

Membership Profiles

Compiled by Sarah Jo Zaharako



Carrie Banks
Photo by Gregg Richards,
Brooklyn Public Library



Eti Berland



Ana-Elba Pavon

Carrie Banks, Supervising Librarian, Inclusive Services at Brooklyn Public Library

How has ALSC contributed to your work in libraries?

ALSC introduced me to colleagues around the country doing work like mine, which has allowed us all to learn from each other and grow. When I started in 1997, there were very few of us. Now there are many more, but still not enough.

What project are you excited to be working on?

I am enjoying rebuilding services after the pandemic. Things have changed so drastically in the disability community that anticipating and responding to the new landscape takes thought. For example, the community meetings I used to attend in person are now virtual. It is much easier to work a room in person than over chat, but it can be done! We did great work during the pandemic and integrating what we learned then into our day-to-day now is critical.

What challenges you in librarianship?

The low expectation for students with disabilities that many people hold. Disabled children and their families have been rejected so many times, we must go out of our way to let them know they are truly welcome at the library. I see my job as countering that narrative, going from family to family to invite them to the library and show them what we can offer them. Another challenge is the censorship of the voices of disabled people and of the BIPOC and LGBTQ communities. Low pay is the third challenge. It is hard to recruit and keep staff.

What brings you joy?

Using American Sign Language or picture communication systems with a child, validating their use outside of school. Helping a student get the services they need. Being told by an autistic middle schooler that he didn't know boys could sew at an adaptive makerspace program. The look on a child's face when I tell them that I have learning disabilities too and I love to read.

What are you looking forward to?

Two upcoming ALA publications—the first is accessibility guidelines for small and rural libraries and the second is the updated guidelines for service to individuals who are incarcerated or detained. Both will address the needs of children and youth.

What is your favorite book(s) to share with children?

Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein. I love humor and the integration of words and pictures. *My Brother Charlie* by Holly Robinson Peete and Ryan Elizabeth Peete. The celebration of the relationship between the Peete twins, one autistic and one neurotypical, makes me grin ear to ear. For teens, *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* by Malinda Lo is just astonishing, heartfelt, and affirming.

Eti Berland, Youth Services School Engagement Librarian, Wilmette (IL) Public Library

Why did you join ALSC?

I previously worked as an academic librarian and wanted to work in youth services. Getting involved in ALSC, from volunteering at the Newbery-Caldecott-Legacy banquet, to joining committees, helped me connect with a community of people passionate about supporting young people and their families and enabled me to make the leap into the unknown that I needed. Most importantly, I have made lifelong friends and mentors through ALSC who help me grow as a librarian.

Describe a library event, program, or outreach initiative that is important to you and why?

One of my all-time favorite library programs has been our Caldecott Club. While we talk about the art of evaluating picture books, we also explore how stories make us feel, how illustration can transform our understanding of ourselves and our world, and how we can learn to listen and share our perspectives with each other.

I was especially grateful for the opportunity to collaborate on a virtual program with Brian Wilson at Evanston Public Library in the fall of 2021 (along with many other awesome staff members) and experience joy during a challenging time. (By the way, our winner was *Lift* by Minh Lê, illustrated by Dan Santat.)

What brings you joy?

I love collaborating with colleagues, whether across departments or even neighboring libraries, to bring our passion and expertise together to build experiences and services for our community. We dream big to come up with creative projects and then use our practical knowledge to make them a reality. From a virtual Comics Fest to collaborative author visits to community outreach experiences, there is so much we can do together.

I also love making videos celebrating new children's books by twirling around to reveal them. Books really do make me dance with joy, and I hope I bring this energy to my work with kids and families.

How have you seen librarianship evolve as a result of the pandemic?

We learned so many things from the pandemic, and we can apply this knowledge about engagement, resource sharing, collaboration, and accessibility into the future. I have had the opportunity to host several virtual author visits over the past years, which expanded to collaborative visits across our library system. I am currently on the Illinois Libraries Present Programming Committee, which helps plan virtual author visits, including youth authors like Kwame Alexander and Jarrett J. Krosoczka. I'm grateful that virtual visits are still being prioritized as a resource our libraries provide to our communities and beyond.

What is your favorite book(s) to share with children?

How can I choose my favorite star in the sky? I know it's a cliché, but my favorite book is the one that I can share that opens the door for reading for young people, which is part of why I'm so passionate about book access. You never know which book you share can become a child's favorite. Some books I've shared recently are *The Serpent's Secret* by Sayantani DasGupta, *Red Panda & Moon Bear* by Jarod Roselló, and *An American Story* by Kwame Alexander.

Ana-Elba Pavon, Semi-retired/On-Call Librarian, San Francisco Public Library

How has ALSC contributed to your work in libraries?

During my National REFORMA presidency, we celebrated the Pura Belpré Award's tenth anniversary. This led to more open communication between REFORMA and ALSC regarding our mutual initiatives like the Pura Belpré Award and *Día de los niños*.

What challenges you in librarianship?

Keeping up with all the technology. There is so much to learn and remember. Then it changes!

What project are you excited to be working on?

I am taking an Excel class. As aforementioned, keeping up with all the technology is a challenge. When completed, I will take an exam to be certified in Excel. I am really excited about it because I have rediscovered that I love to learn. One of my co-managers once shared that she had observed that I like to teach, which is true. But I also love to learn new things.

What brings you joy?

Besides Disney? Helping people in the community. I particularly like helping people that I know would not have gotten the service they could have gotten if they hadn't come to me. Just yesterday, I helped a Spanish-speaking patron at the San Francisco Public Library's Main Library. He had already spent time at UC Berkeley and Stanford Libraries and was hoping to find books by a particular author in Spanish that he could borrow. Because I spoke Spanish, this made the interaction much easier. But because of my background in Spanish acquisitions, I was able to fully answer his questions.

What is your favorite book(s) to share with children?

One that comes to mind right now is *Bark, George* by Jules Feiffer. I've been volunteering with Make-A-Wish, and in one of the interviews, the person interviewing asked me to name a favorite book. The first thing that came to mind was *Bark, George*. The next time she interviewed me, she told me that she had purchased the book for her grandchild and that he absolutely loved it! &