

ASSOCIATION OF WISCONSIN SPECIAL LIBRARIANS | AWSL

A DIVISION OF THE WISCONSIN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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Chair Report

By Anne Moser

As I sit in my home office (a.k.a. our daughter’s bedroom) on a cold January day, I struggle to find inspiring words to share with the dynamic members of AWSL. The omicron variant is everywhere, and I wonder if life (and work) will ever return to “normal.” As the world approaches the third year of this seemingly unending pandemic, I keep wondering: will we always wear a mask in the office, will we always hesitate to give a good friend a hug, will we ever get to squeeze into the conference room and laugh together?

But I am a born optimist and strongly believe that someday soon we will be looking in the rearview mirror at this pandemic. Until then, I have decided to rely on my New Year’s resolution to remind myself that there is a lot to be thankful for. Each day, I choose one thing that I am grateful for. My inspiration comes from a former librarian who uses Facebook to post notes of gratitude for things both big and small. I don’t use social media much anymore, but if I do, I seek out her page. Her posts bring me joy and always make me smile.



So today, I share with you some notes of gratitude:

I am grateful for all the heroes in this pandemic, including librarians, doctors and nurses, formal and informal educators, grocery store clerks, janitors, and first responders, just to name a few.

Next Business Meeting

The next business meeting of AWSL will take place in the spring. Watch the listserv for updates, including the location or connection details for the next meeting.

Join us for AWSL town halls! Get more information from the feature article on this page.

Join our Board!

Becoming a member of the AWSL leadership team is a great way to meet new people and to provide opportunities for your fellow special librarians to get together to have fun, to learn, and to socialize. Being an AWSL leader is a great way to get in some professional development in a low-key, low-stress, high-reward way.

The time commitment is minimal. The board meets twice a year: once in the spring and once at the annual WLA conference in the fall. All other duties can be completed remotely.

Lead a Town Hall!

Would you like to lead a Town Hall for your fellow special librarians? Let us know!

I am grateful for the scientists who are also pandemic heroes. I know firsthand that they have worked very hard (night and day) to develop vaccines and manufacture the test kits and everything else we need to end this pandemic.

I am grateful for my career, which has brought me so much joy over the years. I wake up each day (most, anyway) excited to go to work because I get to help people find the information they need, learn new things about a lot of different subjects and (I hope) make a positive contribution to my community.

I am grateful to be a librarian whose work supports everyone's right to "read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment." I am grateful that I can defend that right every day.

I am grateful for the community of librarians I have met over the years. As a special librarian since 1987, my memberships in professional organizations have provided me with inspirations, collaborations, and lifelong friendships.

Finally, I am grateful for the friends and opportunities I have had through AWSL and the Wisconsin Library Association. It's an honor to be your chair.

What are you grateful for?

AWSL Town Halls in 2022

By Anne Moser

Join us at a bimonthly virtual Town Hall series, created to give members of our division the time and space to connect and network throughout the year. We hope to build community and give our members an opportunity to discuss challenges and more importantly, successes in their libraries.

We will meet virtually on the third Tuesday of February, April, June, August and at the annual WLA conference. Please join us!

Our first Town Hall is scheduled for **Tuesday, February 15 from 11:30 to 12:30**. Eva Stefanski, Horticultural Librarian at Olbrich Botanical Gardens in Madison, will lead a discussion on raising your library's visibility.

About AWSL

The Association of Wisconsin Special Librarians (AWSL) is a division of the Wisconsin Library Association. Established in October 1986, AWSL exists to focus on the activities and issues of special libraries and librarianship and to provide a forum for exchange of ideas among persons involved with special libraries and collections.

Membership

Membership is open to all WLA members who are special librarians or who have an interest in special libraries.

Anyone who maintains a specialized collection of materials is considered a special librarian -- whether they're a trained and certified librarian managing a library's special collection, or a person in charge of specialized materials in a church, museum, prison, hospital, corporation, foundation, newspaper, government office, or other organization.

Join AWSL

Make the most of your WLA membership and join AWSL through the WLA website:

www.wisconsinlibraries.org/awsl

Member Spotlight

My name is Steven Rice, and I'm delighted to be a newly-minted AWSL member. I work at the Door County Historical Museum in beautiful Door County, Wisconsin. AWSL is a great group of individuals, and I look forward to working with all of you more closely over the coming year.

Where do you work and what is your role?

I'm the Museum and Archives Manager at the Door County Historical Museum in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. I oversee the operations of the Museum and Archives, develop programming and policy, and take research requests from the public. I also do a lot of collaborating with local historical groups, our local library system, and state-level entities.

What inspired you to be a librarian?

I don't really consider myself a librarian, but I work with librarians every day and have a profound respect for their profession. I try to emulate their enthusiastic, service-oriented attitude in my public history work. The library was my playground growing up, and it is such a privilege to work in this environment as a professional.

What's the best thing about your job?

The endless variety. I'm a naturally mercurial person; I crave novelty and challenge in my professional life. Working in a special library, you never know where the next patron request will take you. You get to engage in a very personal way with almost any topic you can imagine, and some that you couldn't. That's thrilling.

What advice would you give someone who is interested in working in a special library?

Keep one eye on the outside world, always. Insularity is a constant danger in our profession, particularly in special libraries. We have a tendency to think of our institutions as carved in stone, but in this day and age, that's far from a given. Always be thinking, "How is this relevant? How can I make this accessible and fun? How can this have impact?"

Why did you join AWSL?

I'm a big believer in collaboration at every level, and I'm not a big believer in professional silos. Public history has so much to learn from the library perspective, and I can't wait to bring that knowledge back to my institution. Beyond that, it's just wonderful to share ideas and experiences with like-minded colleagues. That kind of positive energy is priceless.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

My wife and I have a four-month-old baby in the house, so spare time is at a premium! I love to cook, hike, play Magic the Gathering, and dabble in guitar-making. Mostly, I try to give as much time and love as I can to my beautiful family.

WILS Ideas to Action Fund



WILS provides grants of up to \$5,000 so libraries and cultural organizations can bring their project ideas to life. We are actively seeking innovative or collaborative proposals from special libraries of all types in order to support the good work of the diversity of WILS member organizations.

Do you have a project that needs a boost? Are you dreaming on a service you'd like to develop but haven't had the funding? Keep an eye on the [WILS Ideas to Action Fund website](#) for more information coming soon or [sign up for our newsletters](#) to be the first to know when the application period opens this spring.

Not sure about WILS membership? It's free and comes with all perks and no strings. Read more [here](#) or connect with us at information@wils.org.

WLA Conference Tour of the Neville Public Museum

By Carrie Doyle

On November 18, approximately 25 folks walked across the Ray Nitschke Bridge in downtown Green Bay, heading to a specially arranged tour of the Neville Public Museum, which sits on the other side of the bridge from the KI Center. The cool and windy walk was well worth it as we were warmly received by the

directors and staff of the museum, who were ready to give us a tour of the Museum's library, archives, and galleries.

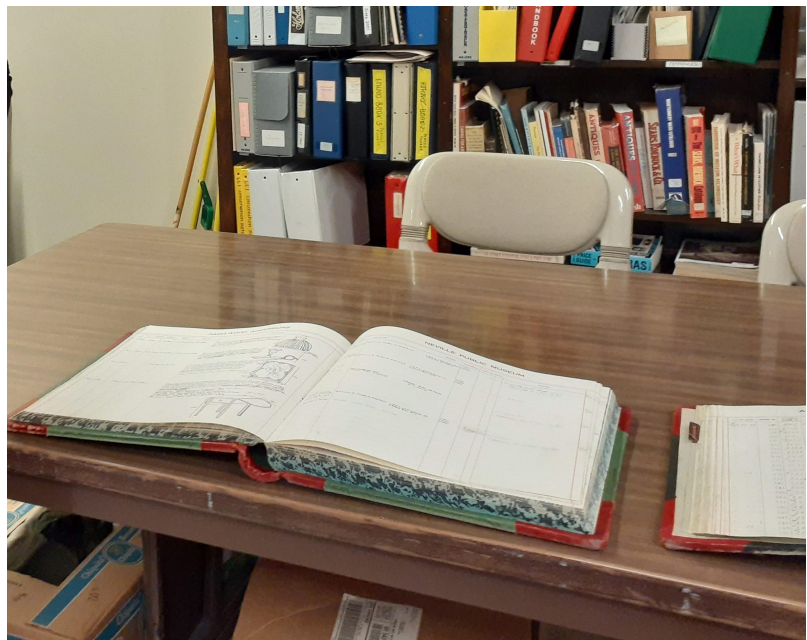
We started out in the Museum's theater, where Deputy Director Kevin Cullen told us a little about the history of the Museum and gave an overview of how some of the collections came to be housed at the Neville. We then split into two groups, with one group following Louise Pfothenauer, Collections Manager to the museum's library, and the other group following Kevin Cullen to the galleries.

A highlight of the galleries tour was the renovated Generations Gallery. The Generations Gallery is designed so that artifacts and themes can be rotated so there is always something new to see. The award-winning gallery includes exhibits with themes like Ice Age, Archaeology (with a hands-on dig station), Industry, and Three Centuries of History. When we visited, the Three Centuries of History exhibit featured artifacts ranging from an item gifted to a Jesuit explorer in 1686 to Donald Driver's football jersey to a more recent hand-made sign calling for social justice.

One particularly cool feature of the Generations Gallery is the Exposed Collections area. Utilizing glass-encased shelves and drawers, the Exposed Collections are a clever way to present more than 1,000 artifacts, many of which would otherwise stay out of view, and which represent a small fraction of the Museum's artifacts. A highlight of this collection is a bloodied coat, with bullet hole, that belonged to Lt. Foster, who was murdered by a soldier at Fort Howard in 1832. While the previous gallery displayed a replica of the coat, the new Exposed Collections format allowed staff to display the real thing in a drawer that protects the object from constant light exposure and damage.

Collections Manager Louise Pfothenauer then gave our group a fascinating tour of the library, archives and collections storage area. The Neville Public Museum has a very strong film and photography collection, housing over 750,000 photographs and negatives. The collection includes negatives for the Green Bay Press-Gazette from the late 1940's to the early 1980's, and special collections of works by local photographers. The Museum also houses over four million feet of home movies and news film from local TV

stations. Photos and film clips of the Green Bay Packers, among other topics, are frequently requested by authors, documentarians, and others. Many photos are available on the museum's website for viewing and/or purchase by the public. Museum staff, volunteers and interns are continually working to digitize more of the collection. It was a special treat to go behind the scenes and see the hand-written finding aids for



photos and other artifacts. Upon request, museum staff with research, identify and digitize photos and films that have not yet been digitized.

For many years, the collection philosophy was to bring the world to Green Bay, as well as collecting important local artifacts. In more recent years, the Neville has been focusing on the land, people, and cultures of Northeast Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. The Museum collects unique items that help tell the story of the people and places of the area. The Museum's storage area was another highlight of tour. We saw so many cool objects and artifacts, including old dresses, canoes, a coffin, and many everyday items from households and businesses.

Many thanks to AWSL Chair Anne Moser for arranging the fantastic tour, and to the directors and staff of the Neville Public Museum for being such welcoming hosts.

What's Your New Normal?

Recent newsletters featured discussion of how our libraries adapted to the pandemic. Over two years later, we're still feeling the effects of the pandemic. How are you experiencing this "new normal?"

Valerie Magno, Fox Valley Technical College

"When I first became a librarian back in 1997, I thought the most dangerous thing about my job was getting a papercut. The rise of mass-shootings added an extra incentive to be even more mindfully accommodating and attentive because problem "individuals with whom we are dealing are often the very people who have never been listened to, and they are desperate to be heard." ¹ But it is only with the pandemic that I have begun to feel I should get hazard pay. Welcome to Catch 22: If I keep working I might get Covid, but If I get Covid I will need the excellent health benefits I get from working. I will keep working, however, because:

- 1) it keeps me from "doom scrolling" all day.
- 2) I feel like I am doing good in the world.
- 3) My work allows me to live my values of creativity, expertise, community service, learning, and teaching. It also gives me a platform to [promote tolerance](#) and [critical thinking](#)."

We'd like to hear from you! Tell us about projects, communication strategies, self-care steps, hybrid work, and anything else you'd like to talk about!

Seeking Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect

We're looking for a Vice-Chair / Chair-Elect for 2022! This is a three-year position. As Vice-Chair, your main job is to plan a program and a tour of a local special library for the fall AWSL meeting at the Annual WLA Conference. The call for conference program proposals generally goes out in March or April and the WLA Conference is in either late October or early November. The next year you will be Chair and

your main duties are to schedule and chair the spring and fall AWSL membership meetings, write a column for the AWSL newsletter, and plan a summer social/tour. The third year, as Past Chair, you will recruit people to run for open AWSL positions and generally help out as needed

Becoming a member of the AWSL leadership team is a great way to meet new people and to provide opportunities for your fellow special librarians to get together to have fun, to learn, and to socialize. Being an AWSL leader is a great way to get in some professional development in a low-key, low-stress, high-reward way. The time commitment is minimal. The board meets twice a year: once in the spring and once at the annual WLA conference in the fall. All other duties can be completed remotely.

AWSL Board Liaison Update: January 2022

By Kris Turner

I'm sad and excited all at once – this will be my last Board update for the AWSL newsletter. Sad because I clearly will miss bringing you all the details on what the WLA Board is working on and doing for you. Excited because the AWSL new liaison, Carrie Doyle, will do an amazing job both on the Board and with the updates. Meanwhile, I'll be taking on a new task with WLA – that of President-Elect! I'm humbled and honored to serve you all in this role and I hope to continue to best represent your interests as WLA continues to move onwards and upwards!

But before all that happens – let's talk about recent updates with WLA in general and the Board in particular. Since our last newsletter, WLA's new Executive Director, Laura Sauser, has jumped in the deep end and really helped invigorate the Board with great new ideas! You've probably seen the WLA Bulletin, which will keep you up on the WLA happenings on a biweekly basis. I bet you'll see this very newsletter there and that other groups within WLA will learn more about our great work there as well. You can always add more member news or just a fun news article to these emails by emailing Laura directly - sauser@wisconsinlibraries.org. Laura has also implemented more webinars for members, with two already happening and many more in the pipeline. Stay tuned for more webinars, available exclusively and freely to you as WLA members!

Of course, we had an in-person conference in November which went really well. It was great to have an in-person experience (while we were safely able to do so) and the Conference also made money – a pleasant surprise! As you



can see in the photo, the AWSL crew played trivia (I hosted and took the picture) and while they didn't win, I feel safe in saying they had a great time.

Read about the Conference elsewhere in this newsletter, but it was so great to see such great presentations and tours from our members and to see some of you in person! Next year the Conference is in Lake Geneva (from November 1st-November 4th) and will, to use a technical term, rule. I hope that we can have a great in-person event again.

Meanwhile, WLA is hoping to take advantage of the remote options that are now available to us. Beyond webinars that I mentioned above, you'll also see more changes for social engagement, fun meet-ups, and just general 'connective tissue' to make sure you are getting value out of your time with WLA. As always, please let me know if you have any ideas for ways that WLA can support you and your library –
Kris.Turner@wisc.edu.

I joined the WLA Board as the AWSL liaison in 2016. In that time, we've seen the membership numbers rise, revenues go up, engagement and creativity increase, and a new executive director. Oh, also a pandemic. Sometimes, these updates were downers to write, but I truly do feel that WLA is on an upward trajectory, in no small part thanks to the engagement from all of you. WLA is here for you and for your libraries. Let's continue to make sure you get what you need! Happy New Year and I look forward to seeing you all at the in-person or remote events that AWSL is cooking up for the coming year!

Share Your Stories & Pictures!

Do you have a story to tell about your library or collection? How are you helping your users? What programs are you offering, or what does your space or collection look like?

Send us your stories and pictures to include in our next newsletter! Email the newsletter chair, Carol Hassler, at carol.hassler@wicourts.gov