

REPORTER

ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

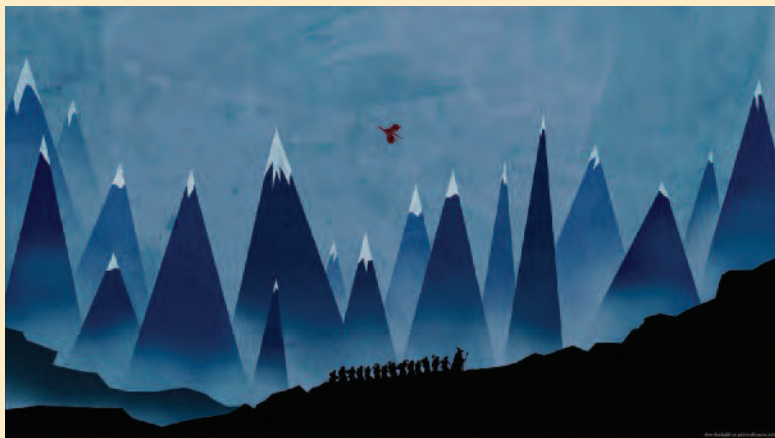
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The Illinois Library Association Reporter

is a forum for those who are improving and reinventing Illinois libraries, with articles that seek to: explore new ideas and practices from all types of libraries and library systems; examine the challenges facing the profession; and inform the library community and its supporters with news and comment about important issues. The *ILA Reporter* is produced and circulated with the purpose of enhancing and supporting the value of libraries, which provide free and equal access to information. This access is essential for an open democratic society, an informed electorate, and the advancement of knowledge for all people.



ON THE COVER

The image on the cover is from a post in BuzzFeed on April 12, 2013, that featured twenty-four unofficial movie posters and read: “Listen, studio designers are great at designing movie posters, but fanboys are even better at it.” This poster was designed by a fan for the 2012 film, *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*. Two articles in this issue explore library fandoms, where devotees of the Tolkien and Harry Potter series, Marvel and DC comics, sports teams, and many other aspects of popular culture are being used by libraries to engage patrons.

The Illinois Library Association is the voice for Illinois libraries and the millions who depend on them. It provides leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library services in Illinois and for the library community in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all. It is the eighth oldest library association in the world and the third largest state association in the United States, with members in academic, public, school, government, and special libraries. Its 3,200 members are primarily librarians and library staff, but also trustees, publishers, and other supporters.

The Illinois Library Association has four full-time staff members. It is governed by a sixteen-member executive board, made up of elected officers. The association employs the services of Strategic Advocacy Group for legislative advocacy. ILA is a 501(c)(3) charitable and educational organization.

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See ILA calendar for submission deadlines for the *ILA Reporter*. Copy should be submitted by e-mail to ila@ila.org. You are encouraged to include digital or film photos (black/white or color) and graphics (on disk or camera-ready) with your articles, which will be included on a space-available basis.

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Thoughts of an Accidental Librarian

Remarks made on Saturday, June 24, 2017, in accepting the John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award at the American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference.

I became a librarian, as maybe some others in this room did, in a less predetermined or predictable manner. In other words, I never thought of becoming a librarian. After finishing college, I was back to working third shift. Driving a forklift. Attempting to pay off my college education. Each night my fellow workers on the assembly line and I played a game called “Dodging Bob,” as I drove down those aisles. Everyone is a little slower on third shift and thus, we played a number of games to stay awake. When the whistle blew at 7:00 in the morning, we walked across the street and the Aber Guts and PBRs were lined up. (For those unfamiliar with these terms: an Aber Gut is a brandy shot topped with peppermint schnapps and it is followed with a chaser of Pabst Blue Ribbon beer. I know everyone is very jealous now and wishes the Hyatt was serving Aber Guts and PBRs here tonight. Or, maybe not.)

Days were nights. Nights were day. And, I was lost. After working two jobs on campus during the school year, four summers, and now almost a year after graduation working at the same factory, my undergraduate education was finally paid, but I needed some direction. At the same time, a good friend, Jim Vaughan, decided to scrap law school and enroll in library school instead. And, I thought, well, I’ll try it, too.

Three thoughts went through my mind immediately: 1) what a great way to select a career, just do what someone else is doing; 2) oh, my God, I have to go back to school again; and 3) I’ll become a librarian, I mean who needs money? So I guess you could call me an accidental librarian.

It has been a surprising and wonderful profession, one that has provided me with a number of incredible and unexpected opportunities. As Michael Furlong mentioned in his introductory remarks, I have had the opportunity to work on the local, state, national, and international level—another total surprise.

The American Library Association (ALA) has provided many opportunities and enabled me to see the country and the world. More importantly, I have been proud to work for an organization that has truly helped many.

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“When the whistle blew at 7:00 in the morning, we walked across the street and the Aber Guts and PBRs were lined up.”



When I worked in ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, there were a lot of calls from librarians who were afraid that they'd lose their jobs if they stood up to the principal, the library board, or the mayor. We were able to give them support and help—from small steps like just listening, to providing information specific to their situation, all the way to providing them with legal counsel so they could defend free expression in the court. That important work continues today.

While working at ALA, I also had the opportunity to establish a Fulbright program for librarians with what was then the United States Information Agency to reestablish the International Relations Office. I had first-hand opportunities to talk about our nation's First Amendment, the freedom of expression:

- in Romania as they were drafting their own constitution;
- in Moscow, in 1991, as the tanks rolled down the streets during the dissolution of the Soviet Union;
- in Cuba, in 1993, when all flights were cancelled back to the U.S.; and
- in China, in 1996, a really ironic experience having freedom of speech meetings and presentations in that country.

The experiences were many and varied, some disturbing, many mesmerizing, and all opening my eyes to things I would never have discovered working third shift or driving a forklift, nor even things I imagined when I decided to go to library school.

- I saw pervasive poverty in Havana, and libraries ravaged by war in too many countries.
- I saw the expansive Serengeti plains, and the blue-green Great Barrier Reef.
- I saw determined Illinois librarians successfully defeat eighteen attempts at mandatory statewide Internet filtering legislation (more than any other state in the nation, I believe); and thwart three attempts to change the state's obscenity laws; as well as stave off several challenges to user privacy laws.

Everywhere, I met remarkable people who have taken tremendous risks, accomplished worthy goals, and demonstrated great courage.

I can close my eyes and see those friends—across the U.S. and all over the world.

I have been proud to work side by side with them in organizations that have truly helped many people—including many who have been isolated, bullied, discriminated against, or ignored.



As I reflect on these and other remarkable, rewarding experiences that have sprung from my accidental librarianship, I have two thoughts.

First: Experiences like the ones I've been so lucky to have are available to everyone in this room who wants them. But you have to pursue the opportunities and make them happen. Our profession—and, if you believe the stereotype, our personalities—might not lean toward the risk-taking end of the spectrum, but I'm here to say: Go for it! Become active in your state library association, or in the ALA. Freedom of expression, literacy, diversity, public programs, public policy, digital content—whatever you're interested in, there are opportunities to learn and to help.

And second: Even if your job hasn't required you to travel the world, or the U.S., or even drive your own state from north to south to east to west, in the end we all share something in common. The one thought I've carried with me throughout my career, and the one I'd like to leave you with is this. The fight to make information available and accessible to everyone is what keeps this profession, and all of us who practice it, relevant and vibrant. It inspires us and motivates us, because we have been the beneficiaries of free and open access to this world of information, a right guaranteed to us by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. The freedom we are granted by those forty-five words opens our minds, enriches our lives, and takes us to places we never imagined. It's our job to make sure everyone else has that same opportunity. **ILA**

“Everywhere, I met remarkable people who have taken tremendous risks, accomplished worthy goals, and demonstrated great courage.”



Trendspotting: Once and Future Fandoms

Fans of the British sci-fi program, *Doctor Who*, call themselves Whovians. The passion for the series, which began in 1963, has spanned generations and generated a spin-off series called *Torchwood*, along with book tie-ins, toys, and games. They hold an annual convention, the Chicago Tardis, which brings together more than two thousand fans every Thanksgiving weekend.

Whovians are but just one example of the many fandoms you might find in your library and around your community. Fandoms at the most basic level are a group or community of people who share a passion for a certain thing, whether it be a celebrity, book, musician, TV show, movie, etc.

Other popular fandoms include Sheerios (Ed Sheeran fans), Bronies (My Little Pony fans), Thronies (Game of Thrones), and Sherlockians (Sherlock Holmes fans). There is even still a huge following for the 1990s boy band, New Kids on the Block, who refer to themselves as Blockheads. Whatever the interest, there just may be a fandom out there.

So what should the role of libraries be and why do we care? According to ALA's Center for the Future of Libraries, "as a tool for constructing community and identity, fandoms may help further libraries goals to be centers of community and engagement. Fandoms may also help libraries bring together diverse individuals around shared culture and/or engage individuals who had not previously participated in the library's services."

"Fandoms may help further the library's goals to be centers of community and engagement."

CASE IN POINT: POTTERHEADS

One of the biggest fandoms reported by libraries is Harry Potter, which comes as no surprise. And it isn't just for the kiddos; muggles of all ages seems to love the *Harry Potter* universe.

The head of reference & reader services at the Plainfield Public Library District (PPLD), Michelle Roubal, maintains, "Harry and his friends appeal to all of us, young and old. We were all once students struggling with the same things in the real world that Harry confronts in the wizarding world—friendship and loyalties, loneliness and bullying, competition and choices."

In partnership with nearby libraries and the local community college, PPLD chose "celebrating twenty years of Harry Potter" as the theme of their community read. The opening event featured Harry Potter trivia and costume contests. Then, for the month of February, patrons were encouraged to attend one or more of many programs offered, or to read a Harry Potter book or read-alike to be entered in prize drawings. The final event culminated in a magic show and contest of artwork in any medium inspired by Harry Potter. According to Roubal, "I've been involved with community read programs for over a decade, and this twentieth anniversary Harry Potter celebration was by far the most successful one yet, due to the incredible continued popularity with Potter fans."

Students at the Columbia College Chicago Library expressed great interest in Potterdom during trivia nights supported by the Muggles Association of Columbia. A hunt for the sorcerer's stone highlighted riddles and quests featured in the book, but also promoted other library resources.

The interest in Harry Potter doesn't seem like it will wane anytime soon. With new movies and books in the works, libraries can bet on a continued interest.

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"You want weapons?

We're in a library!

Books! The best

weapons in the world!

This room's the

greatest arsenal

we could have."

chicalookate

Doctor Who

FANDOM 101 FOR STAFF

Sometimes fandoms have languages all their own. Would “Team Jacob” or “Team Edward” mean anything to you if you never got into the *Twilight* craze? So how exactly do library staff integrate themselves in fandoms?

Libraries admit that most staff have a passion for some fandom, so make sure to tap into that knowledge from your coworkers, from pages to your library director. It’s simply human nature to have passions! Lauren Chambers, adult & teen services librarian at the Urbana Free Library, created a “guess the fandom” display for their comic con and reached out to staff for objects across fifty different fandoms. She was pleased with the response, receiving a variety of items from *Game of Thrones* to *Sherlock*, *My Little Pony* to *Guardians of the Galaxy*.

“Yes, my coworkers are crazy nerdy,” says Melinda Mathis, teen librarian at Napa County Library (CA). Personally, she is interested in *Supernatural* and *Doctor Who* and can name several coworkers with these same interests. The staff also contend that they love all comic books, minions, and even wrestling.

Columbia College Chicago’s (CCC) focus on art means many students and staff alike are well versed in media and art forms, even more so than the general public. Joy Thornton, access services assistant, tells about a Cinema Arts and Science major and staff member who “can tell you any and everything about any movie that has ever been made...either because he’s a robot or because he’s been studying his craft since he was a kid.”

SAFE SPOTS & FUTURE FANDOMS

Columbia’s Thornton feels the programming they offer for fandoms “transforms the library into a social place where you can meet people who have common interests. It’s also bringing people in who would never have otherwise walked into the library.” For some, the library may be the one safe place to express some less-than-conventional interests: “In the CCC Library, we love strange,” says Thornton.

At Evergreen Park Library, teen assistant Mary Black mirrors what is happening at Columbia College Library. “I had a group of teens whom I’d never met before come in on their day off from school and use the teen room to play *Dungeons and Dragons*. It was incredible to listen to them explain their game.” With school being out for the summer, she has invited them to use the library’s teen space as their summer hangout.

Tracie Amirante Padal, librarian at Palatine Public Library District, believes, “When a library hosts an event that supports and validates a fan’s passion, and those fans leave the program with a positive feeling about the library—that’s priceless. And that’s the whole point: it’s the thing that drives everything we do.”

Fandoms will always change and morph into something new as they follow trends and fads, but this urge to be with like-minded fans is here to stay and hopefully libraries will continue to be a hotspot for these passionate groups. For your library’s fans of these popular titles, be on the lookout this fall for another Robert Langdon thriller from Dan Brown, reboots of *Roseanne* and *Will & Grace*, the return of *Stranger Things* in October, Marvel’s *Thor: Ragnarok*, and *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* in December. **IA**

Top Fandoms of 2016

- ★ 5 Seconds of Summer (Top Music - Band)
- ★ Ali Krieger (Top Athlete)
- ★ *Captain America: Civil War* (Top Movie)
- ★ Chocolate (Top Food)
- ★ The *Harry Potter* series (Top Book)
- ★ Kylie Jenner (Top Reality Star)
- ★ *Steven Universe* (Top TV Show - Animated)
- ★ *Supernatural* (Top TV Show - Live Action)
- ★ Taylor Swift (Top Music - Solo Artist)
- ★ Undertale (Top Video Game)

Source: Tumblr Fandometrics, <https://thefandometrics.tumblr.com/tagged/tumblr2016>

Fandoms: Subcultures on the Rise!

If you've gone to a movie theater, turned on the TV, logged onto social media, or walked down the toy aisle at any major department store recently, you've noticed that the days of keeping one's nerdy interests on the DL are gone. Individuals express their allegiance to the pop culture they love on t-shirts, jewelry, backpacks, shoes, nail designs, cellphone backgrounds, and even tattoos. And in case you didn't know there was a name for this, these allegiances are called fandoms.

Everyone is keen on being involved in the fandom craze, and libraries are no exception. Rather than simply an opportunity to cash in on a trend, pop culture and fandom are great resources to use in creating programs that are timely, relevant, and responsive, which in turn keeps things fresh and patrons coming back. More than just a passing fad, interest in a topic so strong that it has a fandom behind it can trigger interest in other library classes and services and is actually a way to build and foster community.

Fans are brought together by their fervent devotion to a fictional book, TV show, movie, game, sport, and more. Often characterized, in part, by the feelings of empathy and camaraderie felt with fellow members over their shared interests, these are groups with strong ties. While the pervasiveness of the Internet and social media brings fans together in ways previously unavailable, and large-scale gatherings like San Diego Comic Con and the Chicago Comics and Entertainment Expo (C2E2) give them opportunities to interact in real life, libraries are in a unique position to be able to offer in-person social interaction and celebration on the local level.

Library staff tend to be both eager and hesitant at the same time to enter this new realm of programming. There are as many fandoms as there are members of the *DC* and *Marvel* universes combined, so where to start? As each library differs widely in terms of service area, patron base, and budget, the key is looking at what you've got to work with, keeping an open mind, and not being afraid to take a few chances. As libraries respond to more fandoms, they will be better equipped to quickly plan for popular interests.

FINDING THE FANS

It is as important to keep up with fandom trends as it is to carry best-selling authors and movies in the library. Learning about which fandoms are popular in your community is often a matter of patron watching, which of course many library staff do already. Patrons will come in dressed for a particular fandom—this was especially evident during the Cubs' 2016 season! Sometimes comic costumes or anime characters are regular sightings around the library, and their distinctive looks are hard to miss. Passionate patrons will be at EVERY program on a particular topic.

Another place to look is at your circulation statistics. Are there certain graphic novels that go out especially often? What about movies, video games, and novels? At the Schaumburg Township District Library (STDL), fandoms that we see as especially popular among our patrons include *Star Wars*, the *Marvel* and *DC* universes, *Stranger Things*, *Harry Potter*, fantasy series such as *Doctor Who*, *Shadowhunters*, and *Game of Thrones*, steampunk, and of course, sports fandoms. Some fandoms do wane, or morph into something else. Twilight fandoms have mostly gone away, as well as most things having to do with vampires. Hunger Games fans have found other survival and adventure movies and series to watch with strong female leads such as *The 100*, *Wonder Woman*, and *Star Wars: Rogue One*.

In addition to checking out your circulation statistics, think about which programs are especially popular at your library. When the CSI television franchise began, forensic and mystery programs were especially popular. Drawing programs may be popular with comic fans, as well as anime and manga aficionados who wish to design their own. Offering a trivia or fan fiction contest can also be a good way to gauge interest before planning a series of events. Our library hosts a general fandom event within our Comic Con each year that includes trivia from several popular fandoms, a craft like slime-making or butterbeer, and games with popular

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characters. Teens and adults at the event are polled about which fandoms they belong to. When new *Marvel* or young adult books/movies are released, the library hosts fandom nights or kickoff parties with related activities. Monitoring popular movies, TV shows, and Netflix trends are good ways to gauge fandom interest.

PROGRAM PARAMETERS

Usually at least a few staff members are watching the popular series, or attend cosplay (costume + play) events in the most popular fandoms. Often they will suggest things to other library staff members. But if a suggestion is made from a group of teens on a fandom that staff are not familiar with, there are some ways to quickly immerse into a new world. For example, staff may not be familiar with all the incarnations of *Doctor Who*. First, research the series, and try to watch at least one episode with each of the main actors. Second, look at Tumblr and Pinterest—many fandoms live there, as well as fan art. The most popular characters, ships, crafts, and activities will pop up on those sites even under simple searches like “*Doctor Who* crafts.” Search also for library programs on Doctor Who as well as high school or

community college clubs on that theme. If staff are still not comfortable enough to host simple crafts, treats, or trivia contests, they may build a 2-D or 3-D Tardis and see how many people want their picture taken with it. Having a key symbol for a fandom and seeing how it is received may help determine parameters for a fandom, such as most popular age of fans, what they wear, which library materials they like. It is definitely possible to dip a toe into most big fandoms, even without an in-depth knowledge.

Some basic activities work with almost any fandoms. As mentioned above, trivia can be adapted to many fandoms. Green-screen photography or simple interactive prop displays are popular. Used figurines could be incorporated into a stop-motion animation program to make short movies with an app, iPad, and a tripod. Charms can also be purchased for patrons to make simple necklaces or key chains. Small, used figurines can be made into key chains or necklaces as well, or glued onto lamp bases for craft programs. Simple costume design can include mask decorating for superheroes, gear charm key chains or necklaces for steampunk fans, printable iron-on transfers or 3-D printed figures for gamers to wear on shirts, bags, or as key chains.




Craft or food programs can be linked to many fandoms. There are cookbooks and recipes online with simple, child-friendly recipes for many big fandoms including *Star Wars*. The author's or characters' favorite treats could be served or made, for example, cheesecakes for a Stephen King program (a favorite of his). Cookies can be decorated for fandoms with *Shadowhunter* runes or *Harry Potter* horcruxes, or with popular team colors and logos.

SHARING INFORMATION

Promote patron creativity through their interests. Involve teens and adults in fan art contests or fan fiction contests to celebrate an upcoming movie sequel or book release. Offer a costume design contest for steampunk accessories or characters. Invite patrons to come in costume or cosplay, then have them discuss how they made or put together their costumes so everyone leaves with ideas. Having a daily display with quotes for patrons to identify can help promote a fandom or an upcoming fandom event, an activity that can also work on Twitter or a Facebook page.

For fan events that pop up quickly, like *Stranger Things* or *Pokémon Go*, libraries polled each other to see which programs worked. Several libraries posted Christmas light displays for *Stranger Things* or created spur-of-the-moment library *Pokémon* hunting events by dropping lures within a couple weeks of those popular trends. Again, Tumblr and Pinterest can be great resources as people will quickly post what they are doing to celebrate trends.

Fandom programming is a chance for staff to get creative and receive input from others not always involved in programming. It's a great way to discover hidden talents and interests in your staff and encourage them to take an interest in programming, thus promoting your programs from within. Offering the freedom to incorporate staff's own fan interests into programming and outreach encourages staff buy-in and makes for happier staff. It is an opportunity for staff members to show their passion to the community and geek out with like-minded patrons.

And you never know, staff may find a new fandom for themselves after researching and planning! 

“Offering the freedom to incorporate staff’s own fan interests into programming and outreach encourages staff buy-in and makes for happier staff.”



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Good Girls and Last Lies: Q&A with Author Mary Kubica



An Illinois native living in the southwest suburbs, Mary Kubica took the reading world by storm with the success of her debut novel, *The Good Girl*, in 2014. In *Every Last Lie*, her newest psychological thriller released this summer, a woman loses her husband in a car crash that her daughter survived unharmed and she begins to suspect his death wasn't an accident. With several best sellers under her belt, the *ILA Reporter* asked Kubica to talk about her writing process and what reading and libraries mean to her.

Q: Tell us about the first story you remember reading (or one that was read to you) and the impact it had on you.

I can't say that it's the first—it definitely wasn't—but it's one of the first that I remember and one that has stuck with me for a long time. When I was a girl, even when I could read myself, my mother would sometimes read aloud to me before bed. It was something I always looked forward to. At some point in my elementary school years, she read Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* to me, and I absolutely loved the aura and mystery of the Tuck family, as well as watching the friendship between Winnie Foster and Jesse Tuck build on the page. To this day, it's one of my favorite books of all time, as it truly instilled a love of reading within me, something that only flourished over time.

Q: Do your characters sometimes hijack the story or do you feel like you're holding the reins?

They do! I often have an idea of who my characters are when I begin a novel, but at some point in the writing process, a phrase emerges or a character does something that really solidifies for me the person they are and the impact they're going to have on this book. It's certainly something unintentional that happens during the process, but for each novel I've written, I can honestly say the plot emerges in ways I never would have planned, and I have the characters and their unpredictable nature to thank for this, no doubt!

Q: Do you have any writing rituals?

I'm an early bird. I love getting up at 5:00 A.M. every day to write. It's absolutely my favorite and most productive time of the day to work, with my first cup of coffee and while my mind has yet to be bogged down with all those thoughts that arrive with daylight.

Q: If you could tell your younger writing self anything, what would it be?

To write like no one will ever see my work. My earlier manuscripts and stories were very inhibited. There was a voice in the back of my mind that constantly wondered what a reader might think of my work—or what my parents, sisters, and friends would think of it—and for this reason, I was more constrained. I held back in my writing, and my work suffered because of it. It was only in letting go of those concerns that I felt my writing had the ability to be more honest and to truly shine.

Q: How do you select the names of your characters?

I try to choose names that feel suitable to the character, which sometimes means that they change during the process. I like to mix traditional names with something a bit more modern, and sometimes rely on a family name or a name that I simply like. In *Don't You Cry*, the narrators Alex and Quinn share my own children's middle names. In *Every Last Lie*, the character of Maisie shares a name with my great-grandmother.

Q: What is the most difficult part of your artistic process?

Quieting the voices in my head. Writing is a process that can play games with the mind. One day I love my manuscript and the next I hate it. The most difficult part of the process is silencing those doubting voices and putting my all into the manuscript every single day.

Q: Have you written any books that are not published?

I have a number of unfinished manuscripts that predate my debut, *The Good Girl*, but I have only one completed manuscript that's not been published. It was written between my second and third novels, *Pretty Baby* and *Don't You Cry*, and quite simply, though it had a premise I loved and was excited to write, it didn't come across so well on the page. My editor and I made a unanimous decision to set that manuscript aside and focus on a clean slate, and thus, *Don't You Cry* was born.

Q: Where is your favorite place to write?

At home. I find that I'm far too easily distracted to write anywhere public, and so I do my writing at home. If I'm alone—when the family is off to school and work—I'll park myself at the kitchen table or the living room sofa to work, but when they're home, I stay in my office.

Q: What's your favorite under-appreciated novel?

Pretty Baby. For whatever reason, it didn't fare as well as my other novels, though it's one that has always held a special place in my heart. I loved the story and the characters (Willow especially), but for me, it's the novel that solidified the fact that I can write and that my first novel, *The Good Girl*, wasn't only a stroke of luck.

Q: What is something memorable you have heard from one of your readers?

I love hearing from readers. What is the most memorable to me is anytime readers share with me how much they've been touched by a character or a story line. Writing is quite a solitary endeavor, and so to see the way that your novel impacts another human being means the world to me.

Q: Is there anything you can share about your next book?

I'm just finishing up my fifth novel, called *11 Days*, which is still a work-in-progress, and so I can't speak to it too much, other than to say it's a novel about mistaken identity and a young couple's struggles with infertility. Look for it in the summer of 2018!

Q: Tell us about what libraries mean to you, as an author.

I adore libraries. They offer such a wonderful community feel and are an amazing way for readers and writers to connect. I visit many libraries, both locally in-person and throughout the country via Skype, and have met a great number of librarians and patrons, all of whom have been so supportive of me. I love that libraries offer all people an equal opportunity to read, and access to those things that they love to read.

Readers' Advisory Note: With a Chicago setting in most of her novels, Kubica's books are a sure bet for readers of *The Woman in Cabin 10* and *The Girl on The Train* who are clamoring for more. To book Kubica for a book discussion or author visit, she can be reached through her website at <http://marykubica.com>.



Meet the Avengers

At a special session at the recent American Library Association Annual Conference, Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden held a conversation with the directors of three of the country's largest and most adventurous urban libraries: Chicago Public Library's (CPL) Brian Bannon, San Francisco Public Library's (SFPL) Luis Herrera, and New York Public Library's (NYPL) Tony Marx. She began by referring to this as her Oprah moment (but promised not to make anyone cry), then called them to the stage, one by one, and referred to them as "avengers," suggesting something other than the library stereotype.

Hayden asked each of them to explain how they came to the profession, what called them, and what makes them who they are today. These are three very different men, even on the surface—one in a coat and tie, one in a coat but no tie, the third in jeans and sneakers. Three different starting points:

Herrera talked about his fear of the "library police" when he was a boy, some unnamed force that would come to reclaim the books he'd taken home. Today, he believes eliminating barriers is the most important thing libraries can do.

Bannon thought libraries were the least likely place he'd end up, but a college professor suggested he consider library school. He believes libraries have a radical mission to connect more broadly to the world outside their walls.

Marx, former college professor and college president, is not an MLS librarian, but believes there is no other institution that can do what libraries can do in terms of education and opportunity.

Hayden asked them each to talk about the big challenges that face all libraries, but especially those that big city libraries need to address. Again, three different examples emerged of how their libraries are meeting some of those challenges and the ones that remain.

San Francisco has just announced seven-day-a-week service at ALL city libraries, dubbing it EVERY LIBRARY, EVERY DAY—talk about removing barriers. At the same time, one of the challenges that remains is making sure libraries are safe places. Herrera said, "Every public policy issue comes to our doors, and we need to be able to provide access and public safety at the same time."

In Chicago, the focus is on the library as a place. The counter trend to flat or declining circulation is physical use of the library going up two and three times, as more people claim the space as their own. The most dramatic example is Chance the Rapper, a former teen library user, coming back to CPL as a three-time Grammy winner to host monthly events. For Bannon, this means finding ways to turn the space over to users and collaborating with non-library players and institutions in radical new ways.

And in New York, the outside perspective that Marx brings sees the library as having three advantages: there is more trust in libraries, their mission is clear; they have scale and scope, they are a place for all as society fractures into more and more segments; and they are less constrained than many other institutions in their capacity to innovate. But they are no longer the only game in town, they need to compete for users—compete with screens, with other media, for mental activity. And according to Marx, libraries are losing that battle, and will continue to do so until they learn to sell and promote themselves, using muscles they've not yet developed.

Three different cities, three different sets of challenges, three different avengers. Despite those differences, or maybe because of them, these thoughtful responses gave rise to a sense of power and optimism. This is not a time for platitudes and praise, but for blunt talk and big ideas. All three delivered. **ILA**



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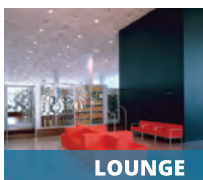
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