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Jerry Almonte

The CRS infographics team (from left): Bisola Momoh, Amber Wilhelm, Brion Long, Mari Lee, Jamie Hutchinson and Juan Pablo Madrid.

CRS Mobilizes Technology to Better Serve Congress

New tools help the Congressional Research Service to enrich its offerings.

BY ERIN DOHERTY

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) is pressing forward in its efforts to harness cutting-edge technologies to enhance its services to Congress. Through use of data analytics, artificial intelligence and infographics, CRS is working to expedite production of high-quality bill summaries on Congress.gov and providing members of Congress with more interactive and visual tools for understanding the impact of policy choices on different constituencies.

"These kinds of technologies are essential to providing Congress with the top-notch policy research and analysis that members expect from CRS," Robert Newlen, interim CRS director, said. "Fortunately, we

have access to talented staff, from the Library's Office of the Chief Information Officer to CRS' Publishing Office, with the know-how and experience to make great things happen."

In August 2022, CRS contracted with a nonprofit public-sector consulting firm to explore applications of data science methods and tools with the potential for enhancing data analytics capacity within CRS. The contractor's report provided a road map for CRS as it pursues use of data science for policy analysis and enhanced customer service.

"The report presented a long-term plan for integrating data science into our workflow and, importantly,

CRS, CONTINUED ON 7

NOTICES

DONATED TIME

The following employees have satisfied eligibility requirements to receive leave donations from other staff members. Questions? Contact the Human Capital Directorate at askhr@loc.gov.

Christine J. Back
Rafal H. Dziozkowski
Ken Grant

Tanesha L. Gunter
Trina Montgomery
Katie Mullen

MOVING ON: NEW PAY PERIODS POSTED

Pay period 27 from 2023 and pay period 1 from 2024 are now available in the Moving On column on the Gazette [intranet site](#). Moving On is a compilation of personnel changes at the Library as reported by the National Finance Center.

Questions? Submit them to AskHCD@loc.gov.

OIG WOULD LIKE TO KNOW

Report suspected illegal activities, waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement in Library of Congress administration and operations to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). A link to all Library regulations is available on the [staff intranet](#).

To make a report, contact OIG via the online form [here](#) or report by mail to 101 Independence Ave., S.E., LM 630, Washington, D.C., 20540-1060.

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

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MISSION OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
The Library's central mission is to engage, inspire and inform Congress and the American people with a universal and enduring source of knowledge and creativity.

ABOUT THE GAZETTE
An official publication of the Library of Congress, The Gazette encourages Library managers and staff to submit articles and photographs of general interest. Submissions will be edited to convey the most necessary information.

Back issues of The Gazette in print are available in the Communications Office, LM 143. Electronic archived issues and a color PDF file of the current issue are available online at loc.gov/staff/gazette.

GAZETTE WELCOMES LETTERS FROM STAFF
Staff members are invited to use the Gazette for lively and thoughtful debate relevant to Library issues. Letters must be signed by the author, whose place of work and telephone extension should be included so we can verify authorship. If a letter calls for management response, an explanation of a policy or actions or clarification of fact, we will ask for management response.—Ed.

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GAZETTE DEADLINES
The deadline for editorial copy for the March 1 Gazette is Wednesday, Feb. 28.

Email editorial copy and letters to the editor to mhartsell@loc.gov and wmal@loc.gov.

To promote events through the Library's online calendar (www.loc.gov/loc/events) and the Gazette Calendar, email event and contact information to calendar@loc.gov by 9 a.m. Monday of the week of publication.

Boxed announcements should be submitted electronically (text files) by 9 a.m. Monday the week of publication to mhartsell@loc.gov and wmal@loc.gov.

How-To Genre Proves Popular in Braille on Demand

BY MARK LAYMAN

“Cooking Without Looking – Food Preparation Methods and Techniques for Visually Handicapped Homemakers” began as a master’s thesis by a University of Texas graduate student, Esther Knudson Tipps, in 1956. Tipps surveyed blind homemakers about their needs in the kitchen and had students at the Texas School for the Blind test dozens of recipes, according to a 1958 story in the Clifton (Texas) Record.

To this day, “Cooking Without Looking” is helping visually impaired cooks navigate the kitchen and, undoubtedly, produce delicious meals. It’s also one of the most-requested titles since the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) began offering its patrons hard-copy braille books on demand to keep on indefinite loan.

Indeed, more than 500 of the 8,300 Braille on Demand titles requested by NLS patrons since the program began in summer 2022 are cookbooks, a fact the Washington Post noted in a December Food Section story.

Bestsellers like the Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings series, learning-to-read books like “Nothing Fits a Dinosaur” and braille instruction manuals are also popular choices. No surprise there.

But a closer look at the most-requested titles reveals the variety of interests patrons have. There’s “A Treasury of Knitting Patterns,” “Crochet Your Way” and other how-tos. Puzzle books like “Sudoku Easy to Hard” and “The Biggest Riddle Book in the World.”

Through Braille on Demand, patrons can get those and any of the other 18,000-plus electronic braille books available on BARD, the NLS Braille and Audio Reading Download service, embossed in hard-copy braille. It’s been “a smashing success,” Tamara Rorie, head of



Mark Layman

Debbie Brown, an NLS quality assurance specialist, reviews a newly produced Braille on Demand book.

NLS patron engagement, said. With development of the NLS Braille eReader, an electronic braille display provided free on loan to patrons, NLS has seen a big increase in digital braille downloads from BARD – 424,319 titles in fiscal 2023, more than 32,000 over the previous year.

But while e-braille is undeniably convenient – the Braille eReader can store hundreds of books – hard-copy braille is a better format if patrons want to thumb through books easily or jump from section to section. That includes cookbooks and crafts guides or old favorites they want to read over and over.

To speed delivery and keep costs down, Braille on Demand books have cardstock covers with simple labels and are comb-bound instead of hard-bound like the braille titles NLS produces and sends to libraries in its national network.

Patrons have responded enthusiastically. “I adore this program!” one in California wrote. “I love reading braille, and the idea of having a small library is great!” a Georgia patron wrote.

The Braille on Demand program benefits NLS, too, by reducing

expenditures for mass producing and storing hard-copy braille books.

It’s also a key part of NLS’ braille modernization initiative, which began with development of the Braille eReader. Some 10,000 NLS patrons who don’t own expensive commercial braille displays now have access to e-braille books, and more Braille eReaders are being distributed by NLS libraries every month.

Currently, braille books make up about 15 percent of the NLS catalog. To get more braille titles onto BARD, NLS will begin using automated transcription software to create text-only braille books from e-books.

“The technology to do that has gotten very sophisticated,” Rorie says.

The braille modernization initiative also includes plans to begin integrating tactile graphics, such as the maps commonly included in fantasy books, into Braille on Demand books. And last year NLS began producing wall- and pocket-sized braille calendars for its patrons.

“More people are reading braille because the barriers that were up have fallen down,” Rorie says. ■

In the Spotlight: Discovery and Preservation Services

In a new monthly series, service units share their progress.

BY CARLY MORSE

On Feb. 2, Discovery and Preservation Services (DPS) leaders presented the second installment in the Library's new Strategic Plan Spotlight series, launched in December to promote awareness of work happening across the agency. The office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management hosts the 30-minute online sessions, open to all staff members, with the Digital Strategy Directorate in the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

With more than 375 employees in attendance, Kate Zwaard, associate librarian for DPS; David Brunton, acting director of digital services; Jake Nadal, director of preservation; and Beacher Wiggins, director of acquisitions and bibliographic access shared how DPS improves user discovery and collections usability through preservation, digitization, metadata and technology.

Zwaard offered an overview of DPS' work, noting that although DPS is working toward every goal in the Library's strategic plan, its services and capacity-building efforts substantially support the plan's goal to expand access to Library collections.

Brunton shared the focus of the digitization strategy, the Library's five-year (2023-27) plan to significantly expand users' online access to rare, unique or distinctive material, while also determining the resources necessary for a more ambitious future digitization agenda.

"Digitization is not only a powerful tool to enable broad digital access to our collections, but also a trusted preservation reformatting technique, allowing us to ensure that collection items will be accessible to future

generations," Brunton said.

He also discussed the Library's five-year (2022-26) digital collections strategy. It addresses all aspects of born-digital collecting and curation – from acquisition and processing through preservation and access.

"This plan, which involves Library-wide collaboration, lays the path for growing our born-digital collections, while strengthening our capacity in terms of workflows, processes and infrastructure," Brunton said. "It ensures that we not only grow our digital collections, but also that we can make them discoverable, accessible and usable, now and in the future."

Nadal described how the work of the Preservation Directorate in safeguarding the collections is critical to the Library's strategic objective to sustain access to knowledge and creativity.

"A major strategic initiative for fiscal 2024 is to ensure all staff have up-to-date knowledge and resources to ensure safe, sustainable access to the

Library's collections through a coordinated assessment and training effort," Nadal said.

He noted that the directorate is also implementing a modern new inventory management system for items at the Library's state-of-the-art collections storage facilities.

Wiggins highlighted work underway in ABA to modernize subject headings.

"The Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate is continuing critical work to expand access to Library collections through our metadata and descriptive practices," Wiggins said.

He described efforts to modernize controlled vocabularies, including Library of Congress Subject Headings, which are used by the Library and many other large public and academic libraries. He also noted work to expand the use of non-Latin scripts in Library descriptions and to expand culturally sensitive descriptive practices.

For more information, visit DPS' [intranet site](#). ■

STRATEGIC PLANNING SPOTLIGHT SESSION

Feb. 20, 10:30 a.m.

[Online](#)

Kaffie Milikin from the Library's Development Office and Tom Nauer from the Multimedia Group discuss how the Library's fundraising efforts and video communications support the 2024-28 strategic plan. All staff members are invited to learn more about this exciting work within the Office of the Librarian.

Questions? Send an email message to cvic@loc.gov.

VETERANS TO SHARE STORIES OF GROWTH AND HEALING

Feb. 27, noon

LJ 119 and [online](#)

Join Glenda Arrington, the Library's inspector general, as she welcomes Byron Rowe, a retired senior hospital corpsman with the U.S. Navy, and Phillip Brashear, retired chief warrant officer with the U.S. Army, to speak about their military service.

All employees are welcome, and veterans are encouraged to attend. Veterans History Project (VHP) staff members will be available to answer questions and facilitate connections across the Library's veterans community. Attendees are invited to bring their lunches, and light refreshments will be provided.

Questions? Contact Andy Wolanski of VHP at awolanski@loc.gov.

QUESTION & ANSWER



Cesar Ruiz

Cesar Ruiz is an interior designer in Integrated Support Services.

Tell us about your background.

I was born and raised in Puerto Rico. I earned a bachelor's degree in business management from the University of Puerto Rico and a master's degree in marketing and human resources from the Universidad Metropolitana. In addition, I have an interior design degree from the San Juan School of Interior Design.

Prior to moving to the mainland in 2014, I worked for 21 years in the hospitality industry as a convention service manager at one of the top hotels in Puerto Rico. Right after finishing my design degree, I moved to Maryland to pursue my passion for interior design. I worked in the residential design field for two years, then in the private commercial sector for seven years before starting at the Library.

What brought you to the Library, and what do you do?

Once I settled in the area, and as a result of my constant quest for knowledge in the design and architectural fields, I got a reader's card at the Library to browse and read books on related topics to broaden my knowledge.

Upon my initial visit, I was amazed

and awed by the grandeur of the architecture and interiors of all three of the Library buildings. I saw the Library as a great place to work, one that caters to a public in search of knowledge. As soon as I got the opportunity, I applied to work here.

As a designer for the Library, I help design and update different spaces to accommodate the evolving needs of patrons and employees and to maximize the use of areas to fit their purposes.

What are some of your standout projects?

I have only been working for the Library for a few months, so don't have any large projects to mention – but I look forward to many standout projects in the future.

Before starting at the Library, one of my biggest projects was working on the MGM National Harbor Hotel and Casino in Maryland. I designed spaces and specified furniture for public areas and back-of-the-house employee spaces.

I have also worked on challenging design projects for the D.C. Armory,

the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the University of Maryland Medical System. I take pride and joy in all my projects regardless of their size and reach.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

I enjoy reading, traveling, kayaking and exploring and hiking trails around the Washington, D.C., area. I also dabble in spagyrics (herbal alchemy). I research plants and their medicinal properties and qualities to create tinctures, oils and natural remedies for all different kinds of personal and household uses.

What is something your co-workers may not know about you?

Something my co-workers may not know about me is that I have a very diverse background with ancestors ranging from Spain to Cuba. In addition, I am a very "crafty" person. I enjoy hands-on projects and home improvements involving woodworking, screen printing, sewing, electrical work, plumbing, tiling and other skills. ■

JUSTICE KAGAN SPEAKS AT THE LIBRARY



U.S. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan talks with Jeffrey S. Sutton, chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, in the Coolidge Auditorium on Feb. 8. Sutton interviewed Justice Kagan during the annual lecture of the Supreme Court Fellows Program.

Shawn Miller

Winner of Holland Prize Announced

The Library and the National Park Service announced in January that the 2023 Leicester B. Holland Prize will be presented to students from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for a drawing of Illinois Beach South Bathhouse in Zion, Illinois. The students are Shelbye Doyen, Chanan Hanson, Laura Hershner, Victoria Hill and Sol Scherer-Estevez.

The Illinois Beach South Bathhouse was erected in 1961 with several other buildings in Illinois Beach State Park. Its cast-in-place concrete construction is typical of modernist structures of the period. The building features a prominent series of interconnected, cast-concrete barrel vaults and a prominent tower. Its waveform roof speaks to its location on the Lake Michigan beachfront and waves on the lake.

Associated extant structures include a nearly identical bathhouse and cast concrete picnic shelters to the north and a large convention center and hotel just to the south. The firm Barancik, Conte and Associates designed the ensemble.

The Leicester B. Holland Prize recognizes the best single-sheet, measured drawing of a historical building, site or structure prepared to the standards of the Historic American Buildings Survey, the Historic American Engineering Record or the Historic American Landscapes Survey.

The prize honors Holland (1882-1952), a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, director of what is now the Library's Prints and Photographs Division and co-founder of the Historic American Buildings Survey. All drawings accepted for the competition are added to the Library's permanent collections.

For more details, read the [press announcement](#). ■

16 FRIDAY

Concert: The Melnikov-Faust-Quayras Trio performs music by Beethoven, Brahms and Carter. 8 p.m., Coolidge Auditorium. Contact: 7-8000.

20 TUESDAY

Webinar: This month's Reference Forum focuses on making the Library's Foreign Copying Program more accessible through updated description. 11 a.m., [online](#). Contact: acuf@loc.gov.

Toastmasters: The Library's Toastmasters club meets the first and third Tuesday of each month. Noon, Madison Building staff multipurpose room. Contact: rjon@loc.gov.

Lecture: Miranda Bartira Tagliari Sousa of the University of Pittsburgh discusses the Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo Collection in the Music Division. 7 p.m., Montpelier Room. [Get tickets](#). Contact: 7-8000.

21 WEDNESDAY

Book Talk: Library of Congress Professional Association hosts Jeffrey Lofton, author of "Red Clay Suzie." Noon, Dining Room A. Contact: then@loc.gov.

Webinar: The Copyright Office

presents "Hip-Hop Beyond 50: Protecting and Promoting Culture." 1 p.m., [online](#). [Register here](#). Contact: amro@copyright.gov.

Lecture: Connecting Communities Digital Initiative scholar-in-residence Maya Cade discusses her research at the Library on Black film. Noon, Pickford Theater and [online](#). Contact: 7-8000.

Webinar: A "Finding Pictures" webinar highlights the work of Robert H. McNeill, who documented 20th-century African American leaders and life in Washington, D.C. 3 p.m., [online](#).

22 THURSDAY

Webinar: The Law Library presents "Fighting Terrorism Through Law: How Egyptian Courts Apply Laws on Combating Terrorism and Terrorist Financing." 2 p.m., [online](#). Contact: gesa@loc.gov.

Book Talk: Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden speaks with award-winning historian Kerri Greenidge about Greenidge's new book, "The Grimkes: The Legacy of Slavery in an American Family." 7 p.m., LJ 119. [Get tickets](#). Contact: 7-8000.

Request ADA accommodations for events five business days in advance at 7-6362 or ADA@loc.gov. See www.loc.gov/events

HIP-HOP BEYOND 50

Feb. 21, 1 p.m.
[Online](#)

The U.S. Copyright Office is hosting "Hip-Hop Beyond 50: Protecting and Promoting Culture" in recognition of Black History Month. Copyright Office specialists, industry experts and practitioners will speak about hip-hop's influence on creators worldwide and about the Copyright Office's resources on sampling, interpolations and beat stores.

Questions? Send an email to amro@copyright.gov.

HCD SERVICES PORTAL

In the new hybrid workplace, the [Human Capital Directorate \(HCD\) services portal](#) is there to help. Ask questions of HCD professionals; submit documents related to benefits, retirement and payroll matters; and track requests.

CRS, CONTINUED FROM 1

suggested actionable near-term steps in advance of longer-term objectives,” Steve Maguire, a program manager in CRS’ Office of Legislative Services, said.

CRS completed several data analytics projects in fiscal 2023, including using TRIM3. A microsimulation model constructed with funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, it permits analysts to examine the impact of receipt of benefits from major low-income assistance programs and to simulate policy alternatives.

CRS has also developed a student-loan calculator, which can be used to model changes to federal student loan programs and is constantly updated to include new data and refinements.

“This is one of the projects our current data science engagement will help refurbish and streamline, allowing for faster response times to congressional inquiries as well as richer analysis,” Maguire said.

To further explore data analytics tools, CRS has formed data science support teams. Two teams in the Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division are creating a searchable database for budget documents of the U.S. departments of Defense and State.

In addition to streamlining the student loan calculator, a team in the Domestic Social Policy Division is ingesting and processing terabytes of health insurance pricing data to enable analysis of price variation in different locations. And a team in the Office of Administrative Operations is modernizing its workforce information systems, which currently rely on legacy routines and software applications.

Beyond data analytics, CRS and Library AI working groups are identifying possible next steps and use cases for AI tools.

CRS’ Artificial Intelligence Working Group, launched in May 2023, is evaluating applications that could benefit the work of CRS, such as

expediting the drafting, reviewing and publishing of bill summaries on Congress.gov. An intranet site was launched in January to provide CRS analysts with core documents, background information and resources on AI and related topics.

“The CRS Artificial Intelligence Working Group also is considering best practices to ensure that AI would be used consistently with CRS’ mission and values and with Library requirements,” Steven Lev, deputy assistant director of the Resources, Science and Industry Division and co-chair of the working group, said.

CRS also continues to enhance its infographic products. First piloted in 2015 and developed into a product line the following year, infographics are produced by a team of visual information specialists in CRS’ Office of Publishing. In collaboration with subject matter experts, the visual information specialists translate information into a visual, designed format that includes text, data visualization and illustrations. The results benefit congressional users by offering stand-alone visual products on complex topics.

Tamera Wells-Lee, associate

director of the Office of Publishing, credits the graphics team for the growth and popularity of infographics and related CRS products. In 2022, the office appointed Bisola Momoh to head the Visualization and Geospatial Information Systems Section and expand CRS’ visual-based products.

“Under Ms. Momoh’s leadership, the talented team, which includes visual information specialists as well as GIS analysts, has refined and reimagined the presentation of visual and GIS products in response to growing congressional interest,” Wells-Lee said.

CRS continues to prioritize mobilization of rapidly evolving technologies, believing that it’s essential to maintaining the highest standards of service to Congress.

“As the issues that Congress considers become more intricate and complex, CRS has to position itself to meet those needs,” Newlen said. “It’s something that I am committed to doing as interim director and something that I know that Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden and the Library’s leadership team are very much focused on as well.” ■

100 YEARS OF ‘RHAPSODY’



George Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue,” a rapturous burst of music that has become a motif of the nation’s creative spirit, turned 100 on Monday, reports Neely Tucker on the [Timeless](#) blog. Home to the George and Ira Gershwin Collection, the Library marked the centennial with a Feb. 12 performance by the U.S. Air Force Band and pianist Simone Dinnerstein and an [around-the-nation video tribute](#).