

# Information Today

The Newspaper for Users and Producers of Digital Information Services

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FEATURE

## What It's Like to Be a Wikipedian in Residence

by KELLY DOYLE

**A**s the Wikipedian in Residence for Gender Equity at West Virginia University (WVU) Libraries, I was fortunate enough to gain experience in and be part of helping to widen academia's understanding of Wikipedia within the academic library setting while also tackling the site's considerable gender gap and working toward establishing sustainable models for change.

Many may think that Wikipedia is merely an unreliable resource and a generic encyclopedia because anyone can edit it—or some may have no strong opinions about it



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at all. However, the information on Wikipedia is largely accurate, precisely because of the diligent work of our longstanding volunteer editor base. The general process by which information is uploaded to Wikipedia is that volunteer editors add content using citations, which are then subject to moderation by the whole Wikipedia editor

community. Vandalism to articles or deliberate addition of misinformation has occasionally occurred, but in these rare instances, articles are generally reverted to their original content within minutes by this same editor cohort. Any information that is added to Wikipedia needs to have a citation to a

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## Library Positivity

by BRANDI SCARDILLI

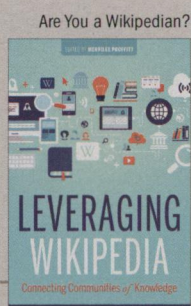
■ At the end of every year, *Information Today* looks ahead: What will info pros be talking about in the future? How will the information industry change? This year, like any, has seen its share of challenges—such as the threat of federal budget cuts (which has been tempered somewhat), the fight for Net Neutrality (now centered on California), the spread of fake news (ongoing and inescapable), failures to protect online privacy (especially by social media companies), and having to continually defend libraries' value (that infamous *Forbes* piece advocating replacing libraries

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## ALA Ventures Out Into Communities for New Advocacy Effort

by CORILEE CHRISTOU

■ To borrow a phrase from Judith Viorst's classic children's book, this could very well be a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad year for libraries, especially public and school libraries. As part of his

FY2019 budget, the president reportedly wants to eliminate funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the

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## Library Positivity

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with Amazon bookstores is mentioned several times in this article—but but there's a lot to stay positive about these days too. Join a group of librarians and library-related organizations and companies in celebrating the best parts of being involved with libraries. (Responses have been edited for style and clarity.)



### Jenny Arch

information services and children's services librarian at  
Winchester Public Library in Massachusetts  
(jenny-arch.com)

#### What's something that has re-energized you or kept you excited about librarians/libraries in the past year?

Starting at a new library and branching out into children's services have helped to keep things fresh and interesting. I was also fortunate to be able to participate in a number of professional development activities, including the Public Library Association conference in Philadelphia in March and the Massachusetts Library Association conference in May. Conferences are excellent for showcasing new ideas, big and small—there's always something to bring back and share with co-workers. Certainly, social justice is an important theme lately in the library world, and people are questioning the idea that libraries are "neutral," acknowledging that we stand for the things enshrined in the ALA Code of Ethics. The #WeNeedDiverseBooks movement has also been an important reminder to make our readers' advisory, programs, and collections as diverse and inclusive as possible.

#### How do you see librarianship/libraries evolving in the next few years?

Libraries and librarians are constantly evolving to keep up with—if not ahead of—the times, serving their communities in the most necessary and creative ways, including collections, displays, and programs. Some libraries are moving into the civics sphere, like Skokie Public Library's Civic Lab ([skoki.library.info/resources/civic-lab](http://skoki.library.info/resources/civic-lab)), focusing on civil discourse around local issues. Other libraries partner with community organizations to host programs or put up displays on a whole range of topics—early literacy initiatives, voter information, English-language learning, citizenship, and more. And we're doing fun stuff too, of course—I see YA librarians at the forefront of programs around fandom (Harry Potter, Doctor Who, Sherlock, etc.) and escape rooms, as well as more practical (but also fun) programs around life skills. Basically, we're doing everything to meet communities' needs and be helpful, vibrant, informative spaces that are open to all.

#### What makes you feel hopeful about the future of libraries?

Libraries and library staffers are dynamic and alert to community needs and wants. As Caitlin Moran wrote, libraries "are the only sheltered public spaces where you are not a consumer, but a citizen instead." I think people do recognize the value of libraries—as we saw from the backlash after the misinformed op-ed in *Forbes* this summer. At every library I visit, every conference I attend, and in every article and blog post about libraries and librarianship, I see energy and ideas, openness and enthusiasm, a willingness to learn and (in most cases) willingness to admit to and learn from mistakes. Libraries—almost alone among public institutions—still enjoy a high degree of social trust, and in many places, library staffers are capitalizing on that trust to make the library a safe space, bringing in community partners and reaching out to those who may not have been typical library users.

### John Chrastka

executive director of EveryLibrary ([everylibrary.org](http://everylibrary.org))



#### What's something that has re-energized you or kept you excited about librarians/libraries in the past year?

EveryLibrary's work is thrilling all year long. We're lucky to have 14 libraries on the ballot in November 2018, and we are already working with library leaders on planning their referenda and bonds for as far out as 2021 and 2022. The opportunity to learn about a town and the relationship that the librarians and board have with their community—and to figure out with them what the right way is to support a good, engaged, and ultimately effective conversation about the future of their library funding—gets me up and out every day. More and more I realize that there isn't a toolkit for anything library-advocacy-related. It's all about what is right for that library in that place.

#### How do you see librarianship/libraries evolving in the next few years?

The folks who are embracing for themselves a visible and engaged brand of "librarian" are the ones who will be most successful when asking for new funding because they not only have better (i.e., broader) relationships, there is also an awareness of who they are among the general public. And people who don't use the library, but who believe in it, want to see that person (the librarian) doing things they believe in. I think the profession needs to continue to challenge itself to not only get from behind the desk to talk to patrons, but to leave the building to talk to funders and other humans who care about the same people you both serve.

#### What makes you feel hopeful about the future of libraries?

I think that when the public, voters, and funders are engaged by librarians with a legitimate and direct answer to their sometimes painful questions—such as "Why do we need libraries when everything is on the internet?" and "Who uses libraries anymore, anyway?"—there is dramatic new understanding of why those members of the public, the taxpayers, should pay for the library and the people who work there. We've seen it in nearly 100 election days across the country. Every time we go to a small town or a big city to train and support their team in making a clear answer to those key questions, I'm sincerely hopeful.



### Loida Garcia-Febo

ALA president 2018-2019 ([loidaalapresident.com](http://loidaalapresident.com))

#### What's something that has re-energized you or kept you excited about librarians/libraries in the past year?

Library workers are taking time to know more about the communities they serve. It is very inspiring to see how libraries now are lending baking pans; tools, including demolition hammers; fishing poles; and paintings to decorate homes and providing connection for people to charge their cars. It is an amazing way of meeting the needs of the community.

#### How do you see librarianship/libraries evolving in the next few years?

One aspect that I am very excited about is the expansion of services for those accessing information online. For instance, Harris County Public Library's iKnow library card ([hcpl.net/iknow](http://hcpl.net/iknow)) allows users to access a myriad of resources online. This service from a public library is heavily used by college students in the area as well. I see more of those services, including an increase in platforms to download ebooks (like the fabulous app from OverDrive, Libby; [meet.libbyapp.com](http://meet.libbyapp.com)), audiobooks, periodicals, magazines, videos, and music and programs to learn languages.

#### What makes you feel hopeful about the future of libraries?

The renewed love for the communities we serve at academic, public, school, and specialized libraries. I've been visiting libraries around the country, and I can feel a genuine interest in providing access to information to absolutely everyone in our communities. The diversity, inclusiveness, and intersectionality spirit is very much alive, and librarians have embraced it.

## Brendan Gallagher

CEO of ByWater Solutions (bywatersolutions.com)



### What's something that has re-energized you or kept you excited about librarians/libraries in the past year?

We have seen many libraries and librarians really engage on the idea and aspect that libraries are the centers of communities; changing the ideas and procedures for integration into the community. We see libraries as the center, and each institution or aspect of the community should be using the library to help carry out their missions.

### How do you see librarianship/libraries evolving in the next few years?

We have seen so many wonderful data changes that are on the cusp of being accepted into the library world. No longer will librarians be tied to a desk or tied into a single aspect of being a librarian. As we move forward, each librarian will have the chance to apply and make changes that they see as being the best for the integration of the idea of libraries as community centers. Librarians will have the respect and freedom for extending the programming and involvement of libraries in their communities. We have been offering Koha Klassmates (klassmates.us) for a couple of years now—which gives librarians in graduate programs a free chance to use an ILS so that they are already familiar with how to use it, so that they can concentrate on the change that we all want to see.

### What makes you feel hopeful about the future of libraries?

Just meeting a lot of new librarians in the workforce. Everyone that I have met has been overly enthusiastic about what we as librarians do. (I have an M.L.S. and remember that same enthusiasm that I had when I entered.) Also meeting lots of new library directors that are changing and challenging structures and procedures of libraries. The future holds putting the user first and eliminating processes or procedures that create barriers in access to users (for both the digital and physical worlds). We at ByWater Solutions feel that open source as a model really fits well with the future of libraries, since with open access, data, and software, you can control the change that you want to see in the future.

## Paul Gazzolo

SVP and general manager at Gale, a Cengage company (gale.com)



### What's something that has re-energized you or kept you excited about librarians/libraries in the past year?

The crescendo of support for public libraries. There was a remarkable moment in the media this summer when a magazine columnist questioned the value of public libraries to taxpayers. The backlash was swift as library patrons and advocates vocalized support for their community benefit and social impact. It was exciting to see public libraries not only fervently defended for their legacy, but as diverse, multistoried community resources.

### How do you see librarianship/libraries evolving in the next few years?

That evolution will focus on a few key areas that relate to local economic impact: workforce development, entrepreneurship, and community engagement. Virtually every public library supports job seekers. Looking ahead, patrons in lower-paying jobs will come to libraries to upskill with career technical education to increase earning power in a changing employment landscape. Entrepreneurship will continue to be a growth driver for local economies as libraries open business incubators with tools and skilled resources that increase the odds of success for a new business. But most significant will be the need for data-driven engagement with community members and patrons. Mailings and announcements in local papers will give way to targeted bulletins and social media communications.

### What makes you feel hopeful about the future of libraries?

Libraries are champions of a free society, leveling the economic playing field with access to information and lifelong learning opportunities. Most encouraging is the creative leadership in libraries of all sizes.

## Jessica Hilburn

historian and head of reference at Benson Memorial Library in Pennsylvania (nwpastories.com)



### What's something that has re-energized you or kept you excited about librarians/libraries in the past year?

I have been energized by the flood of interest in local history and genealogy in the library setting. People both inside and outside my patron base have clamored for information about the history of our town and their own familial pasts this year as a result of Ancestry (ancestry.com) being provided for free at the library and a research request service I offer that is also free of charge. It is important to make history a living presence in the lives of our patrons so that they can use it to inform their choices and futures. Through the library's NWP Stories blog (nwpastories.com), we have uncovered the history of many buildings, sites, events, and people in our collective past. This shared learning has brought us closer together. Research I've performed at Benson Memorial Library this year has even helped reunite adoptees with their birth parents. In a political and social climate rife with divisiveness (for very valid reasons), it is incredibly energizing to see how the power of a shared memory or emotional tie to the past can unite us again.

### How do you see librarianship/libraries evolving in the next few years?

While I can only speak from a rural public library standpoint, I see libraries expanding the services and programs they offer regarding information literacy and community services. Being able to tell truth from propaganda, helping people take advantage of the ever-growing repository of electronic sources, and providing services to help people in all spheres of social service are essential functions of the modern library. We must embrace technology and the way it makes our jobs both harder and easier. By mastering new tools, we can help the public use them effectively. I often hear librarians and library workers talking about how we are put into the role of social worker without having any training in that sphere. Whether that issue is corrected by helping library students and employees gain necessary social work training or hiring more social workers in libraries, it is certainly something I think should and will be implemented in the coming years in order to best serve our communities.

### What makes you feel hopeful about the future of libraries?

Honestly, what doesn't? At my library, we have a beautiful distribution of ages, abilities, genders, and identities. By providing services that are useful and either low-cost or free to our patrons, we have made a case for our worth and usefulness that people are rallying behind. For example, the tone-deaf article posted by *Forbes* arguing that Amazon bookstores should replace libraries was immediately blasted across the internet. The backlash was so intense and the opinions so one-sided against *Forbes* that the article was removed. I am currently running a book club at the library for the first time in many years, and more than half of my members are young people. Libraries are strong. Resilient. Adaptable. Libraries are a light in the darkness, helping lead a weary world into the future.

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## David Lee King

digital services director at Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library in Kansas (davidleeking.com)



### What's something that has re-energized you or kept you excited about librarians/libraries in the past year?

The ever-evolving world of library technology definitely keeps me excited about librarianship. The past few years have seen a lot of once-emerging technology start to slowly trickle into mainstream usage. The Internet of Things is turning library back-end support systems (like security cameras) into something our security staffers can interact with via a smartphone. Augmented reality and virtual reality technology is seeping into my library's programs and events—both for kids and for adults. Those are just a couple of examples—there are many more.

### How do you see librarianship/libraries evolving in the next few years?

I think in the next few years, libraries need to get serious and proactive about digital inclusion in their communities. In one way, libraries have always helped out with digital inclusion by teaching technology classes and offering connected computers in our buildings. I think libraries can do more than that. We need to be advocates for all people in our communities. We can do that by working toward adequate broadband coverage in our communities, by continuing to hold technology classes in our libraries and out in the community where those classes are most needed, and by working alongside other like-minded organizations that are working to help people get connected—whether that means broadband connectivity, access to inexpensive devices, or teaching classes on how best to use those tools.

### What makes you feel hopeful about the future of libraries?

People need information, entertainment, and connectivity. They have questions; they are working on a variety of projects and research. Those things are basic needs for our communities, and they never really change—no matter how technology changes. And that's awesome, because that's what libraries do—we provide all those things to our communities. And we can do it in a safe environment, where learning and exploration are valued.

## Skip Prichard

president and CEO of OCLC (oclc.org)



### What's something that has re-energized you or kept you excited about librarians/libraries in the past year?

I'm fortunate to have opportunities to visit libraries in all parts of the world to see firsthand how librarians are innovating to serve their users. I'm always excited and energized by the work they're doing, whether they're working in a large research institution or a small, rural library. When I visit libraries, almost without exception, I run into someone who has a personal story about finding something rare, delivering something valuable, or helping someone succeed. You may have heard the phrase "connecting but not connected." We are connecting constantly through our devices, but are less connected to each other than ever before. Libraries sit at the intersection of personal and informational connection. It's something that inspires me every day.

## Steve Potash

founder and CEO of OverDrive (overdrive.com)



### What's something that has re-energized you or kept you excited about librarians/libraries in the past year?

We are always excited to work with our librarian partners throughout the country. Working with them and listening to their and their patrons' feedback helps OverDrive continue to innovate and serve their needs. Their input has been instrumental in the success of our new one-tap reading app, Libby (meet.libbyapp.com), as well as the development of an Instant Digital Card (resources.overdrive.com/library/apps-features/instant-digital-card). More than 30 markets now provide the ability to sign up for this Instant Digital Card in 30 seconds or less.

### How do you see librarianship/libraries evolving in the next few years?

With the increasing challenges of finding the right information in an expanding universe of content, libraries and digital information specialists have become and will become even more valuable in helping guide us to curated, quality resources. Now more than ever, the librarian is the information professional that all readers should turn to for credible, reliable, and objective information.

### What makes you feel hopeful about the future of libraries?

I feel hopeful because many librarians have adapted to be our communities' first responders and evolved to overcome the challenges they face. More than ever, each community needs a strong, vibrant library with professional librarians. This is the domain of a librarian—to help at each stage of our life, family, and career to empower us with the right book, resource, or information and adopt lifetime learning and lifetime literacy.

### How do you see librarianship/libraries evolving in the next few years?

Even more than most industries, libraries are evolving to incorporate new information technology into everything they do. They have to—information is at the core of library work. Libraries also have to be ready to serve customers whose expectation of service is being shaped by digital giants like Amazon, Apple, and Google. Consumers expect immediate answers, speed of delivery, and accuracy. Libraries have to be able to deliver that. Librarians have to bridge the digital divide by being tech-savvy and community-minded. Libraries are becoming focused on both content and community in equal parts. Libraries and librarians must guard the historical record but embrace the technology- and service-driven future. Many that OCLC sees and serves are already well on their way.

### What makes you feel hopeful about the future of libraries?

It seems that about every 2 years, someone at a major publication writes an opinion piece about the "end of libraries." There are plenty of people who know nothing about libraries—who haven't set foot in a library in years—but who somehow feel qualified to have a negative opinion about how they can be replaced by Amazon, Wikipedia, or Google. What makes me hopeful—every time this happens—is how universally, loudly, and passionately libraries are defended. And not just by librarians, but by people who understand the unique, trusted, inspirational roles that libraries play in our communities, schools, and universities. Hearing them sing the praises of libraries always makes me proud to be involved. I'm hopeful because I know that this vital community resource is already adapting to the future.

## Duncan Smith

chief strategist for public libraries at EBSCO Information Services (ebSCO.com)



### What's something that has re-energized you or kept you excited about librarians/libraries in the past year?

Staff. Over the past year, I've had several occasions to interact with staff members from libraries across the country, and I continue to be amazed by their dedication, commitment, entrepreneurial spirit, and drive. I worked with several staff members at the Hillsboro Public Library in Oregon at a six-session readers' advisory training. We examined videos of real readers to determine how reading fit into the lives of these individuals and how the library might enrich their reading. The readers had lots of options for finding books, but in our final "Shark Tank" session, this talented group of professionals identified several potential new programs and services that could add value to each reader's experience with books and other storytelling media. These sessions demonstrated that when staff members have the opportunity to connect with their readers, they can use their extensive skills and knowledge to create services that enrich their users' lives.

I'm not only energized about the people who are currently practicing in libraries, but the individuals entering the profession as well. I was invited to participate in the Seminar in Popular Materials class at the University of North Carolina's School of Information and Library Science in October. Based on the emerging talent I saw in that classroom, it's clear that public libraries will have the talent they need to continue to be an essential part of their community's inspiration infrastructure.

### How do you see librarianship/libraries evolving in the next few years?

I think libraries will continue to shift from library-centric thinking to community-centric thinking. We will start to really focus on not only the physical space, but the digital experience that we're providing to our community. One indication of this trend is the shift in the language we use to describe our work from information to learning.

Libraries will realize that their most valuable asset is not their buildings or their collections, but their staff. Librarian experts should look for more services that help them build their audience—followers on Twitter, subscribers to staff-curated emails, and speaking opportunities at library partner events. A good example of leveraging staff expertise is Multnomah County Library's My Librarian service ([multcolib.org/my-librarian](http://multcolib.org/my-librarian)). This trend means that we will be building connected and ongoing relationships with our users instead of allowing library use to be anonymous and episodic. It also reinforces the importance of working with our users to establish the right balance between privacy and personalized services.

I believe we will also see the definition of library user expanded from just individuals to encompassing a community's organizations and groups. In other words, the trend of public libraries partnering with other organizations is going to accelerate as libraries work to enable other agencies to better meet community needs.

### What makes you feel hopeful about the future of libraries?

Being entrepreneurial is in a librarian's DNA, since the definition of being an entrepreneur, as Bruce Bachenheimer of Pace University says, is "imagining new ways to solve problems and create value." Wayne Wiegand, in *Part of Our Lives: A People's History of the American Public Library*, reminds us that our creative approach to solving problems and creating value focuses on three main areas: commonplace reading (i.e., pleasure reading), providing useful information, and serving as a community gathering place. Our creative approach manifested in libraries that looked different in 1990 from the ones in 1890, and the ones that are evolving today are different from the ones around in the 1990s. But while the specific strategies and tactics that we use have changed and evolved, the needs they address have not.

For today, and in the future, I see the need for our communities to have a place that supports inspiration through story, provides the learning that users need to navigate the public library's curriculum (which is this thing called life), and establishes meaningful and respectful connections with others. This is going to be more essential now than ever if we are to establish a world in which we all want to live.

I recently came across a blog post by Abigail DeWitt, a North Carolina author whose book *News of Our Loved Ones* was recently published ([librarylovest.com/2018/09/11f-guest-post-abigail-dewitt-author-of-news-of-our-loved-ones.html](http://librarylovest.com/2018/09/11f-guest-post-abigail-dewitt-author-of-news-of-our-loved-ones.html)). Abigail, who is a devoted public library user, talks about Sylvia, a recently retired bookmobile librarian in a rural Appalachian county. Sylvia not only changed Abigail's life, but also the lives of those she served. Abigail goes on to say, "It is librarians, after all, who, by handing us the means to transcend boundaries, are the true revolutionaries in a species so bent on mistrust of what is different." That is mighty important and necessary work. It is ours to do. Our profession has the human capital to fulfill this mission, and that is why I am hopeful about not only the future of libraries, but of humanity itself.

## Pew Research Center Updates

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More than 80% of people in Greece, Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, and Canada are worried that computers will replace humans in the workplace. More than 70% in Hungary, Poland, Italy, and Japan feel the same way. More than 80% of people in Greece, Argentina, Japan, and Brazil think automation will lead to greater inequality between those who are rich and those who are poor. And more than 70% of people in Canada, South Africa, the U.S., and Hungary agree. "Worsening inequality due to technological advances is a particular concern among the more highly educated in countries such as Japan, South Africa and Brazil."

The Sept. 18 report, "A Decade After the Financial Crisis, Economic Confidence Rebounds in Many Countries," notes that "pessimism about the future lingers, as does a sense that economic conditions were better pre-crisis." A study of 30,000-plus people in 27 countries, it finds that "[i]n 2018, nearly eight-in-ten Germans (78%) say economic conditions in their country are good, up 50 percentage points from 2009. Nearly two-thirds of Americans (65%) are similarly upbeat about their economy, with their assessment up 48 points. And the economic mood has improved 40 points in Poland, 35 points in the United Kingdom, 34 points in Japan and 24 points in Kenya since the depth of the Great Recession."

In 18 countries (including 80% of people in France, 76% in Japan, and 72% in Spain), "half or more of the public believes that when children today in their country grow up they will be worse off financially than their parents." In about half the countries, (including 87% in Greece, 75% in Tunisia, and 72% in Italy), "a plurality to majority of the public says the financial situation of average people today is worse, compared with the pre-crisis era 20 years ago."

Brandi Scardilli is the editor of NewsBreaks and *Information Today*. Send your comments about this article to [itletters@infotoday.com](mailto:itletters@infotoday.com).