures for information.

It is worth noting that a recent, award-winning student research project that explored creating casual chatting space (based on the booth used by Lucy in the Peanuts cartoons) was situated in the university main library (Panesar, 2019). The goal of the project was to "explore whether 'casual chat' is a viable means of community mental health self-support" (Talking Booth, 2019), which also considered "how community members can support each other without professional intervention" (CPASS, 2019). In an email with the student, M. Zielinka, she explained that the selection of the library as the space for this booth was a practical one: it was a large enough indoor space where she "felt that students coming to the library would have more liberty in choosing to engage

with us for a bit" (personal communication, November 21, 2019). However, Zielinka did observe that "students/staff coming and going from the library are not expecting to be invited to sit and have a chat" (personal communication, November 21, 2019). With only 16–20% of American teens and adults "unplugging" every day, and 33–43% never doing so (McCarthy, 2014, 2016), there may be a sense that we are always and well connected. Americans spend nearly two hours a day on social media (GlobalWebIndex, 2019), compared with roughly 15 minutes a day reading (offline) for pleasure, and 38 minutes a day socializing (in "real life") with others (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Research finds that passive use of social media can impact individuals' well-being negatively by promoting envy and social comparison (Verduyn, Ybarra, Résibois, Jonides, & Kross, 2017), often depending on the individual's existing state of mind (de Vries, Möller, Wieringa, Eigenraam, & Hamelink, 2018). This may be especially problematic for young people, who tend to experience both social media and loneliness more than older generations (Pittman & Reich, 2016), making them potentially more likely to have negative affective experience via social media.

If my experience as a library user has not been one that turns on connectedness, my experience as a librarian has been quite the opposite. It seems that the most important turning points in my career were accidental, or at least unplanned. Looking back to those days 25 years ago when I was applying to library school, I could never have imagined the experiences I have had, the relationships of which I have been a part. I applied to library school with the intent of becoming an archivist; as an undergrad, I had visited my small liberal arts college's even smaller and wonderfully eclectic archives, and learned (to my utter amazement) that there were people who got to work with such collections as a career. Interestingly, I became disenchanted with archival work when I realized that I would be spending much of my day alone. Having worked my way through library school as a retail sales associate, I had become accustomed to near-constant human interaction. I had regular customers and spent a good deal of time listening to the problems of my colleagues, a mix of middle-aged and young adult women. And for all of my introversion, I realized I wanted to be around people in a meaningful way, even if I wasn't sure at the time what that would mean. As a student in library school, I wrote a paper (I don't recall for which class) about progressive librarianship. I was enamored of the copies of *Progressive Librarian*, the journal of the Progressive Librarians Guild, housed in the library school's small library. I also cannot recall the focus of this paper, but I distinctly remember being told by the professor that progressive librarianship was essentially dead, a fossil from a more radical time. I wonder now what made him believe that, and how in-touch he could have been with the world of librarianship outside our school, but even then, I knew that wasn't accurate, and the sense of what libraries could mean lingered in the back of my head.

My first job in libraries was as a children's librarian in a small, suburban library. The community was economically stratified by major roads and highways that ran east–west through the school district the library served. The library itself was located in the southernmost layer of the community, a few blocks from

the beach. The patrons we saw most often lived within easy walking distance, although, this being the suburbs, they were more likely to drive to the library. When we would do school visits to the district's two elementary schools to promote summer reading, it was clear that this stratification was impacting library use. In the school closest to the library, my colleagues and I recognized most of the students and were recognized in turn (excitedly by the youngest students, and with visceral embarrassment by the oldest ones). At the school located across all three of the roads intersecting the district, we would barely recognize any students. This distance of no more than two miles was enough to limit students' access. I was reminded that one summer when I was very young (no more than six or seven), my own local public library had offered school buses to bring kids back and forth to the library. My sister and I had walked to the distant bus stop with our older neighbors, library cards in hand, and we traveled what seemed so far (but turns out to be just two and a half miles) to select and return our books. I shared this story with my colleagues years later, and we brainstormed ideas for getting a bus to reach those kids we never saw. Like my skeptical professor, my head of department didn't understand why there was a need for us to bridge that distance, believing it was up to the parents to bring their children to us (or not).

WHAT WE SAY AND DO MATTERS

Early in my career, I was part of a multisession "new librarians" training at the county cooperative library system. I remember almost nothing about these sessions except for one thing, spoken by the director of the system at the time: "librarians are subversives." I was struck by this on so many levels and it stayed with me and deeply influenced my understanding of librarianship, despite the odd looks I got from colleagues when I would gush about the director and this sentiment. Years later, this same man happened to be teaching a class at another library system where I was working. One morning, I saw him sitting in the lobby waiting for someone to unlock the room he was using and I knew I had to take my chance. I went up to him and said:

> You're going to think I'm crazy, but ten years ago, I was a new librarian, and you spoke and you talked about librarians being subversive and I have to tell you that those words have been a guiding force in my career ever since. So I had to thank you!

And he looked at me, stunned, and asked me to tell me who I was and where I worked and how I had gotten here. We chatted for a few minutes and it was one of those profound moments that arrive unexpectedly in life. Later, I learned that he retold the story to the librarians in his class, and I have used that example myself when training pre-service and in-service librarians. I know he didn't remember that day – he likely did that welcome speech twice a year, every year during his tenure as director and that line may have been a throwaway. But that line became the guiding force for at least one person out of all of those new librarians. Once, I was walking down the main shopping avenue near the central library where I was working, and a man started yelling and waving. I ignored him

and he ran to catch up with me. He started thanking me and talking about what I had done for him and his sister and while I started to say I didn't remember him, I stopped myself, racking my brain. At that point, I had been doing outreach for many years, across several boroughs of New York City and I could have met him anywhere. In the end, I figured out that they had been residents at a family shelter I visited to provide library cards and information, but I was struck by how important that interaction was for him. When I talk to new (and not so new librarians) about the vital emotional roles we often (and often unknowingly) serve for people, I share these two stories together, and I talk about how we don't know how our words and actions will impact people. A smile, a small kindness, a gentle word can be of immense importance to someone and we might never know. But sometimes, we are lucky enough to get a moment of grace when we discover how we have influenced someone.

READING AND BEING HEARD

One of my most successful programs as a children's librarian was a parent–child book discussion group I started for tweens and their parents. I usually had half a dozen families, a good mix of daughters and sons and moms and dads; we would meet one evening a month for four months, talking about a different book each time. I offered the program in the fall and spring for two years, and after the fourth series, the families decided they wanted to keep it going past the four weeks, so they arranged to reserve the meeting room and took turns bringing snacks and invited me for each session as the special guest librarian. As an undergraduate English major, an avid reader with friends who also loved books, and now as a librarian, I loved being able to talk about books nearly all the time. But the book discussion group was the first time I truly understood the ways that reading could connect people and give them hope. One of the moms shared her belief that the reason her son had stopped needing extra support in reading was because they had been part of the book discussion group. I'm not sure this would stand up to empirical evaluation, but even though not everyone always finished the books, and we would often get started talking about topics not even tangentially related to the book, we had created a community around reading. In that community, the voices of the children were as important (if not more important) than those of the adults, and given everything I have experienced as a librarian since then, I know how important that was.

I mentioned that most of the turning points in my career were accidental; that was certainly the case with becoming an outreach librarian. It was something I had thought about as far back as library school with that paper on progressive librarianship, and yearned to do as a way to bridge that enormous two-mile gap that was limiting kids' access to my suburban library. But it wasn't until I had moved back to New York City that I had the unexpected opportunity to really do outreach. And I was conned into it. On my first day as a teen librarian in the main branch library, my new supervisor forwarded a voice message to me and explained that it was from some man who wanted to do something with teens and

seniors or something. She was a bit vague but it sounded interesting so I called the man back and he explained that he was the principal at a state detention center for young women and was interested in having the library come in to provide books and programs for the girls. Needless to say, I was stunned, but agreed to travel the couple of subway stops to the center with one of my colleagues and see what we could do. Nearly 15 years later, I can still recall, vividly and viscerally, how I felt leaving the detention center after that first meeting. I was drained, saddened to the core of myself, but immediately and fully committed to providing library services to the best of my ability to the young women in residence. I can also say with complete certainty, that that call and that meeting changed my life. I would not be the librarian or person I am if I hadn't started visiting that detention center and the many others that followed. I wouldn't have begun offering library services to homeless shelters, to young people with emotional disturbances, to men in a minimum-security prison. I would never have understood the deep and lingering social inequity of our society and looked for how libraries could be part of the work to offer access and equity. At a time when Google and Amazon were poised to revolutionize information, as bookstores were closing their doors and libraries struggling to convince politicians of our relevance, I saw first-hand how books could connect people, even (especially?) those who were excluded from so much of the rest of mainstream society.

Our visits to the detention center always included bringing books for the young women. We were limited to what they were permitted by the facility to read, and what we were able to find or request in the week between our visits. But we always brought something. During that first visit, the principal described how the girls were handcuffed and shackled anytime they left the facility. This particular detention center was a double brownstone on a residential street, so it had limited internal security and reminded me in some ways of the house the girls lived in on "The Facts of Life" or my college dorms. School took place in the same building and it was through the school that we did our programming. But the illusion of a typical dorm was shattered one day on my way in with an armload of books for that week's visit. One of the young women who had joined the library program (the girls were allowed to choose to participate and would be pulled out of their classes for our visit) was waiting in the entryway to attend a court hearing. She was handcuffed and shackled, wearing a uniform that looked eerily like a private school shirt and skirt and while I was shocked at the sight of her, she was thrilled that I had brought the books she had requested the previous week, and that I had remembered her name after meeting her just one time. So while she chattered excitedly about what she would read when she got back, I responded and then felt like someone had punched me in the stomach. I felt myself tearing up, heartbroken and appalled at the way this child was in chains, and I struggled to keep it together. It was common for the girls to show surprise and grudging respect that we remembered their first names and once we understood the ways the systems in which they were entrenched sought to dehumanize them, we were even more deliberate in making sure we knew and used their names.

Years later, I facilitated several short story discussions for teens through the public school that serves students in detention. These visits were arranged through