

# wplla NEWSLETTER

A Publication of the Western Pennsylvania Law Library Association

## A Column of Content



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# Member News

What's WPLLA been up to all Summer?

- The Western Pennsylvania Law Library Association assisted with the Pittsburgh Prison Book Project in July.
- July was the 2025 AALL Conference in Portland, Oregon!
  - Morgan Mulzet (ACLA) received a donation to assist with expenses.
  - Victoria Swindle (Steptoe & Johnson) was on the Embolden Yourself panel & presented a poster.
- A return to monthly meetings starting September 18.
- September is also Library Card Sign-Up month! How is your library celebrating?

What's on your summer checklist? Do you have a 'big' Summer project? Do your routines shift as the seasons do? Are you prepared for the influx of students come August/September? May your air conditioning be fully functioning and your dehumidifiers emptied on the regular.

Here's some [tips](#) on dealing with humidity in libraries:

- Avoid temperature and relative humidity fluctuations. Remember, stable temps for storage and exhibition areas read between 65°F - 70°F and relative humidity should be between 30% - 50%.
- Have dehumidifiers? Empty them as needed! Having one (or four) within your space can assist with keeping the relative humidity stable which in turn prevents mold growth and pest infestations.
- Increase airflow. Having good airflow helps keep humidity low. It's rec'd to use fans in lieu of opening up a window/door. Keeping the windows closed ensures the warm outside air stays out.
- Check for leaks.
- Collection walkthroughs. Rove librarians, rove!

Enjoy the issue. Thank you to everyone who's assisted. Here's to many more. - Britiny

# Volunteer Outing

During the bright afternoon of July 13th, a group of WPLLA members donated their time to the Pittsburgh Prison Book Project (formerly known as: Book 'em) in Hazelwood - a suburb within Pittsburgh. Eli was our facilitator. He graciously welcomed us into the Spartan community building and led the group up the steps and into what almost felt like a dream. A classroom-turned-library with books on every subject imaginable. Each shelf was labeled with adorable handmade signs. The light entered the windows and gave the books a warmth that mirrored the heat outside. We were lucky to have air conditioning, as it was sparse throughout the rest of the center. After a brief introduction and example, WPLLA got to work fulfilling requests.

It's quite difficult to put exactly into words the gratitude felt when finding a book that fit the prisoner's request. It's more than elation, it's more than helpful, or doing a 'good deed' - it's necessary. Some requests were as broad as genre types (Romance, Sci-Fi, Action / Adventure) or author suggestions like James Patterson or George R. R. Martin or Tolkein. There were also requests for dictionaries, religious texts, self-help books, puzzle books, and even needlepoint.

The Pittsburgh Prison Book Project relies on donations (to assist with rising postage costs) and volunteers - individual volunteer slots fill up very quickly and are limited to about 10 people per session. Groups may also sign up for a sponsored session and pay a donation fee.

With enough interest, WPLLA will arrange another volunteer outing - perhaps sometime in the Spring. If there's anyone who was interested and missed this chance, there will be more opportunities to volunteer.





Pictured above: Dan, Matt, and Eli  
Photo Credit: Britiny Hommey



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# 2025 AALL Conference Highlights

By Various WPLLA Members

## **AALL 2025 in Portland: Reflections from a First-Time Attendee - Morgan Mulzet**

In July, I attended my first American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) Annual Meeting, along with the Conference of Newer Law Librarians (CONELL). I went hoping to meet colleagues from all over the country, swap ideas, and see how others are tackling the same challenges we face every day at Allegheny County Law Library (ACLL). Before I begin my recap, I want to extend a thank you to Dr. Joel Fishman for his generous \$250 donation as well as the WPLLA Board for their decision to award it to me. Your support helped make this first AALL unforgettable. CONELL provided the perfect warm-up before the main conference began. It combined networking, mentorship, and introductions to AALL's different specialty sections in a smaller, intimate setting. I met all kinds of law librarians, and while our jobs and patrons may look different on paper, the common threads were obvious. And yes, I surprised myself by enjoying speed networking.

The conference opened with Roosevelt Weeks, Director of the Fort Bend County Library. He called law libraries "the heart of the legal ecosystem" and urged us to work with other library types, especially public libraries, to build stronger connections. His message, to advocate together for broader access and to never stop learning, was a timely reminder for those of us in public-law settings to strengthen cross-sector ties and explain our value in ways that resonate beyond the profession.

Once the conference began, I went to check out the vendor hall. The vendor hall was a crash course in how quickly our field has evolved. In one corner, vendors were running live AI demos and, in another corner, sat AALL's time capsule. Created in the year 2000, it's filled with items contributed by AALL chapters and committees that capture a snapshot of law librarianship at the time. One area showed off a floppy disk from the AALL Diversity & Inclusion Committee with a handwritten note that

read, "Can you read this disk? HTML written with Microsoft Frontpage 2000. IBM disk. Good luck!"

Seeing that next to a live AI demo was the perfect reminder that our technology, language, and priorities all shift over time, and that part of our work is helping everyone (ourselves included) keep pace.

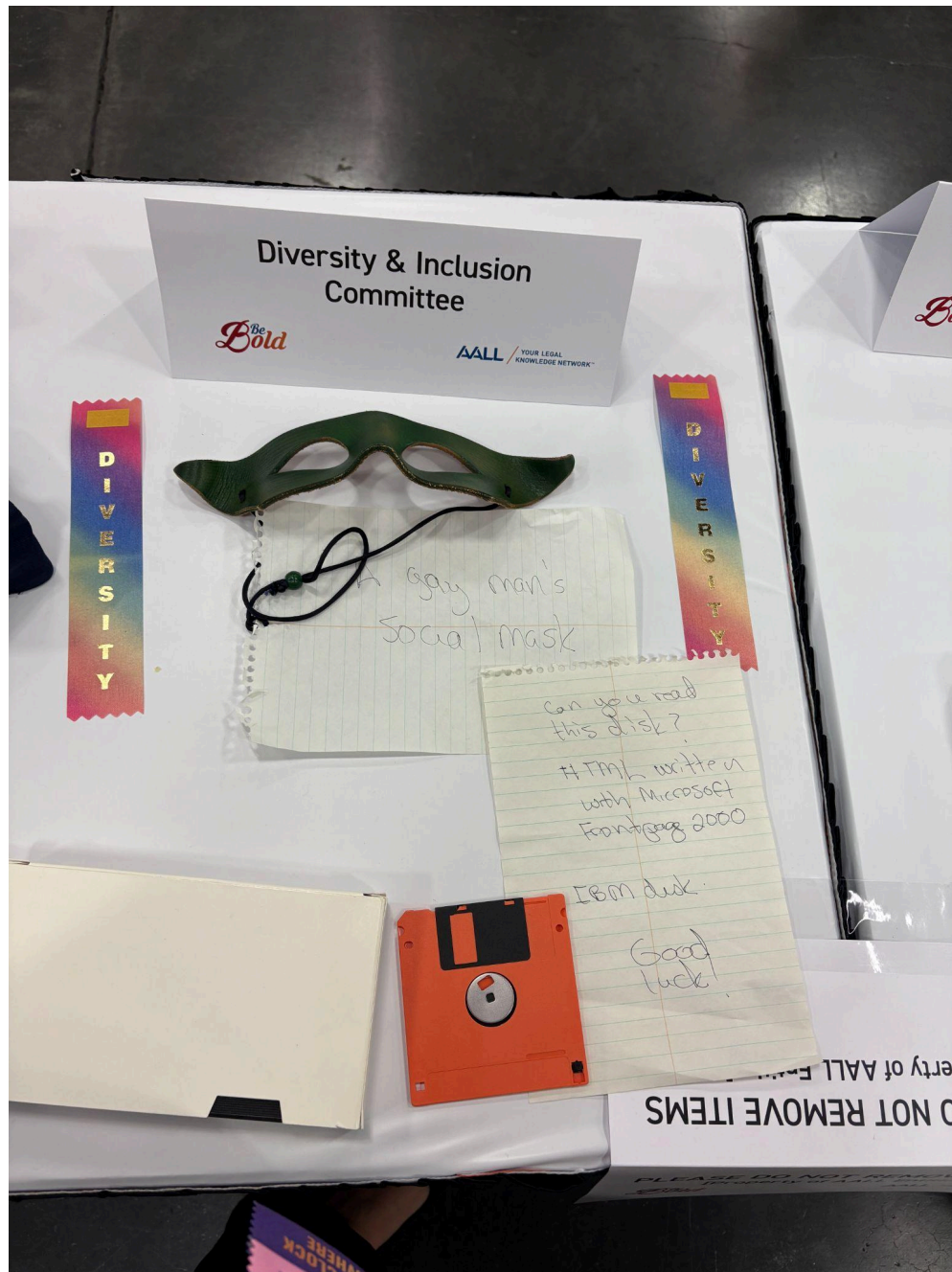


Photo Credit: Morgan Mulzet



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I chose a well-rounded selection of panels to attend but focused a majority of my attention on panels that I believed would be most relevant to our community and to our patrons. For the sake of space, I'll only mention 3 that I went to here:

- ¡Bienvenidos a la Biblioteca! Welcoming Spanish-Speaking Patrons to Your Law Library: Two public law librarians, one from Los Angeles and one from Louisiana explained how they worked to provide legal access to non-English speaking patrons. They worked closely with local language-access groups and courts, found ways to translate materials accurately, and adjusted programs so that non-English speaking patrons could utilize them, such as hosting “Lawyers in the Library” programs with a Spanish-speaking attorney. The big takeaway: language access isn’t an extra; it’s part of equitable reference service.
- Beyond the Stacks: Reinventing the Law Library Tour: This session discussed creating different types of library tours with specific focuses: a research-intensive walk-through for law students, a behind-the-scenes look for court staff, or a quick “here’s how we can help” overview for community partners. The most effective tours were short, targeted, and delivered with energy, aiming not to cover every corner but to leave visitors genuinely interested in returning.
- Rebuilding Lives: The Role of Law Libraries in Post-Incarceration Success: This panel focused on how libraries can support people returning to the community after incarceration. One panelist credited his local library with helping him get his ID, open accounts, and reconnect with the world outside of prison. Others discussed bringing legal resources inside jails and the realities of that work. It made me think harder about how our collections and partnerships can connect to reentry efforts.

AALL taught me that change is an inevitable part of our profession and that if we work together in community, we will learn how to evolve together. I came home with a renewed sense of appreciation for WPLLA and the connections that I’ve been able to form since joining. I’m very grateful

to have been welcomed so warmly by this community, and I am excited to keep learning and growing with you all.

### **2025 AALL Annual Conference Takeaways - Victoria Swindle**

Attending this year's conference in Portland, Oregon, was especially meaningful for me, as I was honored to be one of seven recipients of the New Librarian Grant (awarded to librarians within the first five years of their career).

The conference schedule struck a wonderful balance, offering sessions on AI, data, professional development, and personal interests. In one particularly memorable session, a presenter drew a parallel between today's anxieties about AI and the uncertainty librarians once felt when the internet was first introduced into library settings. Their message was clear: AI is here to stay, and while we must learn to adapt and integrate it into our work, the human touch remains essential—especially in the legal field.

I was also honored to serve as part of a panel discussion focused on offering advice to law librarians with only an MLS/MLIS degree. In addition, I presented a poster in the exhibit hall that explored the idea of *"Promoting Your Library Department with Firm Culture."* If anyone would like a copy of my poster or would like to discuss it, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. The following page includes some highlights that I captured during the conference.





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# Inspo in Recordings

## Reflecting on the 2025 AALL Conference via eLearning Platform

By Britiny Hommey

I recently finished listening to the recording: “The Power and Peril of Unfinished Work: How to Manage the Brain’s Obsession with Your To-Do List to Increase Emotional Well-Being and Productivity.” The three speakers were Crane, González and Simmons. The Body of Knowledge domain for the recording is Professionalism + Leadership at Every Level, as well as Management & Business Acumen. As someone who is constantly thinking of what the ‘next project’ could be and what still needs done - this “Unfinished Work” panel seemed right up my alley. To start, Crane spoke about open loops - which are unfinished tasks/projects caused by either 1. New tasks or 2. Interrupted work. There needs to be a plan for unfinished work, this will assist with some of the brainwork, but not the stress.

One solution to open loops is offloading. It’s important to offload information. One example of offloading info is when I had pages of notes and numbers and I knew that to move forward with my cataloging that I’d need a better way to look at and keep up with the data. Once I input everything into an Excel sheet, the data was much more manageable and organized. I was able to quickly progress with the project. Other solutions to open loops include: leaving work *at* work, creating a ritual for yourself, and intentionally ending your work day. This can be incredibly helpful to those who may work remotely to honor the division of work and personal time. One of my favorite solutions would be to intentionally interrupt creative tasks or to let them linger, because this “allows space for your unconscious to fully develop ideas.” One example of this would be coming across a puzzle, being stuck, taking a step away, then coming back and solving it - wondering to yourself why it was so puzzling to start.

González spoke about the “To-Do list problem.” The issue with to-do lists is that they vary in task, due date, structure, and accomplishment. While listening to González speak about various solutions, I found that I utilize some techniques without fully realizing it. For example, one solution to the list is to shorten it, or make it more concise. Other solutions for lists include: time blocking, managing a list via priorities, or renaming it entirely.

González also touched on many tools and apps that can assist with project management, focus, and habit. Other production strategies include: timeboxing, eating the frog (doing the ‘hard’ thing first), flowtime, task batching, the 2-minute rule, the 1-3-5 rule, and more. What works for you, may not work for everyone so see what fits your schedule, style, and project.

Simmons touched on mindfulness and flow state. Mindfulness is a skill and meditation is how we *cultivate* that skill. Consistent practice can give your brain the space it needs to think. Flow state should feel effortless - like you are “in the zone” or that time completely ran away from you. Other methods of being present were discussed (like touching grass, or barebacking) as well as quite a few books.

There were so many nonfiction books recommended throughout the panel like: *The Lazy Genius Way* and *The Plan* by Kendra Adachi, *Originals* by Adam Grant, *The Upside of Stress* by Kelly McGonigal, and *Outer Order Inner Calm* by Gretchen Rubin. The entire panel was a joy to hear. Check out the recordings and see if there’s something that inspires you. Who knows, you may even find out about a new caucus to join.

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# Six Dimes and a Nickel

By Linda Tashbook

The phrase "Six Dimes and a Nickel" is slang for 65 years-- the prison term assigned to author Damon West for engaging in organized crime. A life sentence like that is the extreme response to the famous question, "If someone took control of your life tomorrow, what's the first thing they would change?" Damon opted to flip the question into self reflection about what he needed to change about himself and he used his time in prison to make those positive changes. His efforts paid off with an early parole, just six years into his sentence.

Having figured out how to appreciate and learn from others, to recognize each individual's humanity, and to seek opportunities to be helpful, he got a masters degree and became a writer and motivational speaker after his 2015 release from prison. His third book, published this year and titled Six Dimes and a Nickel, is a very well written "guide for living." Filled with insightful questions and tasks for self-examination, it is truly engaging. His premise is that "everyone has unlocked potential to make their own lives better through helping others."

A Pitt Law alumnus donated several cases of this book to the law school, and having concluded that it really is an excellent book, I am building book club kits for any WPLLA librarians who would like a set (or more than one set) of free copies of the book along with the discussion activities I'm developing. I expect that the county law libraries would be the most likely to want these book club kits, but any of you are welcome to them. I will include whatever quantity of books you want in each kit. You can use these to host a book discussion in your library, to circulate to borrowers, or just to give away to folks who come to the library. Please contact me at [tashbook@pitt.edu](mailto:tashbook@pitt.edu) to make arrangements.



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# Caucus Highlight

## A Discussion with Heather Simmons from the AALL Mindfulness Caucus:

By Britiny Hommey

After listening to the previously mentioned webinar: “The Power and Peril of Unfinished Work: How to Manage the Brain’s Obsession with Your To-Do List to Increase Emotional Well-Being and Productivity,” I felt compelled to reach out to Heather Simmons after the brief call out regarding the informal Mindfulness Caucus. As a practitioner of meditation, and a reader of Gretchen Rubin, I knew making this connection would be beneficial. I arranged a virtual meetup after a brief email exchange with Ms. Simmons.

Our meeting was brief, candid, and full of opportunity. Heather was open about the way the caucus has seemed to plateau over the last few years - seeing as the founding members had moved onto other areas in their profession. I offered areas of encouragement noting that while some information may be outdated, there’s certainly interest in mindfulness - especially since 2020. I brought up the Mindfulness Institute for Emerging Adults - a group of which Heather is certified - and she mentioned a breathing technique that is known to give the user energy; albeit you may look funny while attempting, it truly works! We also discussed organizing a Coffee Chat through AALL to bring awareness and support to the Mindfulness Caucus - so be on the lookout for that event in the future!

Caucus memberships are open to all AALL members at no charge. If you’re interested in joining an informal, free membership group, maybe a Caucus would be up your alley. I’ve included the link to AALL’s community of caucuses [here](#). There’s everything from animal law to baseball, environmental law, neurodiversity, research, and teaching legal tech. What’s the difference between a Caucus and an SIS group? Caucuses are smaller and less formal. They can connect members with a more focused area of interest.

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# From the Shelf

A Selection of Recent Reads<sup>1</sup>

- *Wolf in White Van* by John Darnielle (2014)
  - This is a short contemporary fiction novel. A reclusive game designer whose face has been severely disfigured tells their story. It's reflective, sad, and if you're not paying attention, you'll blink and miss something. The story is not told in a linear way, but rather in pieces that form the overall picture.
- *The Four Tendencies: The Indispensable Personality Profiles that Reveal How to Make Your Life Better (and Other People's Lives Better, Too)* by Gretchen Rubin (2017)
  - Interested in some self-reflection? Look no further! Rubin asked, "How do I respond to expectations?" and discovered that people typically fit into Four Tendencies: Upholders, Questioners, Obligers, and Rebels. Rubin claims that tendency shapes behavior, so "understanding this framework lets us make better decisions, meet deadlines, suffer less stress and burnout, and engage more effectively."
- *Daikon* by Samuel Hawley (2025)
  - This novel is a suspenseful, what-if text in the setting of Japan, World War II. Love, outrage, war, this book has all these feelings and more. What-if three atomic bombs were actually delivered to the Pacific—not two—and when one of them falls into the hands of the Japanese, the fate of a couple that has been separated from one another becomes entangled with the fate of this terrifying new device.
- *11/22/63* by Stephen King (2011)
  - A time-travel thriller in which a high school teacher discovers a portal to the past and is tasked with preventing the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.
- *Everything Is Tuberculosis: The History and Persistence of Our Deadliest Infection* by John Green (2025)
  - A compelling nonfiction work that intertwines the story of Henry, a young tuberculosis patient Green met in Sierra Leone, with a deep historical, scientific, and sociopolitical exploration of TB, urging readers to recognize that the disease persists today.

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<sup>1</sup> If you would like to suggest a book you have read recently (fiction, nonfiction, audiobook, etc.) send an email to Britiny Hommey; include in the subject line: **WPLLA Newsletter Book Suggestion**.

# Last Call for Comment

## Job Opportunities:

- The Thurgood Marshall Law Library at the University of Maryland is looking for temporary research and reference support. This non-benefited contractual position is available for six months in both a part-time or full-time (up to 40 hours per week) capacity at the rate of \$25/hour. Candidates in Maryland or residing in any state that borders Maryland may have the option to be fully remote. Preference will be given to applicants with a JD and/or MLIS.
  - Interested candidates should email Dean Glorioso ([dglorioso@law.umaryland.edu](mailto:dglorioso@law.umaryland.edu)) with a letter of interest and resume using the subject heading: C1 IRR Application. In the letter of interest, be sure to include the following availability information:
    - Start date
    - Work arrangement (e.g., remote, hybrid, on-site)
    - Schedule (e.g., number of hours, time of day – including evenings and weekends)
  - Questions about the position can be directed to Liz Graham ([liz.graham@law.umaryland.edu](mailto:liz.graham@law.umaryland.edu)). We look forward to reviewing your applications!
- The Maine Legislature's Law and Legislative Reference Library, a nonpartisan staff office of the Legislative Council, is seeking applicants for the position of full-time ASSOCIATE LAW LIBRARIAN. This position provides complex and diverse legal research to library patrons. It also oversees the library's acquisitions operations, including ordering and processing new materials, creating and updating ILS records, submitting claims, and contributing to collections decisions. Employees in this position work in our Augusta library, are enthusiastic about public service and supporting the work of the Maine legislature, and conduct themselves in a highly confidential, professional, and nonpartisan manner. Overtime may be required during the legislative session.
  - Qualifications: A successful candidate will possess a Master's degree of library science or is currently enrolled in a master's degree program in library science; at least 3 years of library experience (technical services experience is preferred); proven competence using an ILS, various online research platforms, and print research materials; attention to detail; excellent communication, interpersonal, and organizational skills.
  - Salary and Benefits: The salary range for this position is \$63,440.00 to \$88,254.40. The bi-weekly dollar values of some State-paid benefits for full-time employees include \$15.22 for dental insurance; 14.11% of employee's pay towards retirement; and at least 85% (\$494.07) of health insurance premiums.
  - Application deadline is September 26, 2025. Submit your application, resume, and cover letter online through the Maine Legislature's job opportunities website: <https://legislature.maine.gov/execdir/job-opportunities/9281>. Application questions may be directed to Amanda Goldsmith by phone at 207-287-1615.

For future offers and information, consider subscribing to the WPLLA email. Contact WPLLA Webmaster for more information.

# WPLLA Contacts

Members: consider becoming an active part of our organization by assisting with the newsletter, or serving on our social media team. We promote our profession every day through educational events, forums, social events, and more.

## WPLLA Board and Committees 2025 - 2026

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