

Speakers from NBA to FBI Attract 13,600 to Philadelphia

Attendance reaches new high as a basketball legend, notable authors, and a whistleblower tackle issues of free speech, privacy, and literacy

Award-winning authors and books, a basketball superstar, and an FBI whistleblower were among the top attractions at the January 11–16 ALA Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia.

Sports legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar delivered a heartfelt address at a program presented by ALA President Loriene Roy. The athlete-turned-author told a packed house, “I am not standing here as a basketball player but as a historian and book lover, all because of a library and librarians like you.” Discovering the New York Public Library’s Schomburg Center while researching the Harlem Renaissance, he said, was a revelation that turned his life around.

Roy, who is the first Native American president of ALA, said it was her love for basketball that prompted her to invite Abdul-Jabbar to speak, along with the fact that he wrote so eloquently about Indian basketball in his book *A Season on the Reservation: My Sojourn with the White Mountain Apache*: “The crowd liked the frenzy of the game more than anything else, perhaps even more than winning itself. These normally quiet people liked the chance to scream and stomp their feet for a while each week during the long winter on the reservation; they liked to give vent to the things they kept inside the rest of the time. Perhaps basketball, in its own way, had become a kind of catharsis and healing ritual.”

Speakers and discussion forums



ALA President Loriene Roy presents keynoter Kareem Abdul-Jabbar with a plaque of appreciation, emblazoned with his American Libraries cover shot.

added variety to the Association’s annual business meeting, foremost among them an appearance by FBI whistleblower Bassem Youssef at the Washington Office session. Despite a warning from his superiors, Special Agent Youssef appeared at the meeting with his attorney, cautiously explaining his dilemma and answering questions from the audience about problems with the FBI’s counterterrorism program.

Another highlight of the meeting, attended this year by 13,601 librarians and library supporters, was the announcement of the Newbery and Caldecott medals, as well as other youth media awards

(see sidebar). ALA President Roy traveled from the conference to New York City to appear with the winning authors on the January 15 *Today Show*. Especially noteworthy was the fact that the Newbery winner, Laura Amy Schlitz, is a librarian at the Park School in Baltimore.

Jazz violinist Regina Carter helped conferees take a format break with a concert at the 9th annual Arthur Curley Memorial Lecture. Legendary journalist Anthony Lewis spoke candidly about his career and key Supreme Court decisions on the First Amendment with Chris Finan, president of the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression,

in a fundraising session sponsored by the Freedom to Read Foundation. Asked if the pendulum has swung today in favor of too much press freedom, Lewis noted that “the press can be abusive of privacy.”

Authors lead the way

Midwinter-goers spent much of the conference attending some 2,000 meetings, many of them planning sessions for the forthcoming Annual Conference in Anaheim, California. Some 500 vendors the exhibition hall in the Pennsylvania Convention Center, enabling attendees to examine firsthand a wide variety of information-industry products.

The Exhibits Round Table sponsored an Author Forum with Random House author Mary Doria Russell and the Penguin Group’s Geraldine Brooks, who touched on many hot-button issues. ERT also sponsored a Technology Showcase, where leading players in the information science and technology industry touted their latest innovations.

Alexander Street Press’s customer breakfast featured 1960s activist Tom Hayden, who quipped, “Most days when I wake up, I’m living in the present.” He said he spent most of his time living a normal life, writing, and “trying to end the infernal war in Iraq.” But he also reminded the group that the 50th anniversary of “everything that happened in the ‘60s” will soon be here and emphasized the need to record the stories of that period from the people who lived it.

Ex Libris hosted perhaps the most splendid customer reception of the conference at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, with open access to the exhibitions, and ALA honored retiring EBSCO Vice President Joe Weed at the Library Champions reception. (Read an Exhibit Hall report from Meredith Farkas on p. 34.) The popular “Top Technology Trends” session spon-

sored by ALA’s Library and Information Technology Association offered attendees an opportunity to discuss such hot topics as blogging, open access, and social networking.

ALA’s Young Adult Library Services Association sponsored a gaming night for some 100 librarians, as Nintendo announced a donation of 21 copies of its Wii games (at a value of \$250 each) to ALA and to the Free Library of Philadelphia, Alpena County and Ann Arbor District Libraries in Michigan, New York Public Library, and Pasco County (Fla.) Public Library to promote library gaming initiatives.

Governance action

The ALA Council (see p. 69) grappled with a number of governance issues, but bubbling to the top was a debate over whether or not divisions and other units of the Association, as well as individuals in positions of authority, should endorse candidates for the ALA presidency. The argument against endorsement was that it would stifle debate if special interests controlled the election. Proponents said restrictions against endorsement are a violation of free speech. In the end, the ALA Executive Board voted to create a special task force to further examine the issue.

Among other actions, Council gave the nod to revised accreditation standards, encouraged accessible workstations at conference locations, and approved resolutions calling for an end to the crisis in Kenya and condemning the confiscation of documents from the Iraqi National Library and Archives.

Council also approved changes to the 1992 *Standards for Accreditation of Master’s Programs in Library and Information Studies* to place



Mary Doria Russell and Geraldine Brooks share a laugh before their Exhibits Round Table-sponsored Author Forum.

stronger emphasis on systematic planning, student learning outcomes, assessment, and diversity.

Six resolutions brought to Council by the Committee on Legislation were passed, including measures calling for no-fee access to federal government information, supporting tribal college memberships in the Federal Depository Library Program, opposing postal rate increases for small-circulation publications, and commending FBI whistleblower Youssef.

Camila Alire, dean emerita at both the University of New Mexico and Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado, and J. Linda Williams, coordinator of library media services for Anne Arundel County (Md.) Public Schools, candidates for the 2009–2010 ALA presidency, presented their platforms and took questions from



Watch video coverage of Midwinter at alfocus.ala.org

the audience at a forum moderated by Immediate Past President Leslie Burger (see p. 66).

The Midwinter ALA Store's central location benefitted from

continual traffic as conference-goers hiked from one end of the convention center to another, with sales of \$57,000—topping the Seattle store by \$4,000

HELPING NEW CITIZENS ACCULTURATE

At a January 14 adjunct meeting at the National Constitution Center arranged by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), 14 representatives of the library community met privately with the Task Force on New Americans to discuss how libraries can contribute to the integration of new citizens into civic life.

Moderated by Office of Citizenship Chief Alfonso Aguilar (*AL*, Jan./Feb., p. 38), the discussion centered on identifying current library programs and initiatives that can partner with the USCIS. "Immigration is the issue of the day," Aguilar said, but "the media tends to focus on undocumented immigrants. This country is also admitting legal immigrants in record numbers" and they are the focus of USCIS programs, which are aimed at three fundamental areas: 1) learning English, 2) learning about the American system of government, and 3) understanding U.S. history.

Although there was general agreement that library programs are effective, Jaime Greene, representing the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, articulated best the group's response to Aguilar's urging that libraries reach out to new citizens. "There are already lines to get into these programs, so it's not a question of getting people in," she said, "these programs need support."

Representing ALA, Dale Lipschultz of the Office for Literacy and Outreach Services and Emily Sheketoff of the Washington Office voiced the Association's willingness to work with the USCIS but also told Aguilar that ALA would never take an official position that new citizens must learn English. Lipschultz pointed to ALA's "The American Dream Starts @ Your Library" toolkit for librarians serving English-language learners, and Sheketoff emphasized ALA's opposition to a proposed national ID card.

The results of the discussion will be captured in a report from the task force to President Bush this spring. The task force has conducted similar round table discussions with representatives from think tanks, the private sector, community and faith-based organizations, and state and local governments.

Other participants representing the library community were: Carol Brey-Casiano, El Paso (Tex.) Public Library; Fred Gitner, Queens Borough Public Library; Martín Gómez, Urban Libraries Council; Susan Hildreth, California State Library; Melanie Huggins, St. Paul (Minn.) Public Library; Marilyn Mason, WebJunction; Homa Naficy, Hartford (Conn.) Public Library; Theresa Ramos, Free Library of Philadelphia; Peggy Rudd, Texas State Library; and Mary Jane Vinella, King County (Ore.) Public Library.

Popular new ALA Graphics items included the Celebrate Black History poster and bookmark, by award-winning illustrator Jerry Pinckney, and character posters and books featuring *Babymouse*, *The Spiderwick Chronicles*, and *Duck for President*. New titles, as well as bestselling backlists, from ALA Editions were warmly received, including *FRBR: A Guide for the Perplexed* by Robert Maxwell and *Strategic Planning for Results* by Sandra Nelson for ALA's Public Library Association.

In concert with the Gaming Spot near the registration area, Eli Neiberger's book *Gaming . . . In the Library?!* was also popular in the ALA Store, as were a variety of ALA Tech Source's *Library Technology Reports* issues on gaming, Web 2.0, and technology training for library professionals. Titles published by other ALA units that sold well included the Association of College and Research Libraries' *Library 2.0 Initiatives in Academic Libraries and Information Literacy Programs in the Digital Age*, edited by Alice Daugherty and Michael F. Russo.

The "Sunrise Speaker Series" drew a sizable number of early birds to three morning sessions. "Celebrate Your Dreams at America's Most Famous Steps," with author Michael Vitez and photographer Tom Gralish, focused on their book *Rocky Stories*, which tells the stories of people who come from all over the world to run the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art just like Sylvester Stallone in the movie *Rocky*.

"A Morning with Aaron Lansky," whose mission it is to rescue the world's Yiddish books. His National Yiddish Book Center has now recovered nearly 1.5 million volumes and is still going strong.

The series concluded with "Books Build Friendships," featuring authors Shireen Dodson, Carol Fitzgerald, Elizabeth



Jazz violinist Regina Carter shares her musical talents as featured guest at the 9th annual Arthur Curley Memorial Lecture that honors the former Boston Public Library director and ALA president. Carter mixed music and stories in her presentation

Basketball Legend Speaks from the Heart

Following a presentation of a wampum disk necklace and a medallion by the American Indian Library Association in thanks for his work with Native American children, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar spoke eloquently about his passion for history. Writing his most recent title, *On the Shoulder of Giants: My Journey Through the Harlem Renaissance*, led him to reexamine his experiences as an African American man and to describe encounters, imagined and real, with the literary and civil-rights giants who profoundly influenced his life.

Looking back on the summer of 1965, Abdul-Jabbar said he had learned three life lessons from that tumultuous period in American history, “lessons I’ve been able to apply throughout my life.”

First, it isn’t enough just to read history. “As Zora Neale Hurston said, ‘Learning without wisdom is a load of books on a donkey’s back.’ What’s really important is what we do with the information we discover, how we use it to motivate ourselves into some form of action to better our own lives and the lives of those in our community.”

Second, “I learned the value of educating myself.” The Schomburg

Center “was a portal through which I could see the real world, not just the one I had been shown in carefully edited books. Every day I spent there, I felt lighter, as if some unknown burden was being eased off of me. When I stepped out of that building, I was energized and inspired. Seeing

all that had been accomplished before me, I felt I could do no less.”

Third, “what I learned from that summer was the power of words. The ability to clearly, logically, and passionately articulate ideas goes much farther in affecting long-lasting change than tossing a brick through a Circuit City window. Dr. King’s ‘I Have a Dream’ speech opened more hearts and doors than any burning car.”

He also identified the guiding principles of the Harlem Renaissance and noted that they “are more important than ever: 1) Study your

own people’s history to see what greatness has been achieved and to realize what greatness you are capable of; 2) educate yourself—not just by mimicking what your teachers or leaders say, regardless of their color, but by honing your mind to think critically; 3) dedicate yourself to your community so that when one member moves ahead, we can all move ahead together; 4) maybe the most important of all: sing, dance, and laugh. The Harlem Renaissance was born out of severe repression and hardship,” he said, “yet it produced some of the most lively, joyous music ever heard.”

Followed by a generous session of questions and answers, the speech ended with Abdul-Jabbar stating, “We are part of a larger community that extends beyond neighborhoods, beyond borders, and, thanks to libraries and librarians, beyond time. And that’s why I’m standing here today.”

The Black Caucus of ALA honored Abdul-Jabbar by pledging to distribute 100 copies of his book to teen centers in public libraries throughout the Southeast, and Abdul-Jabbar was introduced to BCALA founder and past ALA president E. J. Josey.



ALA presidents aplenty at the Library Champions reception: From left, Leslie Burger 2006–07, Barbara Ford 1997–98, Loriene Roy current, Betty Turock 1995–96, Patricia Glass Schuman 1991–92.

FBI Whistleblower Answers Questions

Despite a warning from his superiors, FBI Special Agent Bassem Youssef appeared at a January 12 session with his attorney and an-

swered questions from the audience. Although in October the FBI had approved his request to give a speech on the bureau's counterterrorism program, Youssef received an e-mail January 3 that said his talk could threaten the fight against

terrorism and required clearance, a process that could take weeks. The message was accompanied by a 12-page document, explicitly marked as confidential, that contained directives on bureau secrecy. Youssef, who is the highest-

YOUTH MEDIA AWARDS

SCHLITZ, SELZNICK WIN NEWBERY, CALDECOTT MEDALS

Winners of ALA's Newbery and Caldecott medals honoring children's literature and sponsored by the Association for Library Service to Children, were announced January 14 at the Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia. The popular youth media awards presentation was webcast for those who could not attend.

Laura Amy Schlitz, a librarian at the Park School in Baltimore, earned the John Newbery Medal for *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village*, published by Candlewick Press. In introducing readers to 21 young inhabitants of a medieval English village and manor—from Hugo, the lord's nephew, to Nelly, the snigger—the author draws back the curtain on the period and offers explanatory interludes that round out this historical and theatrical presentation.

Brian Selznick took the Randolph Caldecott Medal for the more-than 500-page interplay of wordless double-page spreads with pages of text to tell the tale of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. Published by Scholastic, the groundbreaking picture book follows the quest of the 10-year-old title character, an orphan who secretly lives in the walls of a Paris train station, as he labors to complete a mysterious invention left by his father.

Christopher Paul Curtis, author

of *Elijah of Buxton*, and Ashley Bryan, who illustrated and wrote *Let It Shine*, earned Coretta Scott King Awards recognizing African-American authors and illustrators of outstanding books for children and young adults. Curtis's book, published by Scholastic, tells the story of 11-year-old Elijah and the Canadian community of escaped slaves in which he lives. Bryan's meticulous attention to detail in *Let It Shine*, published by Atheneum, is evident in the accuracy of the musical notations for each of three spirituals for which he created double-page spreads of collage figures from bright-colored paper.

Other awardees:

- Margarita Engle, author of *The Poet Slave of Cuba: A Biography of Juan Francisco Manzano*, published by Holt, and Yuyi Morales, illustrator of *Los Gatos Black on Halloween*, written by Marisa Montes and published by Holt, the respective winners of the Pura Belpré Award honoring Latino authors and illustrators whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in

children's books;

- Mo Willems, winner of the Theodor Geisel Award for most distinguished beginning reader book, for *There Is a Bird on Your Head!*, published by Hyperion;

- Geraldine McCaughrean, winner of the Michael L. Printz Award for excellence in literature written for young adults, for *The White Darkness*, published by HarperTempest, an imprint of HarperCollins;

- Orson Scott Card, winner of the Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in writing for young adults, for his novels *Ender's Game* and *Ender's Shadow*;

A complete list of ALA award-winning books published during 2007 can be found at ALA's Public Information Office website.



Holding award-winning books for youth at Midwinter in Philadelphia are (from left): YALSA President Paula Brehm-Heeger, Coretta Scott King Book Award Committee Chair Deborah Taylor, ALA President Lorieni Roy, and ALSC President Jane Marino. The awards are administered by ALA's children and youth divisions.



FBI whistleblower Bassem Youssef fields audience questions.

ranking Arab-American FBI counterterrorism agent and who won a medal for penetrating the network of Islamic terrorists responsible for bombing the World Trade Center in 1993, said during the question-and-answer session that he was speaking as a “citizen and library user, not as an FBI official.” Youssef’s attorney, Stephen M. Kohn, noted that the FBI’s method of intimidating its employees often works within the framework of the First Amendment, but the bureau “can’t figure out how to censor spontaneous answers to questions.”

In 2002, Youssef blew the whistle to the director of the FBI and Congress that discriminatory practices within the bureau were undermining the effectiveness of America’s counterterrorism efforts. Speaking publicly for the first time on the subject, the Egyptian-born Youssef said that FBI officials consider that “cultural understanding of the Middle East and radical Islamic groups, as well as the Arabic language, was unnecessary” in conducting counterterrorism investigations. Although the FBI has claimed to be “working hard to get Arabic-speaking agents,” Youssef said he has been completely sidelined since the September 11 attacks. Kohn added that the FBI actually prohibits Youssef from using his Arabic-language expertise to ques-

tion informants.

Asked about the FBI’s use of warrantless National Security Letters to conduct investigations, at least one instance of which involved a library organization, Youssef began to answer but was advised by his attorney that this was an area that he should avoid. “The FBI was quite clear that he could be disciplined as a result of his answers,” Kohn explained.

Kohn, who was not under a gag order, answered for Youssef, explaining that in hundreds of cases, under the guidance of FBI lawyers, NSLs were issued under “exigent circumstances,” which by definition means a life-threatening, immediate emergency. “But the policy approved by the FBI in writing permitted exigent search-

es in nonexigent circumstances,” Kohn said. “If the person signing the National Security Letter has no real basic understanding of terrorism or the Middle East—no expertise, no training, no language, no anything—what gives them the qualification for signing warrantless searches on thousands of Americans?”

Youssef did say that he was an “eternal optimist. I hope that the American public will realize that this has to change. The FBI stands for lofty goals and I want it to succeed.” When asked by an audience member where he found hope, Youssef said he was a “strong believer in a righteous God. If we put our trust in him and follow his laws, we will succeed. Jesus Christ is my savior and I live for the Lord.” Kohn told *AL* after the program that Youssef was a Coptic Christian, although his colleagues in the Bureau often assumed he was a Muslim.

Youssef has a federal discrimination suit pending against the Bureau,

PAINE’S PAPERS

Friends of Libraries USA dedicated Philadelphia’s American Philosophical Society Library January 14 as a Literary Landmark. The honor celebrates the library’s Colonel Richard Gimbel Collection of Thomas Paine Papers.

Paine, a radical republican theorist, political writer, and leading figure of the

American Revolution, was the author of such major works as *Common Sense* (1776), *The Rights of Man* (1791), and *The Age of Reason* (1794). Previous honorees include locations associated with Tennessee Williams, William Faulkner, Dashiell Hammett, and Charles Dickens. See a video of the dedication ceremony at alfocus.ala.org.



Standing with a bust of Thomas Paine are (left to right) FOLUSA’s Rocco Staino and Sally Reed, and Martin Levitt of the American Philosophical Society.

a step he was prompted to take in 2004 after being passed over for several promotions and hearing implied threats against him by other agents, one of whom said that whistleblowers should be hung. Kohn said that for Youssef to “come here and talk to you is extraordinary,” but it was an “indication of the severity of the problem.”

“Since 1986 when I was recruited by the FBI,” Youssef said, “all I’ve ever wanted to do is to be a good FBI agent and arrest terrorists.” He added that “civil liberties and national security are not at odds with each other.”

ALA outside counsel Tom Susman said he intended to file a Freedom of Information Act request to obtain the confidential multi-page document that the FBI sent to Youssef prior to the meeting.

Listen to Youth’s Voice, Value, Vision

“Young people, particularly those from underrepresented and disempowered communities, must be given opportunities for greater voice, visibility, and value in their schools and communities,” argued Kenny Holdsmen, guest speaker at the Libraries Foster Civic Engagement Membership Initiative Group session that



The Avalon String Band Mimmers lead the way into the Exhibit Hall opening reception..

focused on youth civic engagement. Holdsmen is senior program officer and director of youth civic political engagement at the Academy for Educational Development, a global social change organization based in Washington, D.C., and New York City.

He told the group, led by ALA past president Nancy Kranich, that there are many ways that young people are engaging around the country. “Our work is about developing the whole child, about the civic nature and public purpose of school, and about citizenship education that, regretta-

bly, have been crowded out in a huge way in the public education system, yet flourishing in independent and suburban areas where parents, as consumers, want this work as part of their child’s education,” he said.

Holdsmen provided several examples of how youth are engaged in civic activities: the formation of the San Francisco Mayor’s Youth Commission and the Superintendent’s Advisory Councils in Portland and Chicago; a Hampton, Virginia, group that receives \$100,000 from the city council to provide grants for designated causes; and the 30-member State Farm Youth Advisory Board, which handles \$5 million in grants for service-learning projects in the areas of minority access to education, disaster preparedness, teen driver safety, and financial literacy.

“Young people convene themselves in places that can be youth-directed and are youth-friendly, where they have allies that are not patronizing and paternalistic,” Holdsmen said regarding how library teen groups could be used to bolster civic efforts in their individual communities. “Teens need places where they can be themselves, let their hair down, and not feel under pressure to conform to whatever the institutional standard is.



ALA staffer and gaming aficionado Jenny Levine and Executive Board member Terri Kirk get down at the popular Guitar Hero station at the conference entrance.

“Libraries philosophically and pragmatically can offer these elements to young people,” Holdsmann maintained.

RDA Update Forum Leads to Questions

A well-attended RDA Update Forum began with Beacher Wiggins of the Library of Congress announcing that on January 9 LC’s Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control had recommended that development of the controversial new *RDA: Resource Description and Access* (*AL*, Oct. 2007, p. 66–67), hailed by many as the successor to the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, Second Edition* (AACR2) and as the future of cataloging, be suspended. That said, Wiggins went on to tell the group of some 200 Midwintergoers that an “official response” to the working group’s recommendations was being formulated but that the work of the RDA Joint Steering Committee (JSC) will continue despite the recommendation.

The LC Working Group issued the report after calling for suggestions from a wide range of organizations and individuals who read a draft version issued November 30. Characterizing itself as a “call to action,” the report recommends that developmental work cease until its “presumed benefits” are clearly demonstrated and FRBR [Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records, the metadata scheme and cataloging approach] has been fully tested.

The LC Working Group was set up in November 2006 by LC Associate Librarian for Library Services Deana Marcum as part of the library’s efforts to improve its ability to meet user needs for bibliographic access.

John Attig, ALA representative to the JSC, talked about a new organization for RDA, the content of the draft section currently being reviewed, decisions by the JSC at a meeting in

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. SUNRISE SERVICE

FROM GANDHI TO KING TO US

I had a dream that one day I would stand in front of you—me in my sari, my hair in a bun, with my hearing aid, advanced years, a brown-skinned Indian woman, an ideal candidate to apply for affirmative action on all—giving a speech and nobody would find it strange,” said Ganga B. Dakshinamurti, librarian at the Albert Cohen Management Library, Asper School of Business, University of Manitoba, Canada.

She delivered the keynote address during the 2008 Sunrise Observance Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “A Challenging Inspiration Lighting Our Way: From Gandhi to King Jr. to Us.”

Dakshinamurti said she has the “legacy of individual freedom” due to the work of Mahatma Gandhi and King, who were “far apart geographically, and yet kindred in spirits and actions. Both men held that there are not categories of deserving and undeserving people—that we all share a common humanity.”

“In the history of human struggle for freedom and equality, the resounding successes to date are only the ones waged using nonviolent means, starting with the Indian freedom movement against the British, led by Gandhi,” she noted.

According to Dakshinamurti, both King and Gandhi would have similar interests were they alive today: serving

as “beacons” of the green movement, in the forefront of saving our planet from man-made ecological disaster, and exerting their influence and energy to protect individuals from “the stranglehold of supranational oligopolies.”

“By their steadfast adherence to nonviolent techniques, Gandhi and King have shown us the power of Satyagraha—truth and nonviolence—in overcoming aggression,” Dakshinamurti explained. “Are we ready to carry the torch that has been passed from Gandhi to King?”

In addition to remarks by ALA President Loriene Roy and Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels, a special musical presentation was provided by soprano Julie-Ann Whitely Green, who made her New York solo debut at Carnegie Hall in 1992. The annual event is sponsored by the Social Responsibilities Round Table’s Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Task Force and the Black Caucus of ALA, and is supported by ALA’s Office for Literacy and Outreach Services. World Book serves as corporate sponsor.



Ganga Dakshinamurti (in sari) joins the circle with Constance Purcell (left) and others in singing “We Shall Overcome.”

BY THE NUMBERS

COMPARATIVE MIDWINTER ATTENDANCE

2008 Philadelphia
Registration: 10,533
Exhibitor: 3,068
Grand Total: 13,601

2007 Seattle
Registration: 9,256
Exhibitor: 2,974
Grand Total: 12,230

2006 San Antonio
Registration: 8,326
Exhibitor: 2,758
Grand Total: 11,084

Midwinter attendance record: 2001, Washington D.C., 13,989

October 2007, and next steps. “We’re trying to make RDA something that will last beyond 2010,” he said.

“There has been a restructuring of RDA, the organization of it, and we feel that this brings RDA much more in line with the concepts that you find in FRBR,” said Marjorie Bloss, RDA project manager. She also noted that the audience response at the Update Forum had made clear “the hesitation and concern that libraries have about how this is going to roll out, what are going to be the next steps that are going to have to be put in place in order to implement RDA.”

The JSC heard forum questioners’ concerns about the format that RDA is going to take, Bloss told *AL*. “Initially we were seeing this as a web-based online product, but we have heard numerous times the great desire for print, and so that is something we will be working with the publishers on,” she said. “The other

concern deals with the cost of the online product, and the publishers are looking for a variety of ways of pricing this out; so until we have signed a contract for the development software we cannot say for sure what the price is going to be like, but certainly there will be a variety of flavors.”

Wiggins noted that the JSC is going to be taking back comments to the oversight Committee of Principles. “We have to worry about having the prototype ready for users to test to see how the language comes out when you are actually using the web tool.”

Bloss promised the delivery of a new, more robust online prototype currently being tested by user groups. Audience respondents were somewhat supportive of RDA, but many expressed concern about the complexity of the cataloging rules, the need for clear examples that are, as one put it, “comprehensible to the average cataloger,” and the ability of smaller libraries to obtain the necessary training and afford online access.

Pushers and Heroes

“Everything that’s happened to me since 1956,” author Mary Doria Russell joked at the Exhibits Round

Table’s Author Forum, “is all your fault. I hope you’re proud of yourselves.” Russell, author of *A Thread of Grace* (Random House, 2005), blamed her lifelong reading habit on the librarians at the Helen Plum Memorial Library in Lombard, Illinois, who encouraged her with “Dr. Seuss, the gateway drug of book pushers.” Before too long, they hooked her on Nancy Drew, “the tobacco of literature. Just take a little puff—it will make you look older and more sophisticated.” Glancing around the room she intoned accusingly, “Don’t sit there looking innocent. I know you’re out there on street corners pushing Harry Potter on innocent children.”

At age 42, Russell said, she started “cooking up my own crystal meth” by writing her best-selling first novel *The Sparrow* and its sequel *Children of God*. Although she tried to go cold turkey and stay away from the library for a year, she only lasted six hours. “By dinnertime that day I was involved in a new historical novel,” which turned out to be *Dreamers of the Day* (Random House, 2008), the story of the Cairo Conference, where Churchill and other British officials invented modern Iraq



Conference-goer John Stevenson of the University of Delaware checks out the new ALA website redesign concepts at a kiosk in the registration area.



Doctoral students join ALA President Loriene Roy and facilitator Joe Sanchez at the fourth Forum on Education, “The Ph.D Experience: Research into Practice,” cosponsored by the ALA Committee on Education. The half-day program included presentations of individual research programs, poster sessions, and group discussions.

at the Semiramis Hotel in 1921.

Also on the podium was Australian-American journalist and author Geraldine Brooks, who had a different take on librarians. In her novel *People of the Book* (Viking, 2008), Brooks tells the story of the Sarajevo Haggadah, a 14th-century Spanish illuminated manuscript housed in the National Museum of Bosnia. She said her book was dedicated to all librarians, but especially those who risked their lives to save the Haggadah from destruction—including the Muslim librarian Dervis Korkut, who hid the manuscript in his trousers and smuggled it out of the museum in 1942 right past the Nazi general who had been sent to plunder it.

Again, early in the Bosnian War in 1992 when the Serbs were shelling Sarajevo, another Muslim librarian, Enver Imamovic, risked his life by breaking into the museum vault under fire and taking the Hag-

gadah to safety. Brooks quipped, “I knew if I wrote a book that had librarians in it, I’d get to come to the ALA conference—it worked.”

Threats to Free Speech

Two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Anthony Lewis appeared at the National Constitution Center on Independence Mall for a question-and-answer session sponsored by the Freedom to Read Foundation. Lewis discussed First Amendment cases with moderator Christopher Finan, president of the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, especially in areas where free speech intersects the right to privacy.

“The press can be abusive of privacy,” Lewis said, citing the 1967 *Time Inc. v. Hill* case, which Lewis said the Supreme Court “decided wrong.” In 1952, James Hill and his family were held hostage in their home by escaped convicts, an incident that

inspired a fictional book, play, and movie, *The Desperate Hours*. Although Hill tried to avoid publicity, *Life* magazine used photographs of Hill’s former home to illustrate an article. Hill sued for breach of privacy and won, but *Time* took the case to the Supreme Court, where the justices reversed the lower

court decision 5–4. A traumatized Mrs. Hill suffered a breakdown that psychiatrists attributed to having to relive the episode, and she committed suicide a few years later. “That was too high a price for this kind of case,” Lewis said, adding “If your life is ruined by the press, you should have some recourse.”

Asked about civil liberties since the September 11 attacks, Lewis replied that although government suppression of free speech was not as severe as it had been in World War I, “hundreds of people were imprisoned merely for criticizing President Wilson”—warrantless wiretapping, illegal detentions, and a deliberate policy of torture are “very grave violations.”

A question about the USA Patriot Act gave Lewis an opportunity to comment—“because I promised I would”—on the fate of the Cuban independent librarians thrown into prison in 2003 for disseminating anti-Castro literature. “Please don’t ignore the issue,” Lewis said, remarking that this was a case of “freedom for the thought that we hate,” the title of his book released in January. But Lewis refrained from “getting into internecine warfare” 15 minutes later when Robert Kent, of the Friends of Cuban Libraries, pressed the issue. “Don’t spoil it,” Lewis warned as many in the crowd began hissing at Kent. ■

Reporting for American Libraries: George Eberhart, Meredith Farkas, Pamela Goodes, Leonard Kniffel, Daniel Kraus.



Sunrise Speaker Aaron Lansky speaks passionately about saving Yiddish books.