

ALSC Member Profiles

Keary Bramwell



Keary Bramwell is School Librarian at Grace Lutheran School in River Forest, Illinois.

Philip Espe, Library Associate, DC Public Library, Washington, DC (recipient of the 2021 BIPOC New Member Funding Scholarship)

What is your favorite part about working with youth?

Youth have innate passion, energy, and excitement for the world, and it inspires me to match their zeal. It's exciting to engage with youth as whole persons, listening to their stories, experiences, and dreams for the future.



What is your favorite award-winning title?

As a kid, I couldn't get enough of Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith's *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*. Even when I was "too old" to read picture books, I'd grab my copy all the time. As an adult, Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson's *Last Stop on Market Street* and Jerry Craft's *New Kid* have become foundational to my professional philosophy. By being a good adult to children, I hope to teach children to find joy in their communities, lives, and service like CJ does on that bus. *New Kid* says out loud all the feelings I had as a Filipino-American kid, trying to make sense why I felt out of place in the often primarily white schools I attended when moving around the country in a military family.

What is your favorite library event, program, or outreach initiative and why?

Outside the library, I perform as a professional orchestral conductor and clarinetist. With some help with DC Public Library's internal program funding, I was able to bring my two careers together. I created a music festival where I conducted and rehearsed with a professional wind octet. One of the programs was a wide open rehearsal, where we encouraged the audience to ask questions. The preschoolers were the best. Their joyous curiosity and their excitement for seeing music come to life is something I will never forget.

What are you most passionate about in Children's Services?

I am passionate about being passionate. I want children to be proud of themselves. I love harnessing the boundless energy of children and showing them how they can make their community a better place. The process of growing up tends to stifle a child's zeal for life. I hope that every child I work with leaves the library feeling a little better about who they are.

Amy Merda, Programming/Outreach Mid-Kid Librarian, Indian Prairie Public Library, Darien, IL

Why did you join ALSC?

To find out about innovative ideas and research that focus on youth services.

What is your favorite part about working with youth?

It is a true joy to work with kids and see them grow over time as they come back to the library. There is a quote from the musical *Hamilton* that talks about planting seeds in a garden we don't get to see, but sometimes we do get to see the garden a little.

What is your favorite award-winning title?

I am a big fan of *Hey, Kiddo* by Jarrett J. Krosoczka. His raw honesty in sharing part of his life story really came through on the page, and the feelings he shared are so relatable. I haven't teared up like that in awhile.

What are you most passionate about in Children's Services?

I love the variety in my job and part of that is hearing about the many interests kids have and what makes them happy. There are a lot of things that kids like and don't like, and I enjoy hearing all about them at the desk and in programs!



Hanna Lee, Youth Services Coordinator, First Regional Library, MS

Why did you join ALSC?

As a person new to working in libraries, I applied for the Emerging Leader program. I was hoping to connect with other library folks nationally, since I didn't know where I was going to end up geographically. I was assigned to ALSC's Emerging Leader project and was so impressed with ALSC staff and members.



What's your best ALSC memory?

At a Midwinter Meeting a few years ago, I was serving on the EDI within ALSC Task Force, and a bunch of us were gathered in the All Committee Meeting, together with the first group of ALSC Equity Fellows. There had been a few discouraging incidents, but we were a group of primarily BIPOC ALSC folks, and it turned into a moment for us to connect and support each other. It was an affirmation of the idea that We Are ALSC; even the newest or most uncertain of us have a role in shaping the present and future of this association, regardless of our history of exclusion, racism, and other challenges.

What is your favorite award-winning title?

One recent book that is so close to my heart is *Me & Mama* by Cozbi A. Cabrera. I have a three-year-old, and the two of us can't get enough of this story of the love between a mama and child. And the illustrations are stunning.

What is your favorite library event, program, or outreach initiative?

My current library system has long prioritized giving books to kids (over tchotkes and swag), and I'm really proud of that. Each year, we spend dedicated funds to buy thousands of new books, across genres, to give to young people throughout our region. This summer, together with partners including local businesses and organizations, we gave away more than seventeen thousand books in northwest Mississippi. I'm glad that we're committed to providing access to an appealing, diverse selection of free books for kids.

What are you most passionate about in Children's Services?

Equitable access for all children. Do our services reach our hardest-to-reach children? Do all of our children see themselves positively reflected in our books, in our programming, and in our staff? Libraries can't solve all of the world's injustices, but I do believe that all of us in Children's Services have a unique opportunity and obligation to advocate on behalf of the young people we serve, inside and outside our buildings. &