



February 2021

It takes a Neighborhood to Nourish a Children's Librarian

Hello neighbors,

We hope you all have had a good start to 2021! As you know, we took January off to evaluate the future of The Cardigan. 2020 took a toll on all of us, and we wanted to make sure that we were taking care of our own mental health, as well as contributing quality content to this newsletter. Therefore, the Cardigan will have quarterly issues in 2021. You will continue to see us on Instagram (@thecardigannewsletter) and we'd love to continue to hear from you about what you want to see in The Cardigan. If you'd like to contribute, don't hesitate to email us at thecardigannewsletter@gmail.com

I am excited about this issue as we have a couple of guest authors, highlighting some amazing resources. Be sure to check out Awnali Mills' review of STAR Net in our Play section and April Lee's amazing "Being Little in the Time of Covid-19" storytime. In early January, Katherine discussed on Instagram an important article about libraries doing wellness checks on their senior customers. Katherine continues this conversation in our Reflect section. Our sections also continue to evolve, so you will notice two new ones this month! In "Unlearn," we highlight an article unpacking the myth of neutrality, and in "Grow," Morgan shares her experience serving on book and award committees.

On Jan. 28, I attended a webinar titled, "Lessons in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Managing Change From Where You Are." I shared some quick notes on the Cardi Instagram and many of you were interested in a link to the webinar. The webinar has been posted on [Choice Media's YouTube Channel](#). We highly recommend this insightful webinar.

We look forward to what 2021 holds for The Cardigan and for you! We always want to celebrate milestones with you, as well as mourn these difficult times with you.

Cheers to 2021,

Allie

Learn

Virtual Accessibility: A History

Deepen your knowledge on a topic related to Children's Services.

Allie

NPR recently wrote an article titled, "[Parents With Disabilities Face Extra Hurdles With Kids's Remote Schooling.](#)" The article discussed how the pandemic has created a disparity of services, especially for

parents with disabilities who are now being asked to co-teach at home with their kids, but aren't receiving the necessary accommodations. This really got me thinking about how accessible we are making our digital programs and services. There are numerous articles, research, and laws about how to make our in-person programs and services more welcoming and accessible for all, but digital services is a relatively new frontier. In my quest to find more information about how to make our digital programs more accessible, I realized I needed to learn a history of disability rights in the digital age.

A Brief History

Let's just look at a brief history of disability rights and access to the digital world. This is not meant to be a catch-all, but does help us see some monumental moments in the quest for digital accessibility for EVERYONE.

- **Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.** In 1973, Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act required that when U.S. Federal government agencies develop, procure, or maintain, information and communication technology (ICT), that it is accessible to persons with disabilities.
- **The Kurzweil Reading Machine.** Ray Kurzweil made a reading machine for the blind. On January 13, 1976, the finished product was unveiled during a news conference headed by him and the leaders of the National Federation of the Blind. Called the Kurzweil Reading Machine, the device covered an entire tabletop.
- **First Commercial E-book for the Blind.** By the late 1980s, George Kerscher created the first commercial e-book for the blind. He chose not to patent his innovations in the hope that e-books would become appealing to those without print disabilities and thus make a plethora of information available to the blind.
- **ADA.** In 1990 ADA was enacted. While this predated the digital revolution, the Department of Justice interprets the ADA to require consideration of new technology.
- **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.** By 1998, the World Wide Web Consortium issued the first guidelines for ensuring that websites are accessible to all persons with disabilities.
- **First Court Case to Ensure Markets Insist on Accessibility.** In 2009-2010, the Reading Rights Coalition successfully resolved complaints filed with the Departments of Justice and Education against universities that had purchased inaccessible Kindles for the classroom. The settlement of the complaint required the respondent universities to no longer purchase any inaccessible e-book readers.
- **Access to E-books through Fair Use.** In late 2011, the Author's Guild and a number of individual authors sued universities whose collections had been digitized by Google, alleging copyright infringement and seeking impoundment of all the digital scans. The National Federation of the Blind and several blind scholars intervened as defendants in the litigation to argue that the new access to these digital books is nothing more than fair use and is also permitted under the Chafee Amendment to the Copyright Act. On Oct. 10, 2012, the court held that a university, in discharging its ADA obligations, may digitize its library as a fair use under copyright law because it is a "transformative use."
- **The Refresh.** In 2017, "the Refresh" was published in the Federal Register. The updated standards reflect changes in the technology landscape due to development of new technologies, the convergence of technologies and the increasingly multi-functional capabilities of products such as smart phones.

While it seems there have been many strides in making digital information accessible, there have also been many upsetting barriers that corporations and our government have refused to acknowledge. In the late 1990s and 2000s, many corporations still didn't think that ADA applied to the digital sphere.

For example, in 2006 Target was sued by the National Federation of the Blind because their website was inaccessible to users with visual disabilities. Target argued that the laws did not apply to its website because the website was not a physical place of public accommodation. The district court rejected Target's defense. Netflix is another corporation who wanted to dismiss a case referring to their lack of closed-captioning in some of their movies. In 2012, the National Association of the Deaf sued Netflix for this, but Netflix reasoned that because their video service need not have a corresponding physical location, it didn't need to be considered a public accommodation under the ADA. Thankfully, Netflix lost.

What Does This Mean for Us?

One of the library's core values is access to information *for all*. I think as children's librarians, we have a special opportunity to make sure that our physical and digital spaces really are accessible.

- **Learn.** I am just now starting this journey of learning more about the history of disability rights in both the physical and digital sphere. Take time to read articles, books, and watch documentaries (the source listed is a good place to start, but I'd love to hear your recommended content!) As Children's librarians, [Project ENABLE](#) is also a good place to start. It was funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services to help create "inclusive library and information services and programs" for school-aged children. This free, in-depth training consists of six modules and can be completed at your own pace.
- **Advocate.** One of the best ways to advocate is to make sure that our websites and programs are easily accessible. Are we captioning the videos we make? Do our websites meet accessibility compliance? (This includes us! We are going to do our best to make the Cardi more accessible!) Do our public computers have accessibility software? Consider a bookmark on your website discussing your accessibility services. I appreciate that our library has a [page](#) listing our services and resources.
- **Share.** Highlight stories of people with disabilities in your storytimes, book clubs, and displays.
- **Listen.** I hope the library will never act like the corporations listed above. I hope when we have patrons that come to us with suggestions or problems accessing our materials, we will listen and respond.

Sources:

- [Disability Rights and Access to the Digital World: An Advocate's Analysis of an Emerging Field](#) by Daniel Goldstein and Gregory Care
- [Digital services are making isolation easier – unless you have a disability](#) by Reuben Jackson
- [The ADA is turning 30. It's time that it included digital accessibility.](#) By Caroline Casey
- [Protecting digital accessibility ensures equal rights for disabled people](#) by Lainey Feingold
- [Why your website's lack of accessibility options is opening you up to lawsuits](#) by Andrea Hak
- [Access to Digital Resources and Services: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#)
- [Prioritizing Accessibility and Disability Inclusion at Your Library](#) by Webjunction

Unlearn

Fighting for Racial Justice

Katherine

[In a piece for Scalawag](#), journalist Jason Christian puts the experiences of Southern BIPOC Librarians front and center. We see: Black librarians who are called "too sensitive" for reporting a coworker who used the n-word, fear of retaliation, efforts by ALA that fall flat, and institutions that struggle to

manifest their values in light of looming threats of budget cuts. **It's an excellent reminder that "good feelings" and social media posts aren't enough to tackle the very real problem of structural racism in libraries, and that it manifests in a variety of ways.** The lack of communal and institutional support really stood out to me in this article: individual librarians are doing the work that should be a natural extension of a library organization. We've linked to this resource before, but it's always worth bringing up again: The Racial Equity Alliance's report "[Advancing Racial Equity in Public Libraries](#)." The document highlights the work of libraries around the country that have revised policies and services to better serve their community, ranging from low to high effort and risk.

Play

STAR NET Review

Play is a right! Learn quick tips to optimize play experiences in libraries.

Awnali Mills



A resource that no Youth Librarian should be without is [STAR Net](#). Standing for Science-Technology Activities & Resources for Libraries, this clearing house is a treasure trove of STEM information and activities designed for use in libraries. I first came across STAR Net when I was a new children's librarian looking for activities for a Science and Stories program for preschoolers. This website is like the greatest all-time rabbit hole for science information. I can literally spend all day looking at one thing after another – not because it isn't organized, but because it's fascinating! There is so much here that I could never attempt to offer a comprehensive description, but I will try to hit the highlights.

Trying to find a good STEM activity on a particular topic? Not only do they offer collections of activities, but a searchable interface which allows you to search by audience, content level, and difficulty, among others. They also link you to the original source of the activity, such as museums, science centers, and universities. If that was all they offered, it would be more than enough. But wait, there's more! A newsletter offers current information about events going on in the scientific community that focus on children and libraries. My only complaint with this is that the events are so current that my library rarely has enough lead time to act on the information. Hopefully this will change in the future.

Collaboration is an intrinsic part of STAR Net. My library recently joined the American Society of Civil Engineers in promoting their movie *Dream Big*, and advertised online interactive panels that featured women engineers, engineers of color, and more, while we offered take-and-make engineering kits that tied into the topics featured in the panels. All of which was facilitated by STAR Net. Having personally worked with people from STAR Net, I can say that they are incredibly helpful and eager to be of assistance to librarians. Even if you never speak to them personally, you will find the website to be invaluable. Find them at <http://www.starnetlibraries.org/>

Plan

Being Little in the Time of COVID-19

Learn about an interesting program you can easily replicate at your library

April Lee

Being Little in the Time of COVID-19 is a special storytime that I designed to provide a gentle opportunity to talk to children about all things COVID-19: keeping germs to ourselves, wearing a

mask, social distancing, not seeing loved ones and friends, and other activities we cannot do the same these days. So often as adults our first instinct is to shelter children from the hard and scary things of this world, but that is doing them a huge disservice. Children deserve our full respect, and one of the best ways to respect children is by being honest with them in a developmentally-appropriate manner.

For some parents and caregivers who attended, this was a perfect way to bring up this subject with their children. I did advise that grown-ups viewed this storytime with their children, due to the subject matter. Afterwards, I received positive feedback from patrons who appreciated the storytime and opportunity to talk to their children about COVID-19.



1. We started off reading *Germs are Not for Sharing* by Elizabeth Verdick. This was a nice way to open storytime, because it is important for children to understand where our germs come from, that we all have germs, and that they're not inherently bad, but that we should not share them with others.
2. In *Germs are Not for Sharing*, there is mention of singing a song while you wash your hands. So, we pretended to wash our hands while singing the Alphabet song.
3. Next, we read the ebook [Doing My Part](#) by Marta Drew. This is a fantastic ebook published by Montessori Material company Lovevery. The book features real photographs of a diverse family. Centered around a little girl, it shows her perspective on how hard it is to do things like stay socially distant from her grandparents. The repeating "Doing My Part" drives home the idea that by wearing masks and practicing other safe behavior during the pandemic, children are included in a part of a larger effort to keep everyone safe!
4. Montessori Assistant on Facebook has a wonderful song called "Even With My Mask On" which you can [watch here](#). We sang this a few times through, without my mask, with my mask on, and once through changing the lyrics to "even with my face shield." Some kids even had their masks handy and put it on for this song, which was adorable.
5. The last short, but sweet, ebook that we read was [Rainbows in Windows](#) by Yumi. It gave us the opportunity to end storytime on a positive, uplifting note!
6. We sang one last song called "I've Got My Mask On," also written and sung by Montessori Assistant on Facebook. You can [watch here](#).

Model Wearing a Mask

I wore my own mask on and off throughout the storytime. At the beginning of storytime, I wore it as a way to introduce children to what we were talking about. I emphasized that I'm still me, even with my mask on (as the song above goes)!

Emotions & Masks

I also spent some time talking about how to tell what people are feeling when they have their mask on. I put on my mask and made faces associated with emotions such as happy, surprised, sad, mad, etc. I asked the children to look closely at my eyes and watch how they changed with each emotion.

I showed them my face with and without the mask on so they could compare. I have seen matching card sets for kids about mask emotions, and I think they're genius. I just think this is such an important social-emotional skill to have in the time of COVID-19!

Extending the Conversation at Home

After storytime, I sent home this email to parents and caregivers with further resources:

- *If you are struggling, I see you.*
- *I am right here with you.*
- *Young child are not meant to sit behind a screen all day.*
- *Grown-ups aren't either.*
- *You cannot fix this for your child.*
- *You can sit with them in their hard feelings, and validate them.*

[-The Workspace for Children](#)

The best advice I can give you, when talking with your child about this virus, is to sit with them in their hard feelings, and validate them. Here are some talking points:

- You really miss your friends (your teachers, your grandparents, etc.) I know that.
- This is really hard.
- I am right here with you.
- I am listening.
- Being on a computer can be so frustrating.

When your child feels scared or sad, let them explore those feelings. Help them understand it is completely normal to feel that way. Get on eye level and pause to listen to their feelings.

Here are some talking points to help your children accept themselves, including all of their feelings:

- Do you want to tell me about it?
- I hear you. You feel scared because...
- I'm here and I love you.
- What would help you feel safe?
- Let's take some brave breaths.
- Instead of "You're okay," or "You're fine," try "I know this is scary for you. I get scared too sometimes. Let's problem solve together."
- My arms are open.
- I can see how sad you are feeling...
- Sharing all of your feelings is so important.

- I am right here with you.
- I'm listening.
- Tell me more about what's going on.

Further Resources

- [CDC's Recommendations on Mask Wearing](#)
- [More eBooks about COVID-19](#)

Grown-ups, I will leave you with one final thought to mediate on:

- *You are making the best decisions that you can right now. There is no perfect solution. You are enough for your child right now and always.*

- [The Work Space for Children](#)

Be well. Stay safe. Take care of your hearts and minds. Big hugs.

Ms. April

Follow-up Video: Face Mask Craft & Song ([watch here](#))

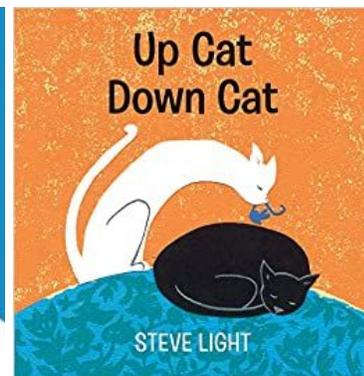
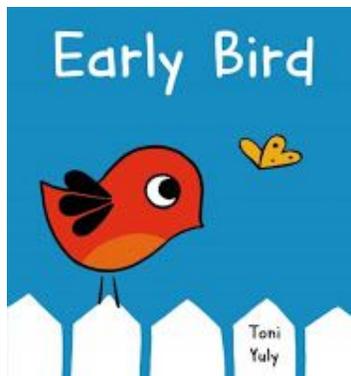
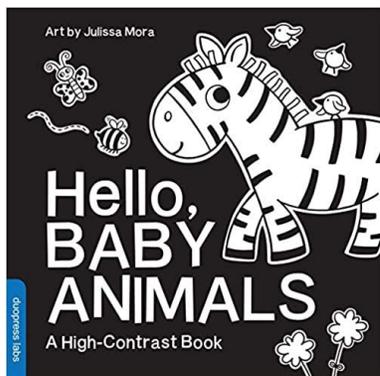
In this video I made for my library's YouTube, I show how to make a mask for your own puppet or stuffed animal at home. Ms. Bunny (my reoccurring puppet friend at all of my storytimes) wore her mask (an old heel of a sock!) to this special storytime. Making a mask for their stuffed animals at home is an activity that can definitely make mask-wearing less intimidating for young children. At the end of the video, I sing one of the songs that we sang at storytime (credit to Montessori Assistant), called "Even With My Mask On."

Be sure to follow April's beautiful website, <https://www.montessoristorytime.com/>

Consider

Books for Readers With Low Vision

Libraries are for everyone!
Katherine



Readers with low vision may enjoy books with certain features: high-contrast, textured, and in large print. Renee Grassi breaks down these categories in [a 2017 post for the ALSC Blog](#). High contrast

books rely on bold illustrations that allow a clear delineation between colors. Duopress has a wonderful series of board books (like the Hello Baby Animals book pictured above.) The “[High Contrast Flying Frog](#)” series also has great titles for babies and toddlers. [The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh](#) recommends Byron Barton’s picture books: the images use bright colors with large elements.

As Renee Grassi notes, it can be easier to find high contrast books for younger children. It is important for libraries to have materials for older kids and teens too. The website “Adaptive Umbrella” (a resource addressing accessibility in libraries) [tackles this issue and lists](#) some quality high contrast picture books. Having book lists for low-vision readers would be a helpful resource to have handy. If you have anything like this already made, please e-mail it to us so we can share with the rest of our readers! Or any other resource you have for low-vision readers.

Connect

J.L. Esplin

Discover new authors!
Allie



I read J.L. Esplin’s middle grade book, *96 miles*, in the summer of 2020 and I couldn’t put it down! This is a must purchase for your libraries, as all your survival/adventure enthusiasts will devour the book within a day. Enjoy our interview with J.L. Esplin below!

1. Tell us about your book *96 miles* and the inspiration for the book.

96 Miles is a middle-grade survival/adventure story about two brothers who must walk 96 miles down a deserted highway in middle-of-nowhere Nevada to reach help after a massive blackout hits the western United States while their dad is away from home. Without enough water and supplies, they only have three days to do it.

The inspiration for this story came from a childhood memory of my dad showing my siblings and me where we could find water around the house in case of an emergency. At one point, he gathered us into the bathroom and said we could drink the water in the toilet if we were really desperate, as long as we boiled it first. We were all pretty horrified by the idea, as you can imagine.

Decades later, while trying to come up with an idea for a new manuscript, this first sentence suddenly popped into my head: “Dad always said if things get desperate, it’s okay to drink the water in the

toilet bowl.” I had no idea what the story was about, I just started writing the first chapter based on that one sentence. At the start of 96 Miles, thirteen-year-old John and his eleven-year-old brother, Stew, are scavenging water from a toilet in an abandoned double-wide trailer (and not getting along very well), when siblings Cleverly and Will enter the same trailer looking for supplies. This happens because I thought... What would make this situation worse? Not only would it be a little embarrassing for John to be caught in the act of scooping water from a toilet, but now he’s also faced with a moral dilemma: Does he keep what little water they have for him and his brother, or risk their survival by sharing it with two complete strangers?

I wrote most of 96 Miles chapter by chapter, continually asking myself that same question: “What would make this situation worse?” That said, I did know some very important details about John and Stew right from the beginning, even though I don’t reveal those details until much later on. Because the story begins 21 days into the blackout, I use flashbacks to gradually reveal more about John and his brother, and to show how they ended up in that trailer in the first place. I wanted to write a high-stakes page-turner with a bit of mystery, but at its heart, I believe 96 Miles is a story about the love between two brothers.

2. What are some books that have had an impact on your life/writing?

Okay for Now by Gary D. Schmidt, and The Thief by Megan Whalen Turner. If you’re familiar with these books, I’m sure it seems as though they have nothing in common with the one I wrote. But I promise, 96 Miles wouldn’t exist as it is if it weren’t for these two books.

I wish I could also mention some books that had a big impact on me growing up, but unfortunately I didn’t read as a kid. I struggled with learning to read, and by the end of second grade, I just accepted the label of “bad reader” for myself. I spent the rest of my school years coming up with clever ways to avoid ever having to read a single book. It wasn’t until my early twenties—when I discovered my love of books and reading—that I realized the joke was on me! I think I would have loved books as a kid if I hadn’t been so anxious about my reading skills. But now I get to write books for kids and teens from the perspective of a once-reluctant reader, which makes for an interesting life plot-twist.

3. How can our readers connect with you?

The best way to reach me is through my contact page on my website: www.jlesplin.com. I always reply to emails sent through my website.

I’m also on Instagram (@jl_esplin_writes) and Facebook (J.L. Esplin), but I’m not great at checking social media, to be honest. That’s a much slower way to reach me. ;)

Read

Flora & Ulysses Read-a-Likes

Some of our favorite books.

Allie

If you’re like us, we are so excited to see how Disney+ adapts Flora & Ulysses by Kate DiCamillo to the small screen. While we wait for the motion picture, in the meantime read and share these read-a-likes to Flora & Ulysses! Also, once you watch the movie, let us know your thoughts. ;)



Grow

Serving on Committees

Grow from other people's experiences
Morgan Brickey

I spent the last eight years of my career serving in varying capacities for professional organizations, and for the first time since 2013, I am not on a book selection committee, developing a conference presentation, on a task force or reviewing books. On the one hand, this lack of obligation is a relief, but on the other hand, I'm on the prowl for new opportunities and challenges. I'm excited about what I can do next and how I can evolve professionally.

Throughout my career, many of my peers asked how I managed to become involved in so many professional-level opportunities on the state and national level. They assumed I was unique in my ability to become so heavily involved. And I'm here to tell you that, my ability is not unique and my formula for success is one you can follow too.

Getting involved outside of my little library bubble didn't happen overnight. Commitments to external organizations happen gradually and help you, your library system, and the profession as a whole grow. Personally, I got started by reviewing books for Voices of Youth Advocates (VOYA) magazine. A supervisor and mentor of mine knew that reading and programming for teens was of interest to me and encouraged me to become a reviewer. This type of mentor- and I hope you have one- is crucial in your growth as a professional. **It's paramount that you have a supervisor, a librarian peer, library director or even someone outside of your profession to let you know that your career and your opinion not only matter, but your words are worth publishing and being heard outside your organization.** While I was reviewing for VOYA, I also started reviewing materials for School Library Journal magazine. Soon after, I started writing articles for VOYA. My accomplishments in writing encouraged me to dip my toe in the waters of my statewide library webinar scene. Around this time, I also became a member of ALA.

This all led to an increase in confidence, and I developed an attitude of "why NOT me?" Why shouldn't I be a member of THIS task force or apply to be on THAT selection committee. I served on Teens Top

Ten, Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers and the Texas Bluebonnet selection committee. One year, I even applied for a program to be selected for YALSA's Margaret A. Edwards award, and I won! **To my library this meant, not only the accolade, but funds for more teen programming.** Very few libraries had applied for the award, so when I saw the opportunity I took it, and it panned out. Of course there were applications I put out that were not successful as well. I was never chosen to be an ALA Emerging Leader and I'm not on the Printz Committee. Kirkus never contacted me back about reviewing and SLJ has never tapped me to pen an article. PLA did not choose my presentation and there are many more forlorn applications and rejection emails that I'm forgetting. My point in telling you about my failures is that I still tried. But I wouldn't have been selected for the committees, grants and writing opportunities I did have if I did not apply at all.

During my career, and as I've tried to forge a path for myself on the state and national library level, I've worked for two different library systems. Both have been supportive of my involvement outside my library. There have been times when I've been fortunate to work on some of these projects at work. Often I do the work, like reading for selection committees, at home, on my own time. When attending conferences, there have been some that I paid my own way or for my own travel, and others the library or friends of the library paid my way. I can say the same for my professional memberships- they weren't always paid for by my library system. And I often had to ask for the library to cover my expenses. Sometimes they said yes and sometimes they said no, but I never would have known if I didn't ask.

With that being said, there is little about my career, programs or service that I consider exceptional. I went to the same library school you did, do the same storytimes you do and am not even on a management totem pole. I simply apply when the emails or magazines put out the call and I ask for the support of my library system. I do both of these things with the expectation that sometimes the answer will be "no." **I think many librarians are under the impression that committees are mounds of work (Trust me. They aren't), or that there are many more qualified applicants (Trust me. There aren't.) You are qualified, and your opinions, programs and words need to be heard.** I'm sure there are opportunities to serve in your district right now. Apply and be honest and realistic with the amount of time you have and your interest level. The next time you see a call to service, resist the urge to delete it. Instead, apply and see where your journey takes you!

Morgan Brickey - Arlington Public Library, Arlington, TX

Reflect

Wellness Checks for Customers

Where we reflect on the deeper questions.

Katherine

The Toronto Public Library made headlines last month when their [senior wellness check initiative](#) was covered in local news. Their goal is to contact 20,000 of their senior customers to conduct wellness checks and inform them of the library's modified services during the pandemic. I want to start off by stating this is an incredibly kind and thoughtful gesture. It sounds like it is very meaningful to customers and according to their website, staff appreciate the interaction. Community care is a concept I've learned more about this year, and I find it extremely valuable. However, this initiative is particularly problematic for several reasons:

1. **Library staff are not case workers and are not trained to provide wellness checks.**

What if a customer is not alright? Is the library supposed to refer them to social services? Are they expected to follow up? This opens Pandora's box and unleashes the potential for ethically ambiguous scenarios. Librarians are not therapists, social workers, hotline workers, or

healthcare providers. By providing wellness checks, the library is misrepresenting the expertise and role of its staff. This is a great example of “job creep:” when a person’s job duties slowly over time expand to encompass tasks they are not properly trained or compensated for.

2. **It places undue emotional labor on staff.** It is well documented that librarians are underpaid, stressed, and feel ill-equipped to handle the emotionally tense interactions they experience at work ([Garey & Hickey, 2019](#); [Nardine, 2020](#); [Wood et al., 2020](#)). Coupled with staff’s own needs during the pandemic, this will lead to burnout. We heard from several readers on Instagram who were asked to do similar work calling customers. They reported feeling exhausted and frustrated. I’m very grateful to work for a library that has provided paid time-off if we needed to quarantine, but I realize this is not commonplace. There are librarians who are dealing with their own COVID related health concerns, struggling to adapt to changing compensation levels, and caring for their families. Who is doing wellness checks on them?
3. **It is an invasion of customer privacy.** Calling customers out the blue, unsolicited, to advertise, feels like a significant invasion of privacy. There are less invasive ways to communicate with senior customers, like through targeted mailing campaigns. Phone calls are also more likely to lead to long conversations that are difficult to wrap up. How to explain to customers we need to hang up when we called them in the first place to chat about “cooking, cleaning, and the weather?”
4. **It potentially duplicates effort.** Are there other organizations calling seniors to check in on them? Places of worship? Senior centers? How can the library partner with them to better carry out this initiative? Libraries are one of the many institutions in a community’s social fabric. Librarians are great connectors and this seems like a missed opportunity to connect with an existing organization that specializes in this kind of community care.

I feel like a real party pooper here and I realize that I am approaching this as an outsider. The testimonials by staff and customers on the Toronto Library seem genuine, but I wonder how many staff didn’t feel like they could give a sincere endorsement of the program. This topic is complex: perhaps without this program the library would have to lay off its outreach staff. That’s a real possibility. If you have any thoughts or insight, or first hand experience with pandemic-related wellness checks, please e-mail us! We want to be sure to highlight multiple perspective.