

ASSOCIATION OF WISCONSIN SPECIAL LIBRARIANS | AWSL

A DIVISION OF THE WISCONSIN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Leadership

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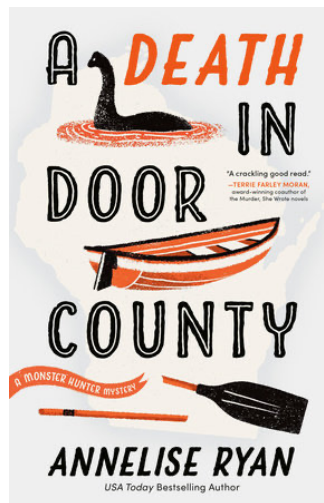
Next Business Meeting

Watch the listserv for date and details for our next business meeting.

All AWSL members and interested WLA members are encouraged to attend!

Summer Book Discussion

This August, AWSL will be hosting a summer book discussion over Zoom in place of our regularly scheduled coffee chat. We will be discussing *A Death in Door County*, by Annalise Ryan.



When: August 14, 2026 at 10:30am

Where: Join [Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 825 4764 2395

Passcode: 513720

Morgan Carter, owner of the Odds and Ends bookstore in Door County, Wisconsin, has a hobby. When she's not tending the store, she's hunting cryptids — creatures whose existence is rumored, but never proven to be real. It's a hobby that cost her parents their lives, but one she'll never give up on.

So when a number of bodies turn up on the shores of Lake Michigan with injuries that look like bites from a giant unknown animal, police chief Jon Flanders turns to Morgan for help. A skeptic at heart, Morgan can't turn down the opportunity to find proof of an entity whose existence she can't definitively rule out. She and her beloved rescue dog, Newt, journey to the strait known as Death's Door to hunt for a homicidal monster in the lake—but if they're not careful, she just might be its next victim.

Chair Report

By Daphne Goldfinch

When I first attended the fall WLA Conference in November of 2025, I had just moved back to Wisconsin and started as a law

Lead a Town Hall!

Would you like to lead a Town Hall for your fellow special librarians? To sign up, contact Daphne Goldfinch daphne.Goldfinch@wicourts.gov

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.

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.

librarian. It was the first library conference I'd ever attended, I didn't know anyone, and I had no idea what to expect. What I found was a community of amazing humans who welcomed me in immediately - and convinced me to be their next vice chair. By the end of the conference, I had monthly AWSL meetings to look forward to and a new understanding of the small, unique spaces that make up Wisconsin's special libraries.

From librarians working at specialized academic libraries to those at government agencies, AWSL brings together perspectives from all corners of the information sciences. We've continued our virtual monthly Coffee Chats (plus tea, interrupting cats, and other shenanigans) to stay updated on the goings-on at each other's libraries. We've had speakers on AI and government information, and are looking forward to a summer bookclub.

From a more logistical perspective, my goal this year is to increase AWSL engagement and membership. AWSL is already a thriving community, but we've got an entire year ahead of us to make an impact on the library world in Wisconsin. Although most of us work at different libraries that deal with very different subject-matters, we are connected by our love for information and passion for information accessibility. It is important that everyone working in a special library has the opportunity to connect through AWSL.

I'm honored that AWSL has taken a chance on me and given me the opportunity to serve as Chair this year. I'd love to hear your thoughts about what you would like AWSL to look like in the future - shoot me an email!

AWSL Book Swap @ 2026 WLA Fall Conference

Join AWSL on Thursday, October 22 at 4pm for a fun book swap.

Last year's book swap was such a success that we're doing it again! Bring any genre or type of book, books, or no books, and add them to the swappable collection. Take as many as you'd like and meet new librarian friends. Snacks and refreshments will be provided. Stay tuned for location information closer to the conference.

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. 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

Coffee Chats

Bring your tea, your coffee, or just yourself and join us on Zoom. We'd love to hear your ideas for AWSL in 2026!

AWSL Coffee Chats are held on the second Friday of the month, 10:30-11:30am. Watch the AWSL listserv for connection details.

November 2025 Report from the AWSL representative to the WLA Board of Directors

By Anne Moser

I am sitting in my dining room, looking out at a beautiful landscape of snow. I keep wondering where the time has gone. It's been about a month since the fantastic WLA conference and I am still drawing inspiration from several excellent presentations and many conversations with colleagues. A highlight for me was meeting new friends at the AWSL social on Thursday. Huge thanks to AWSL Chair Carol Hassler, who served as conference chair this year, bravo!

The biggest news from the WLA Board is the hiring of our new executive director, Kara Sullivan. Kara comes to WLA with a strong background in nonprofit leadership, advocacy, and fundraising. Most recently, she served as Executive Director of the Friends of the Appleton Public Library, where she successfully led a \$12 million capital campaign to support the library's expansion while overseeing operations, donor relations, volunteer coordination, and community engagement.

The "work" of the Board continues and with a new executive director and new WLA president, priorities and initiatives will be set early next year. These priorities are always in service to you, our members. If there is anything you would like me to bring to the Board level, please let me know (akmoser@aquawisc.edu)

Thanks to Helen Murphy for agreeing to take on a leadership role with AWSL! I am looking forward to another great year.

AWSL Scholarship Winner – 2025 WLA Conference Reflections

By Noelle Brasch

In October, I had the wonderful opportunity to attend WLA's 2025 annual conference held in Middleton, WI. This year's theme was "Be the Change;" a focus on adaptability and collaboration that was built upon by all the keynote speakers and breakout sessions. From the personal to the institutional, the conference covered ways for us as librarians to address change for staff, patrons, and communities at large.

This is my first year as a member of WLA and my first time attending its conference! Having recently started at my first full-time library job post-grad, I was excited to meet and connect with fellow librarians from around the state. I was not disappointed! Throughout the conference days I chatted with folks in library related and adjacent roles who shared their experiences. Everyone was very welcoming and brought diverse insights to each session I attended.

I was most looking forward to sessions related to the emotional intelligence and resilience of library staff. Keynote speaker Rachel Williams gave a thoughtful talk on trauma-informed librarianship that emphasized seeing the full person (whether patron or staff) during difficult interactions. Something that resonated with me during this presentation was how smaller patterns are ripples that reflect larger structures of power. An important reminder that small changes can be a win. Two breakout sessions made related points about compassion fatigue and resilience for staff. Rally the Resilience emphasized that while empathy fuels connection, a lack of boundaries can cause resentment. Being resilient means having a foundation of self compassion. Another valuable reminder to take a deep breath and thank yourself just for showing up. Care Less reminded folks to act strategically not sacrificially: "every 'no' is a 'yes' to meaningful, sustainable work." Altogether, intentional decision-making is key to adaptability and resilience for libraries and staff.

Other memorable sessions discussed adaptability and collaboration on a larger scale. Board members from the non-profit Wisconsin Humanities discussed their response to federal budget cuts back in April. What lessons did they learn: to be transparent in communication, lean on existing relationships, and stay hopeful. I appreciated the presenters' honest reflection of this experience as well as the helpful takeaways. These felt like good guidelines for any institution going through major change. The very first keynote of the conference, Sandra Hirsh, explored where changes might take the library in the next decade. Discussing parts of her book, *Library 2035*, Hirsh noted how adaptability and community alignment has served libraries in the past. Continuing to be responsive to patrons by being prepared, user-centered, and initiating global collaboration were some of her visions for the future. In these unprecedented times, it's difficult to imagine how libraries will look just five years from now. Even so I found this presentation informative about the types of larger themes that could steer the role of libraries and librarians in our society. We are all experiencing change and the best thing we can do is look at ways to actively shape it.

Overall, this conference impressed upon me that to "Be the Change" requires resilience and advocacy. Despite the challenges we will face, healthy personal boundaries and a hopeful tone are important for

individual staff to thrive. On an institutional level, libraries should be trying to shape the inevitable change by prepping in advance. This includes cultivating relationships with library users, community stakeholders, and others. WLA reminded me why I went into librarianship in the first place: the people! My thanks to AWSL and its members for the generous grant without which I would not have been able to enjoy this uplifting series of events. It was lovely to meet many of you at the AWSL book-swap social. I look forward to continuing in WLA for many years to come.

WLA Conference Grant

The Wisconsin Library Association Foundation (WLAF) is excited to announce a new and expanded Conference Scholarship Program designed to help more members access valuable professional development opportunities.

This year, WLA is launching a new scholarship application process for the 2026 WLA Annual Conference. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and supporters, five scholarships of up to \$500 each will be awarded to WLA members to help cover conference registration.

The goal of the scholarship program is to reduce financial barriers to participation, encourage first-time attendees and those with limited employer support, and strengthen the diversity and vitality of Wisconsin's library community.

This new scholarship program replaces the AWSL conference scholarship offered in previous years. AWSL encourages all of our readers to apply for this new scholarship program! Don't wait! Applications close on August 21. Learn more and apply:

<https://www.wisconsinlibraries.org/scholarships-grants>

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