

Fall 2019

Know Your Why

Volume 17 no 2



This is Why We Do What We Do

Art by Ryota Naito

Submitted by **MaryFaith Chmiel**, Elizabeth PL

Above is the centerfold artwork from the first volume of our summer teen Fanzine.

This is why we do it: to inspire and to be inspired!

The young artist (Ryota Naito) captured the Reference Desk of Elizabeth Public Library in 2014.

The staff and I all loved this piece he created, and his younger sister now works for us as a Library Assistant while she attends NJIT.

Mary Faith Chmiel is the Library Director of Elizabeth Public Library. She holds her MLS from Rutgers. She can be reached via email at MFChmiel@elizpl.org

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President's Message

Know Your Why

In asking our members to identify their why, I in turn often reflect and renew my own. Because as we know, our why is often refined by circumstance. Last year, circumstances both personal and professional shaped my own short-term why. Needless to say, 2019 will be a year to remember. The Long Branch Free Public Library had to undertake an extensive rehabilitation project. It was also completely unexpected, and therefore, a surprise to all. Thankfully, that project is over and it brought us the gifts of: a new board room, theater, meeting spaces and classroom. I also took on the role of NJLA President, which of course brings its own set of excitement, challenges and responsibilities. The reason I accepted the position of NJLA President is to give back to a profession that changed the course of my life. The library, heart of the community, opened its doors to me and, gradually, showed me how to serve my community. Championing for vulnerable populations is my why.

Community is everything to me, and I will always champion mine and, by extension, the communities which surround it. What better way to utilize my why than by being a long-time member of NJLA, and now by having the honor of being NJLA President? In serving as your President the last three months, I have especially been able to better understand the organization's "why" by observing our committees, sections and round tables in action. Collectively, we have been incredibly busy! From the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce to the launch of Memberclicks, NJLA leaders are working hard to be more inclusive and efficient than ever.

So many dedicated members have stepped up to grow and build upon the progress of those that have come before. Leaders such as Laverne Mann, Public Policy Committee Chair, who ambitiously packs her agenda with relevant topics and tackles legislative issues that could potentially impact libraries and library careers. David Perez, Diversity and Outreach Section President, who is in the process of working with D&O to organize a social work in libraries conference that will be held at Monmouth University early next year. John Bonney, Finance Committee Chair, who with his trademark "kind yet candid" approach is leading his committee to establish best practices and accomplish financial goals to ensure the long term financial health of NJLA. All three trailblazers reflect the dedication of more than two dozen committee, section and roundtable leaders who we are lucky enough to call NJLA members. All who certainly appear to be living their "why" and all who would most likely agree that being members of NJLA helped renew or revise their "why"!

I firmly believe that YOUR "why" is already within you. Tap into it and see where you go within NJLA and your profession.

I can't wait to see what the rest of my year as President will bring. Thank you for allowing me to serve.

Tonya Garcia

New Jersey Libraries NEWSletter
is published quarterly.

To contribute, contact the Editor at
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Pat Tumulty at ptumulty@njla.org

Proposals will be due on or around
February 15 (Spring issue);
May 15 (Summer); August 15 (Fall); and
November 15 (Winter).

Mission Statement of the New Jersey Libraries NEWSletter

The New Jersey Libraries NEWSletter is one of the official publications of the New Jersey Library Association and serves as a vehicle for communication of library issues and activities among the members of NJLA.

Editorial Statement of the New Jersey Libraries NEWSletter

The New Jersey Library Association NEWSletter shall provide news of NJLA and information about statewide, regional, and local library activities.

News shall be as current as possible within the constraints of the publication schedule and the publication will serve as an archival record of significant and lasting library issues and topics.

The New Jersey Libraries NEWSletter shall provide reports from officers, committees, roundtables, sections, and other units of the NJLA.

It shall also publish reports on trends and practices in the library profession and articles on topics of interest to the New Jersey library community. Ephemeral issues and time-sensitive topics will be covered in the Listserv or the association website.

Inclusion of an article or advertisement in the New Jersey Libraries NEWSletter does not constitute official endorsement by NJLA.

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My Why: Community Energy Exchange

By **Lexi Majeski**, Ocean County Library

When I was a kid, I thought about many careers. Like most kids, my career ideas ranged from the weird (cowgirl) to the practical (writer): actress, paleontologist, pirate, librarian, etc. One thing all of these ideas had in common, though, was the thrill of adventure. The pursuit of searching and finding was in-ately appealing to this self-professed master of hide and seek.

However, when I got to college I realized “adventurer” did not provide a stable income and health insurance. This was something crucial, especially being chronically ill, so I set my sights on a more profitable job, librarian.

It combined so many of my passions into a feasible outlet for living.

Art, seeking out information, making a difference, and, yes, books, were all important to my health.

Why do I do what I do? What motivates me to get out of bed in the morning, when I admittedly would never get out of bed before 11am if I had my preference? It is the idea that I can help the high school student find a book for a report they needed yesterday. It is the hope that I can give a respite to the adult who has been taking care of their elderly unwell parents with a satisfying craft-- even if it is only an hour. It is the pure joy I feel when a little boy in my story time, who I have been working with for weeks, finally feels comfortable enough to not only talk to me, but also the other kids in the room. It is trying to be a ribcage to hold the heart of my community.

“What motivates me...is trying to be a ribcage to hold the heart of my community.”

Let’s be honest, working with the public can be absolutely and completely draining.

At times, this job can seem like a never-ending swirl of people needing your energy, time, and empathy.

It is SO much more than that (hopefully) though. For me, my “why” is the energy exchange.

I thrive off the interactions I have with people at work, especially kids. The stories I encounter daily are also good bridges for connecting me with people outside the library world. Who doesn’t have at least one good story from working in a library?

Even a negative encounter can become a way to break tension or bond with someone else.

For me, librarianship is a fulfilling way to spend my time because it utilizes my skills and passions. It is a nice way to earn a living (at least until my books are published and I start making that JK Rowling money!), and gives me the opportunity to make a positive impact on people’s lives. I am enjoying the field, and that is “why” enough for me for now.

Alexandra Majeski is Branch Manager, Plumsted Branch, Ocean County Library. She can be reached at amajeski@theoceancountylibrary.org



My Why: Promoting and Strengthening Democracy and Freedom

By **Richard Kearney**, William Paterson University

Almost twenty years into my professional career as a librarian, I’m more confident than ever that the reason this is my vocation is because I want to promote and strengthen democracy and freedom. That might strike you as ridiculously idealistic or naïve, but it’s not meant to. I am aware of the serious problems that transpire when libraries compromise on those principles, when they fail to serve their communities on an equal basis, or when they find it easier to

knuckle under to local power or accommodate it so as not to invite unwelcome hostility.

Despite this, however, at their best libraries are places where a democratic culture can be nurtured and sustained through practice. Every reference interaction I have with a library visitor is an opportunity to treat someone with respect, to provide individuals with equal attention regardless of their identity or the resources at their command, and to offer high-quality public service. It’s an opportunity to insist upon the value of civic culture and to enact it. This isn’t always easy, and I fail plenty of times, but when I stay focused on my “why” I find I can rededicate myself.

It helps to be in New Jersey, where I don’t have to look far to find people who offer fine examples.

Democracy and Freedom, continued from page 3

People like:

Michelle Reutty, who for the simple act of following the law in a 2006 case where police were requesting patron information found herself subjected to five months of relentless harassment and bullying from a municipal government that couldn't have cared less about the rights of library users. Resigning rather than accept a set of bogus charges on her record, Reutty's willingness to stand her ground helped libraries around the state establish clear policies on addressing police requests for information.

Ann Spananese, who upon finding out about HarperCollins' plan to kill Michael Moore's book *Stupid White Men* in 2003 when Moore refused to rewrite half of it and scale back on his criticism of then-President George W. Bush, launched a campaign in opposition to the publisher's cowardly censorship. Within days, librarians and readers across the country forced HarperCollins to abandon that plan and publish Moore's book intact.

T.J. Lamanna, who works tirelessly to educate librarians about the need to protect patron privacy, to manage our technology infrastructures in accordance

with that principle, and to articulate the connections between patron privacy and patron freedom. When governments and corporations now use information technology for massive surveillance and control, fighting for library patron privacy rights is more essential than ever.

I'm not satisfied with the term "information professional" as a description of library work. That doesn't cut it for me. It's woefully inadequate. There were plenty of libraries in the pre-modern era, exclusive domains of governments and the wealthy. There are plenty of "information professionals" in our time who work for surveillance regimes, who are fine with censorship, and even with totalitarianism. Today libraries must be democratic institutions or they will be irrelevant. The public support we need to thrive is linked directly to our dedication to our defense of democratic principles and patron freedom. That's more than enough to get me out of bed each day.

Richard Kearney is electronic resources librarian at William Paterson University in Wayne. He holds an M.L.S. from Rutgers University in New Brunswick. His email address is kearneyr@wpunj.edu.

NJLA Statement on Macmillan Publishers' Proposed eBook Pricing Model for Libraries

Macmillan Publishers' proposed new pricing model for eBook lending would negatively impact library users all over the state of New Jersey, and the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA) opposes its model.

Under the new rules effective November 2019, Macmillan Publishers would allow libraries, including multiple branch library systems and digital content consortia, to purchase only one copy of a new title in eBook format upon release at half of the library purchase price. Only after an eight-week embargo would libraries be allowed to purchase additional copies at full cost. This move foreshadows a troubling trend in limiting access to libraries while charging them four to five times the cost of consumer purchases.

American Library Association (ALA) President Wanda Brown stated, "Limiting access to new titles for libraries means limiting access for patrons most dependent on libraries."

Library users rely on their public libraries to provide information in a timely fashion and in formats accessible to all. Patrons use their public libraries as a resource for lifelong learning, career advancement, and critical decision making.

The restrictive pricing model that Macmillan Publishers proposes will severely limit libraries' ability to respond to community needs. Macmillan's policy is likely to frustrate its faithful readers as well as librarians that promote their books, advance literacy, and create opportunities for lesser-known authors to emerge as new favorites.

Macmillan Publishers is the sole major publisher restricting access to its new eBooks. According to Alan Inouye, ALA's senior director for Public Policy & Government Relations, three other large publishers concluded that libraries were not a threat to their profitability and believe that libraries ultimately benefit their businesses.

Macmillan has declined repeated requests over the last year to discuss the embargo, or its library eBook program. NJLA encourages Macmillan Publishers to reverse or modify these unfair policy changes and strongly urges Macmillan Publishers to reconsider its approach to working with libraries.

Passed September 17, 2019, by the New Jersey Library Association Board



From the Executive Director

A Challenge to Us All

At the NJLA leadership luncheon, President Tonya Garcia announced her theme for her presidential year: “*Know Your Why*.” This is a challenge to us both as individuals and to NJLA as an organization.

On a personal level, why did we choose to work in libraries? This may not be a simple question to answer. For each of us the answer is different. There were probably many factors to the decision. Did you choose this profession while in college or is this a second career? What were your expectations of your career? I believe most of us think of librarianship as a service profession. Whether we are youth services librarians, technologists or directors we do our job to provide service to others and our communities. I know that might sound a little idealistic but I think it is true. Every one of us has been told, “It must be great to just sit and read books all day.” But you know the truth. Even though we may love our jobs, many days can be exhausting. That is why understanding our personal “why” is so important. Although we may not reflect on it every day, Tonya’s theme gives us each the opportunity to take a moment and revisit our goals and aspirations. Every time you see her theme, it is an opportunity to renew our commitment to our chosen careers.

However, “knowing your why” is equally important for NJLA as an organization. Why do we exist? What is our role? NJLA was founded in 1890, so we have a long history. Is its purpose the same today as when it was founded? Yes, we as an organization must also know our “why” as we prepare for the future.

NJLA recently completed two important documents that help us define our Why for the future. First, the Association adopted *Core Values for the Organization* (see: <https://njla.memberclicks.net/core-values-of-the-new-jersey-library-association>). This document outlines what beliefs should motivate the actions of the Association. In addition, NJLA completed a new Strategic Plan for 2019-2022 (<https://njla.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/NJLA%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>). Many members contributed to both of these documents. They provide a foundation for NJLA as an organization as we discuss our “why” for the future of NJLA. As our Strategic Plan states, “The New Jersey Library Association provides vision and leadership for the library community and serves as a voice for New Jersey libraries and library workers.” With Tonya’s leadership and that of incoming NJLA President Jen Schureman Brenner we will continue to reflect on our “why.”

These two documents provide a strong foundation for our current “why,” but what will the future hold? Technology, changing demographics and fiscal challenges are the reality for all libraries. As we move toward the future, we must continually ask ourselves if NJLA is providing the necessary leadership to keep vital library services available for all residents of New Jersey. And, if not, “why not?” The “why” will always be the challenge.

Pat Tumulty



New Jersey Libraries NEWSletter

is a publication of the

NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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2019 NJLA Performers' Showcase

November 14, 2019

Performers' Showcase is a venue for librarians to preview quality entertainment to assist in their promotion of literacy development and summer reading for youth, from babies to high-school aged. It also inspires programming options which can be offered year-round. The Showcase Committee recruits and enlists the talents of a wide variety of artists including music and dance, storytellers, circus arts, creative theater, and nature/science specialists, among others. The goal of the Showcase is to foster and promote resource sharing of performers and programming information statewide. Since 2005, the Showcase has been presented each fall.

Professional development credits will be available to attendees.

Registration Deadline: Mon, Nov. 11.
Late registration, after deadline, is ON-SITE ONLY

Fee:
\$35 NJLA Members | \$52.50 Non-members | \$17.50 Students/Retired

Morning refreshments and a buffet lunch are included in the fee.

See the NJLA Website for more information and registration!

"My job as a librarian allows me to make positive contributions to the world around me while learning from students who never fail to challenge, impress, and teach me."

My Why: Connecting and Improving Lives

By **Theresa Agostinelli**, Brookdale Community College Library and Middlesex County College Library

Just the other day, I met an older student who was a recent immigrant and needed help with a research assignment. She was working full-time in a nursing home and working on her RN degree. This student was bright but lacked basic computer skills. She had a son that was eager to help her, but rather than showing his mother how to use a computer, he had done her work for her. I explained that we could use the article and citation that her son had found for her, but that this approach would not help her when she received her next assignment. As I helped her to develop her topic and navigate our library databases, there were many stumbling blocks as she struggled to type as well as manage the mouse. After emailing article results, we faced an additional challenge when she failed to remember her email password. Helping patrons with limited technology skills can be tedious, but this student was so grateful for the help that I was giving to her that it made it worthwhile.

Before we parted, I took a few moments to chat with this student. She first shared how challenging it was to balance long work hours, a full course load, and a family. She also told me that her job required her to enter large amounts of text into a computer--a task that was not easy for her but seemed to be easier for her coworkers. I remarked how typing speed was important, but a genuine sense of care and concern for others was more valuable, and I could sense that she possessed such traits. This student immediately brightened and shared how she would put her hand on the backs of patients and family members as they were experiencing particularly trying moments. As a person with a family member who spent their last years in a nursing home, I know the true value of what she gave to her patients, and I wanted her to understand how important her overall compassion and caring was. It was important for this student to receive the recognition that she sorely deserved. Before she left, she asked me when I would be working again, which let me know that the session had been successful and that this student felt comfortable working with me.

Librarianship allows me to help people gain the skills they need to improve their lives and achieve their goals. It is a privilege to assist people at their point of need, in ways that may seem small but often yield tremendous results. I am also continuously inspired by the people I encounter in the library each day. It often frustrates me when I hear negative things about college students since my experiences have overwhelmingly been with hard-working people seeking to better themselves. My job as a librarian allows me to make positive contributions to the world around me while learning from students who never fail to challenge, impress, and teach me.

Theresa Agostinelli is a part-time reference and instruction librarian at Middlesex County College Library and adjunct librarian at Bankier Library, Brookdale Community College. She can be reached at agostinellit@gmail.com.

Reminder: The I ♥ NJ Libraries website and twitter feed are collecting and publishing great library stories from New Jersey Libraries. Submit your press release at: <https://ilovenjlibraries.org/submit-a-press-release/>

Browse the blog at <https://ilovenjlibraries.org/blog/> for stories on a Halloween Costume Swap, Gardens at NJ Libraries, Maker Day and Pride Month celebrations!

From the Editor:

The Ultimate “Share Your Toys” People

“I just did a Reader’s Advisory! At the desk and everything!” My colleagues at my public library job have not quite gotten used to me, a rather more than middle-aged career reference librarian, crowing over my new achievements (positive and negative) in public librarianship. Despite the differences in audience, tools and (sometimes) working conditions, I find that my “why” is the same in public library digital literacy and at the academic reference desk. Riffing on Carol Simpson’s adaptation of Ranganathan’s Laws: “Every patron their information; Every piece of information its user.”¹

Or, as one of my heroines, Marylaine Block, put it more succinctly in her newsletter, *Ex Libris*: “I have always maintained that librarians are the ultimate share-your-toys people, and that the worst punishment you could inflict on any of us is to offer to show us an incredibly useful free resource but only if we swear not to tell another living soul about it.”

Getting people the information they need, want, or didn’t know they would like until they had it, that’s my why—which is “why” I’m editing this newsletter.

Which is why I’m asking for your help. While we find out from other librarians what they’ve been doing at NJLA Annual Conference, in sections and committees, and on mailing lists, this newsletter forms another way for us to expand our horizons of librarianship. But to do that, we need material to publish—and for that, we look to you!

The **Winter 2019** issue is on **Urban Libraries**— we’re looking for urban library programs, urban librarians, urban library information to share with one another. **Spring 2020**’s issue is on **Library Cons** (like Comic Con, but in the library) and other **fandom connections in the library**. For both of them, we need material! Got a story, or a program, or tips to share? Please contact me ASAP, at newsletter_editor@njlamembers.org.

Jennifer Heise

¹Simpson, Carol. “Five Laws”. *Library Media Connection* 26(7) 6 April/May 2008.
Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20180829132353/http://www.carolsimpson.com/5laws.pdf>



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