

ALSC Member Profiles

Linda L. Ernst, King County
(WA) Library System
Children's Librarian, Retired

Editor's Note: ALSC is sad to report the loss of our colleague Linda Ernst in early 2025. In her honor, we are printing the profile she wrote last year.



Why do you stay involved with ALSC?

I retired at the end of 2019 due to health issues—my kidneys were failing, and I needed a transplant. Then in 2020, COVID-19 arrived, putting everything and everyone on hold.

Despite these challenges, I had ALSC commitments to uphold, so like everyone else, I transitioned to Zoom meetings. I completed my term on the ALSC Board and filled out my volunteer form to see what opportunities lay ahead. Committee work provided me with purpose and connected me with people who cared for each other during a time of isolation. Staying involved kept my mind engaged as I attended webinars and meetings.

After receiving a new kidney in February 2022, I continued to support those on the front lines as libraries faced growing challenges. With over forty years of experience, I believe I can help newcomers in the field and contribute to the work necessary for our organization to thrive, while also offering background knowledge of ALSC's history. Yes, after nearly forty-two years, I am retired, but there will always be a place in my life for ALSC.

What brings you joy in librarianship?

I especially love connecting the perfect book with a child or adult, processing both new and old titles, mentoring others in children's services, promoting early literacy, empowering parents, and, of course, storytimes. Attending an ALA and ALSC conference, webinar, or Zoom meeting is another highlight, as I get to learn, grow, and connect with incredible individuals. Even in retirement, I can still share my passion for books and these joys with others, which always brightens my day.

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

That is like asking me for my favorite chocolate—I love them all! Just kidding, but after more than forty years in the field, I have so many titles I hold dear. A few of my favorites include *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin, *The Baby BeeBee Bird* by Diane Massie, and *Round Trip* by Ann Jonas. Regarding chapter books, I love *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin and *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. While my go-to titles are often older ones, they remain tried and true.

What are you reading right now?

Honestly, I expected to be reading a lot of adult books in retirement, but I keep finding myself drawn back to my favorite genre—children's literature. I just finished *The Frindle Files* by Andrew Clements, illustrated by Brian Selznick. *Frindle* was always a favorite of mine, and this work published after Clements' passing is truly a gift. The endnotes and Selznick's message enhance the story and connect *Frindle* to the digital age.

I also recently enjoyed Katherine Applegate's *Wishtree*. The characters are believable and the story of nature and people communicating and finding common ground is both insightful and engaging.

What is your favorite ALSC or ALA memory?

I remember meeting Robert McCloskey and having him autograph *Make Way for Ducklings* at my very first ALA Conference. There was also the moment I received a phone call asking if I would consider adding my name to the Caldecott Committee selection ballot, knowing I had to be voted in. Serving on ALSC committees that pushed me out of my comfort zone was another highlight; the members collaborated to navigate challenges together.

One particularly memorable experience was telling then-ALSC President Jane Marino that Dr. T. Berry Brazelton would be the speaker at her President's Program.

Ultimately, my strongest memory is of the people who share my passion for library services to children. Their commitment to staying current and recognizing the importance of libraries in today's world truly embodies what ALSC represents.

Mary Schreiber, Branch Manager, Cuyahoga County (OH) Public Library



How has ALSC contributed to your work in libraries?

Over a decade ago, I applied for a materials selection position at my library system. It was the first time Cuyahoga County Public Library (CCPL) hired a selector that would focus exclusively on youth materials (birth through eighteen). At the time I was a children's librarian, and I had served on the ALSC Intellectual Freedom Committee, was serving on the Theodor Geisel Award Committee and had attended the Bill Morris Seminar on book evaluation (highly recommend applying for this biennial seminar). Having these experiences, I like to think, provided me with an edge during the interview process, so did having made connections with publishers and collection development librarians from attending ALA conferences.

Now that I'm in a new role as the manager of the CCPL Brooklyn Branch, I feel my work with ALSC has contributed to the skills I need to both lead and mentor a team of library staff.

What challenges you in librarianship?

One of the things that challenges and excites me about librarianship is the work being done so that the community feels seen and welcome at the library. As a materials selector, I worked hard to find books that reflected my communities as well as introduce them to people and experiences that were different from their own. It was important then, as it is now, to listen to young readers when they tell you what they want to read—and observe how they use the materials in the library. This passion led to co-authoring a book published by Bloomsbury Libraries Unlimited called *Curating Community Collections: A Holistic Approach to Diverse Collection Development*.

Working more directly with kids and families now means that I get to be a part of recommending titles to them again. I am extremely lucky to have a youth services team, from the children's and teen librarians to the children's assistants, who are very responsive to the community they serve.

From making sure the programming offered is inclusive to thoughtfully picking out books for the StoryWalk, they want our kids to know the CCPL Brooklyn Branch is their library. It is incredibly rewarding to be a part of that team and to have systemwide support for meeting challenges related to equitable access to the library.

What brings you joy in librarianship?

Whether a children's librarian, materials selector, or branch manager, the thing that continues to bring me joy is getting books into

the hands of children, families, and educators in the community. Recently, a dad asked if it was okay to ask for recommendations for his daughter. After saying "Yes that is what we are here for" (and a favorite part of the job), father, daughter, and I spent some time exploring the nonfiction for Weird but True read-a-likes. It was such a delight to see this second grader take ownership of her reading tastes, including wanting to see the cover before deciding, and dad let her make the decisions. He just held out his hands to carry the ten or so books she picked out including several that had magic or gross in the title.

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

I love to recommend books like *The War That Saved My Life* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley and *We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom. Having served on the ALSC award committees that honored these books, it is so much fun to share that experience along with the books with kids.

I also tend to be the librarian whose memory of books they've read goes right out the window when they get asked for a recommendation. So, I love just walking the stacks and recommending books from the ones that catch my eye—and giving kids a chance to see the face out titles too. Many a kid has seen a cover that looks interesting and decided to take it home while we are browsing!

What are you reading right now?

I have a passion for learning through children's nonfiction books and just finished *Up, Up, Ever Up! Junko Tabei A Life in the Mountains* by Anita Yasuda, about the first woman who reached the top of Mount Everest and was a force for protecting the ecosystem of the mountains. I've also started *Red Bird Danced* by Dawn Quigley. I really enjoyed her Jo Jo Makoons chapter book series and this middle grade novel in verse is drawing me in to a present-day story told through the eyes of two Native kids.

What is your favorite ALSC or ALA memory?

I attended ALSC National Institute in Denver this past September. It wasn't my first ALSC Institute, but it springs to mind because it was the first time my colleague and co-presenter attended. Seeing things through her eyes made the experience even more enjoyable for me. It was great to connect with library friends from all over the country and to help a children's librarian from home realize she was among peers who feel the same way she does about children's services work made for an energizing few days.

ALSC National Institute was my first experience with ALSC and ALA conferences. I was enamored with all the youth centered librarians in attendance, meeting some of my favorite authors, and learning from my peers. After that Institute in Pittsburgh in 2006, I was appointed to my first ALSC committee and, closing in on twenty years later, I am still an active member and love the enthusiasm the newest members of ALSC bring to the division.

Beatriz Barreca, Librarian II, Head of Children and Teen Services, Okeechobee Blvd Branch Library, Palm Beach County (FL) Library System

How has ALSC contributed to your work in libraries?

My first job as a full-fledged librarian was in the Research and Reference department working with adults. During that time, receiving the *Children and Libraries* journal helped me stay up to date on programming trends, professional development topics, and challenges that Youth Services, public and school libraries across the country are facing. Access to the journal has been a way to ensure I was professionally prepared when I went back to Youth Services.

What project are you excited to be working on?

I am looking into promoting physical literacy as a way to bring together the sensory activities and rhythm and movement programs I implement for sensory-seeking children ages five and under.

What challenges you in librarianship?

Ensuring the role libraries play in society is safeguarded.



What brings you joy in librarianship?

I introduced the children at my new branch to my biweekly Sensory Circle Time program several months ago. The kids have picked up the American Sign Language songs we are using fairly quickly. It is incredible to see the little ones develop new skills.

What are you looking forward to?

Building strong and meaningful relationships with my library members, and guiding the efforts of my team providing them with the tools they need to ensure services guided by respectful interactions focused on maintaining inclusion and diversity standards.

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

Dreamers by Yuyi Morales.

What are you reading right now?

Currently, I have these titles on my nightstand: *Maus* by Art Spiegelman, *Pick the Lock* by A. S. King, and *That Librarian: The Fight Against Book Banning in America* by Amanda Jones.

What is your favorite ALSC or ALA memory?

I participated in a workshop to discuss the book *Ask, Listen, Empower: Grounding Your Library Work in Community Engagement* by Mary Davis Fournier and Sarah Ostman. It changed the way I approach community services and the interactions with our members. We should meet our members where they are at, and understand that they are the experts when it comes to their needs. We should be asking them how we can help them, what we can do for them from a place of genuine humbleness without pretending to be saviors and having all the answers. &