

# Serving Well

## Using Professional Toolkits to Fill Gaps in Service Knowledge

Anne Price



**Anne Price** is the Children's Librarian at the North Platte (NE) Public Library. She has worked in youth services in rural public libraries for the last ten years, and currently serves on ALSC's Public Awareness and Advocacy Committee.

**L**ibraries being accessible for all is one of the core tenets of modern librarianship, but a perennial concern for all librarians is reaching and advocating for marginalized and underserved communities. There are many reasons why a segment of the community isn't using the library—from a lack of physical accessibility to not knowing what resources are offered. The following six toolkits from ALA divisions and other institutions focus on serving the needs of marginalized populations.

### Autism-Ready Libraries Toolkit, <https://bit.ly/3W3PRWB>

A research team at the University of Washington Information School created the Autism-Ready Libraries Toolkit, which offers training modules for public library staff serving youth emphasizing adaptive and inclusive services and programs, as well as resources for identifying barriers to library use for autistic children and their families.

### Learning Beyond: Twenty-First Century Summer and Out-of-School Time Programs for Youth, <https://bit.ly/3wdoM99>

This toolkit, completed in 2021 by the ALSC Summer-Out of School Time task force, centers on community values and equity in summer and out-of-school programming. It recognizes that not all youth come to library programming with the same skills or background. It uses that knowledge to create programming that is participant-led and focuses on STEAM learning and twenty-first century skills.

### Library Accessibility Toolkit, <https://bit.ly/4bg0mcj>

Created by the Library Accessibility Alliance in 2020, this toolkit gathers information and publications from a variety of sources to make library materials and spaces accessible, including digital spaces. Many of us are familiar with accommodations for physical spaces, but does your website and online content have alt text or high contrast for the visually impaired? This toolkit offers not only tips for creating more inclusive digital spaces and content, but it also provides a list of online accessibility checkers and assistive technology.

### Library Services to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers, <https://bit.ly/3W5m2oU>

Authored by the 2020-2021 Library Service to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers committee, this toolkit covers a wide variety of communities, from those who experience gaps in the digital divide, the unhoused, new citizens, and more. This toolkit includes a guide to reaching out to your target population, identifying resources, and creating partnerships that can help you reach the population on which you are trying to focus.

## Open to ALL Toolkit, <https://bit.ly/3WbVLoU>

Created by ALA's Rainbow Round Table, this toolkit focuses on practical tips, such as addressing patrons and staff in inclusive ways, recognizing not all families look the same, nor is gender always a necessary piece of information when registering a new patron for a library card. This toolkit also includes collection development resources as well as information dealing with challenges to collections.

## Serving Diverse Communities, <https://bit.ly/3TULMI2>

Authored by ALSC committees and curated by the Public Awareness and Advocacy committee, this toolkit offers resources for building diverse collections, protecting vulnerable populations, and understanding privilege. The toolkit includes archived keynote speakers from previous ALSC Institutes and resources from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). &

*Visit the newly updated ALSC website ([www.ala.org/alsc](http://www.ala.org/alsc)) for more toolkits and other advocacy resources.*

## It's Professional Awards Season!

This Fall ALSC members have the opportunity to research, discover, and celebrate one another through the ALSC Professional Recognition Awards. Applications are open now!

Do you love children's literature and researching? The Louise Seaman Bechtel Fellowship might be right for you. Selected fellows receive up to \$7,500 to visit and study at the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature of the George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville. Applications are due October 15, 2024.

New to the field of children's librarianship and want to attend your first ALA Annual Conference next June in Philadelphia? The Penguin Random House Young Readers Group Award may be just the ticket for you. Two librarians will be chosen to attend and given \$1,200 to help offset costs. Applications are due November 15, 2024.

Now is the time to shine a light on an ALSC individual member who has made a significant contribution to the field of children's librarianship or ALSC. This can be over a career lifespan or through a special project that had wide impact. ALA members, nominate that coworker, friend, or mentor you respect for the Distinguished Service Award. Nominations are due December 15, 2024.

Learn more about these and other ALSC Awards by visiting the ALSC Professional Awards & Grants website at <https://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/profawards>.

Contact the ALSC Professional Recognition and Scholarships committee co-chairs Mary Schreiber, [schreiberalsc@gmail.com](mailto:schreiberalsc@gmail.com), and Gwen Vanderhage, [gvanderhage.ala@gmail.com](mailto:gvanderhage.ala@gmail.com), if you have any questions.



Mary Schreiber (l), co-chair of the Professional Recognition and Scholarships committee, and Oralia Garza de Cortés (r), 2024 recipient of the Distinguished Service Award, at the ALSC membership meeting at the ALA Annual Conference in San Diego this past June.