



SRRT

Social Responsibilities
Round Table **EST. 1969**

AmericanLibraryAssociation

Newsletter

June 2021

Issue 215



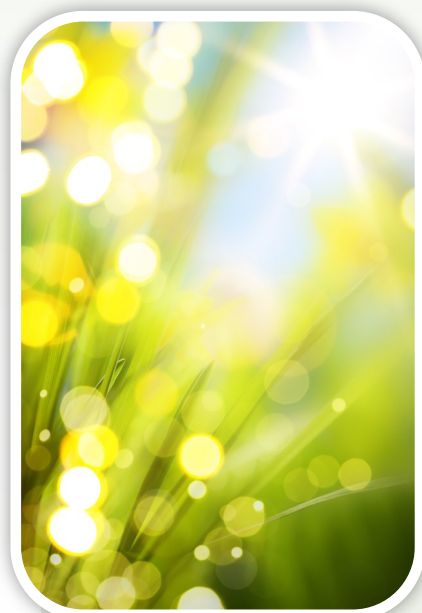
Julie Winkelstein
SRRT Newsletter Editor

Hello everyone and welcome to our June 2021 newsletter!

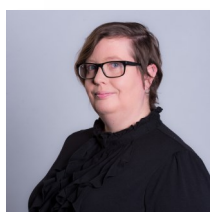
My first news is that after many years of being first editor, then co-editor, Melissa Cardenas-Dow has moved on from the SRRT newsletter team. We will miss her, but I'm so appreciative of her hard work and wonderful contributions to this newsletter. And in keeping with that news: The SRRT newsletter is looking for a new co-editor. You'll find a call for a new co-editor on page 5 – please consider applying! We're also looking for new Editorial Board members – two members have recently left. Again, consider applying!

In this newsletter, you'll find information about SRRT activities at ALA Annual 2021, reports from the task forces, book reviews, two pieces in response to our June newsletter theme: "What if your library/profession/institution/community were anti-racist. What would that look like?" and a piece about the 2021 Critical Pedagogy Symposium. As usual, as I look at what's happening both inside and outside of SRRT, I'm glad to be part of a profession that takes social justice so seriously.

Finally, many many thanks to Doreen Dixon for her expertise in the layout and technical aspects of this newsletter issue!



From the SRRT Coordinator



April Sheppard
SRRT Coordinator

Congratulations to our newly elected SRRT Action Council Members-At-Large:

- Gerardo Colmenar
- Laura Koltutsky
- Mark Winston

We'd also like to congratulate Tara Brady for being reelected SRRT Councilor to ALA Council. I have interacted with all our new and reelected members and I think they're going to be great. I look forward to working with everyone after Annual.

I also want to thank everyone who stood for election this year. I was very happy to see so many talented people interested in serving on the Action Council. It's hard when we have more candidates than open spots, but I hope it's a problem we continue to have.

Finally, I want to give my most sincere thanks to Lisa Eichholtz, who served as SRRT treasurer. She may not remember it, but Lisa was one of the first SRRT members I met in person. She helped this very nervous new Action Council member feel welcomed on top of being an excellent treasurer.

Continued on p. 2

Inside this issue

From the SRRT Coordinator.....	2
ALA Annual Virtual 2021	2
SRRT Afternoon of Social Justice	2
FTF News	3
Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Task Force News	3
HHPTF News	3
What if your library/profession/institution/ community were anti-racist. What would that look like?	4
The Use of Libguides in Struggling Against Pandemic and Racism in Iowa	5
2021 Critical Pedagogy Symposium	6
Reflections on the Critical Pedagogy Symposium	6
Voices from the Past	7
Book Reviews.....	7
Call for Submissions	8



From the SRRT Coordinator

SRRT Membership Numbers

As of March 2021, SRRT has increased membership by 10.58% compared to March 2020. Here are other Round Tables which also saw an increase in the same time period:

<u>ALA Round Tables</u>	<u>Membership Numbers</u>	<u>% of Growth</u>
Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT)	2,069	10.58%
Ethnic & Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT)	1,086	10.7%
Film and Media Round Table (FMRT)	783	16.52%
Graphic Novel and Comics Round Table (GNCRT)	1,092	8.33%
Government Documents Round Table (GODORT)	547	0.09%
Library History Round Table (LHRT)	472	7.03%
Library Support Staff Interests Round Table (LSSIRT)	438	8.42%
Retired Members Round Table (RMRT)	347	4.83%
Rainbow Round Table	1,452	0.07%
Staff Organizations Round Table (SORT)	223	3.72%
Sustainability Round Table (SUSTRT)	1,439	15.12%

ALA has 52,031 members, +0.17%

I am very thankful to all our members and to them, the Action Council, task forces, SRRT liaisons and representatives, the newsletter editorial board, and the web and social media teams who help make SRRT a place worth joining. However, I also wanted to point out how many of the round tables above are small. I am glad that the most recent Forward Together draft resolutions appears to have dropped the 1% membership requirement for round tables, but I want to encourage SRRT and other large round tables to continue to keep an eye out for our smaller brethren and do what we can to advocate for their continued success.



SRRT Events 2021 ALA Annual Virtual Conference

All times listed in Central.

- June 24th, 11:00am – 12:00pm – SRRT Annual Membership Meeting*
- June 24th, 12:15pm – 1:15pm - COVID's uneven impact on communities (Co-Sponsored by SRRT)
- June 25th, 1:00pm – 2:00pm - Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Multicultural Idea Exchange
- June 25th, 4:00 – 5:00pm – SRRT Feminist Task Force
- June 26th, 2:45pm – 3:45pm – APALA Community Driven Justice in Our Work: Library and Archival Workers of Color Advocating for Self-Preservation, Solidarity, Change, and Justice in Communities, Workplace, and in the Profession at Large (Co-Sponsored by SRRT)

* Do not need to be registered for Annual to attend. Zoom link will be posted prior to the meeting.

2021 SRRT Afternoon of Social Justice

Keep your calendars open for our next SRRT Afternoon of Social Justice event, which is currently scheduled for July 8, 2021. Programs will include a reshewing of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Multicultural Idea Exchange program from ALA Annual, a session on youth homelessness, and a panel called Racial Justice/ Social Responsibilities. We are currently finalizing the times and panelists. Once we do, we will post the information on the [SRRT website](#) and our social media channels.

Missed last year's event? Our 2020 Afternoon of Social Justice sessions are available on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLY6JdvV7ZFZvlYmu7ahPn38i9iec4U1qU>.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Feminist Task Force (FTF)

Feminist Task Force meeting at ALA Annual 2021: June 25th, 4:00 – 5:00pm

FTF is at a critical point, with new leadership needed to guide the work of the task force. SRRT is an incredibly supportive organization, making this a perfect opportunity to make that next step of action and activism. Interested? Questions? Feel free to email me at sharrington@berry.edu or give me a call at 706-236-2285.

Submitted by Sherre Harrington

Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Task Force

We're pleased to announce that we will be hosting the **Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Multicultural Idea Exchange on Friday, June 25, 1PM (Central)**. The idea exchange is this year's SRRT Chair Program for Annual. A panel representing public and academic libraries will present programs and activities from their organizations that promote the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in their libraries and communities, particularly during the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday. During the exchange, program attendees will also have an opportunity to tout their own special events. Our panel will include staff from the Milwaukee Public, Akron-Summit County Public, and Michigan State University Libraries.

Carla J. Davis, Marketing and Communications Director, Akron-Summit County Public Library - Carla is a communications professional with over 20 years of experience in public relations, journalism, and communications. She currently serves as the Marketing Communications Director of the Akron-Summit County Public Library, where she is responsible for planning and directing system-wide communications. Prior to joining the Library, Carla worked at the Akron Beacon Journal in the newsroom, as well as in promotions, where she developed ABJ promotional campaigns, including one for the Pulitzer Prize-winning year-long series, A Question of Color. The newspaper received the John S. Knight Gold Medal in 1994 for Meritorious Public Service. Carla is the owner of Carla Davis Communications, a strategic communications business. She has a passion for women's and human rights issues, clinical counseling, and music. Carla is a graduate of the University of Akron with a B.A. in Communications and Ashland University with an M.A. She enjoys traveling, reading, music and spending time with friends and family. The beach is her happy place, this side of Heaven.

Ranti Junus, Systems Librarian for Electronic Resources, Michigan State University Libraries - Ranti's work includes supporting the design, access organization, and support in technical and access issues related to electronic resources including purchased databases, the catalog, and other digital resources. Her interests include usability & accessibility (especially for persons with disabilities), open source, and knowledge management. Ranti is also the subject librarian for Library & Information Science collection and the library liaison for MSU Museum Studies program. She enjoys listening to prog-rock, blues, jazz, and classic.

Erik Ponder, African and US Ethnic Studies Librarian, Michigan State University Libraries - His area of interests are southern African contemporary politics, history, and popular culture. He has traveled extensively throughout the African continent. In 1994, he was an international election observer for the historic democratic elections in South Africa. He has collected ephemera from Africa in response to the Obama presidency. More recently, he has collected Black Lives Matter protest posters in Washington DC. Erik has also worked extensively in the Digital Humanities, combining his interests in Africa and digital scholarship.

Brett Rohlwing, Branch Manager, Milwaukee Public Library, Martin Luther King Branch - Brett has worked for the Milwaukee Public Library system for 10 years in a variety of roles and subject areas. He earned both his Bachelor's Degree (1994) and MLIS (2009) from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Planning for and working during the annual MLK Birthday Celebrations have been the most rewarding parts of his entire professional life.

*Submitted by Lajuan Pringle,
Chair, SRRT, Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Task Force*

Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Task Force (HHPTF)

Hi everyone,

In case you didn't know, the HHPTF maintains a blog at <http://hhptf.org/>. It's our official site and includes news, resources, and links for related organizations. We invite you to explore it, let us know what you think, and offer any suggestions or comments. This site is managed by Lisa Gieskes, co-coordinator for the HHPTF.

We also are continuing to work slowly toward creating a booklist for children and young adults that includes titles that are respectful, accurate, and supportive of youth and families who are experiencing housing and food insecurity. If you would like to be involved or have suggested titles, please let us know: Lisa Gieskes – lgieskes@richlandlibrary.com and Julie Winkelstein – jwinkels@utk.edu
We look forward to hearing from you!

Submitted by Julie Ann Winkelstein and Lisa Gieskes, co-coordinators for the HHPTF

Call for Newsletter Editorial Board Members

Are you looking for a way to be more involved in the Social Responsibilities Round Table? Are you passionate about books, media, and their role in social responsibility? Do you have excellent writing and editing skills? Are you good at meeting deadlines and encouraging others to meet them as well? If so, membership in The SRRT Newsletter Editorial Board might be just the volunteer position you're looking for!

We are in need of more members who can serve on the Editorial Board after ALA Annual Virtual 2021 and beyond. Editorial Board placements are determined by the SRRT Action Council. We'd like the SRRT newsletter Editorial Board members to be members of SRRT. The duties of members of The SRRT Newsletter:

Editorial Board are to liaise with groups in the profession to solicit content and to collaborate with the SRRT Newsletter co-editors to layout, publish, and distribute issues of The SRRT Newsletter. If you are interested, please send a copy of your resume/CV and a brief letter of inquiry outlining your qualifications and interest in the position to the SRRT newsletter editor, Julie Winkelstein, jwinkels@utk.edu



What if your library/profession/institution/ community were anti-racist.

What Would That Look Like?

Lajuan Pringle

Chair, Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunrise Celebration

As discussions of anti-racism inherently focus on structures, my view of an anti-racist library requires evaluating staff demographics and recruitment of BIPOC staff, adapting policies and procedures that eliminate opportunities for structural racism and discrimination, and continuous improvement in serving underserved populations.

Does your library staff reflect the community they serve? Most of us have access to basic demographic information that could offer a glimpse as to where your organization is at. For example, a quick visit to the U.S. Census Bureau's Quick Facts webpage will reveal that people of color make up over 50% of the population in my home city of Charlotte, NC. How does this compare with our organization? A quick scan of my organization's demographics could be the start of evaluating this question. The demographics of the organization's leadership should also be examined and cross-checked against not only the demographics of the community at large, but also the staff. In my anti-racist world, library staff and leadership reflect the presence of the communities they serve.

In an anti-racist library, recruitment plays a large role in ensuring that library staff do reflect the communities they serve. A recruitment process that purposefully targets BIPOC future employees signals a commitment to anti-racist hiring practices. Other anti-racist commitments could be:

- Recruiting BIPOC employees through outreach events (job fairs, neighborhood block parties, etc.) where BIPOC communities are the primary audience.
- Engage in career day events and/or discussion panels that highlight librarianship and would appeal to job-seekers who want to make a difference in their communities. Many library employees, regardless of race, will share that they wanted to work in libraries because they already view libraries as valued by the community. Focusing on how librarianship is a great career for folks who are socially conscious (and responsible) would send a strong message to the BIPOC community that their talents would be welcome in a library environment.

“my view of an anti-racist library requires evaluating staff demographics and recruitment of BIPOC staff, adapting policies and procedures that eliminate opportunities for structural racism and discrimination, and continuous improvement in serving underserved populations.”

Anti-racist libraries should probably ask: Are your current policies and procedures aligned to produce equity within the communities you serve? Are BIPOC communities using their local libraries less because of fines and fees? Would eliminating fees eliminate usage barriers? Thank goodness, many libraries across the country are recognizing the hardship that late fees have caused, particularly within BIPOC communities, in terms of library use. Other policies and procedures to consider:

- Ensure that your library's services and programs are created and shared with diverse audiences in mind by specifically targeting BIPOC communities. Regular programs like a Black Lives Matter book club or Keiki Reads are targeted clubs that anyone can participate in.
- Start affinity groups within your organizations. For many, affinity groups are an indicator of an organization's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Allowing space for staff who share the same unique life experiences can not only serve as a morale booster for staff, but also reaffirm an employee's commitment to their organization.
- Consider utilizing restorative practices to resolve conflicts with both staff and customers/patrons. Restorative practices involve holding people responsible for their actions with direct interaction with the person(s) involved in the situation. Restorative practices are finding their way in libraries as they have already been introduced to classrooms. Restorative practices have been shown to produce positive outcomes for everyone involved and decreased the number of unwanted incidents. More libraries engaging in these kinds of practices will make both public areas and workspaces safe for patrons and staff alike.

An anti-racist library continues to improve on serving underserved populations. This means constantly bringing new services and features to these libraries. It means building new and improved facilities in underserved areas where the demand for new facilities may be less than in more affluent areas. It also means improving facilities that are currently in underserved areas. Whether it means adding services or renovating existing facilities to provide better service, make libraries in underserved communities the pride of their community. This demonstrates your library's commitment to anti-racism.

Setting up standards for anti-racist practices in libraries shouldn't be difficult. While most of these practices would create a favorable environment for anti-racist libraries, everything outlined could appeal to everyone regardless of race. It's my hope that much of the fervor surrounding anti-racism results in game-changing practices that make our libraries more welcoming to everyone. But especially for BIPOC communities.

The Use of Libguides in Struggling Against Pandemic and Racism in Iowa



Shu Wan, MA, MLIS

University at Buffalo

CCOVID-19 has stuck everybody in America in the plight for over one year. The situation is challenging for the Asian American community. Its members encountered the threat of being scapegoated as the disease carriers. The often racist/xenophobic theories about Asian origins of the pandemic contributed to an increase in actual violence and hate crimes against Asian Americans.

As one of the whitest states in the United States without a significant Asian population, it seems reasonable that Anti-Asianism could be a less severe issue in the history of Iowa than other states in the country. According to the census results in 2020, white folks make up 90.6% of the population in the state, but only 1/20 of Iowa's residents have Asian heritage. During the heyday of anti-Chinese sentiment in the 1870s, in which Asian immigrants confronted the intense violent threats in California and Colorado, there were rare records of antagonism against Asian Iowans. Even so, as an absolute statistical minority in the heartland state of America, Iowa's residents of Asian origin still live in the shadow of racism and hate crimes.

Facing the haunting menace to the Asian American people, some large college libraries and their affiliates in Iowa, such as the University of Iowa (UI) and Iowa State (ISU) libraries, have engaged in creating libguides for taking their patrons' notice of the severity of racial discrimination in the local community. Libguides could be library patrons' best companions in assisting them with seeking helpful information, and more importantly, one of library workers' most potent weapons in fighting against racism. This essay intends to demonstrate how ISU and UI library systems use the libguide as a powerful weapon, with which librarians could equip their patrons in the fight against the exacerbated racial relations and elevating anti-Asian discrimination during the pandemic.

In reaction to the outburst of the pandemic, which poses threats to both affiliates of the college and local community, UI libraries took immediate actions in creating a pandemic-oriented libguide, which has been kept updated until March 10, 2021. As displayed in the picture below, the libguide provides information involving the available reliable news resources for dealing with COVID-19. Notably, the COVID-caused racism is not neglected in the libguides. For example, there is a tiny column called "Racism & Prejudice" containing the links to the newspaper articles covering the COVID-19-related racist sentiments, as shown in the picture below:

<https://guides.lib.uiowa.edu/coronavirus>

Likewise, another large academic library in the farming state, ISU Libraries, has set out a similar agenda for creating a COVID-related libguide, guiding patrons to use library resources. It does not only include the description of the severity of the issue in those national newspapers, but also provides suggestions on how to seek professional consultations, along with a comprehensive definition of "COVID-19 racism" as follows: "anti-Chinese and anti-Asian scapegoating and xenophobic reactions, including fear, exclusion, harassment, microaggressions, and other racist behaviors related to the COVID-19 public health epidemic." More importantly, allowing the library student patrons to further their knowledge of the confusion of racism (and xenophobia), the specter haunting the history of this nation, is imperative to raise young college students' awareness of the prominence of a Chinese student. At this moment, it is reasonable to expect that President Biden must fulfill his promise to end the time of wearing masks on the eve of July 4, which may indicate the end of the hard time and victory over the warfare with the pandemic. However, the pandemic-stimulated racist sentiments and xenophobia will not be relieved immediately. It is because the sentiments are not an emerging social issue but embedded in the history of the United States. Hence, it will still be significant to inform college patrons of the irreducible and ineradicable social illness inflicting American society since 1619. To raise college students' and community members' awareness of the dark side of racial relations in American history, ISU libraries' libguide also recommends readings in their extended collections, which may renew their understanding of "intellectual tradition" of racism and anti-Asianism in American society and history.

<https://instr.iastate.libguides.com/c.php?g=799527&p=7267352>

Overall, both UI and ISU libraries have succeeded in paving a pathway for college and community patrons to access their Asian neighbors and their descendants' traumatic encounters with racism and xenophobia, which could be the first step that local white folks take: learning about the long history of anti-Asianism.

Call for SRRT Newsletter Co-Editor:

Are you looking to get more involved with the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT)? Do you have excellent writing and editing skills? Are you familiar with basic desktop and web publishing or have the ability to quickly pick up these skills? Are you good at meeting deadlines and encouraging others to meet them as well?

If you answered "yes" to the questions above — you might be our next SRRT newsletter co-editor!

The SRRT newsletter is a quarterly online publication. An estimated 12 to 15 hours of work goes into each issue. This position focuses on editing and formatting submissions and making final edits before publishing. The new co-editor will examine changes in workflow, distribution, and production of the newsletter.

The new SRRT newsletter co-editor will work closely with co-editor Julie Winkelstein, the SRRT Action Council, the SRRT Editorial Board, and the current SRRT web team. The co-editor is considered to be an ex-officio member of SRRT Action Council and attendance at Action Council meetings is highly encouraged, but not required. SRRT newsletter archives are available here: <http://www.ala.org/rt/srrt/newsletter-archive>.

If you are interested in becoming the next co-editor of The SRRT newsletter, please send a copy of your resume/CV, a brief statement (250-300 words) outlining your interest in the position and qualifications, and a writing sample and/or examples of previous work to Kyle Evans (kylee@thelibrary.org) and Laura Koltutsky (laurakoltutsky@gmail.com). The deadline for submission is Friday, August 1, 2021. If possible, the new co-editor will start in July 2021. Priority will be given to BI-POC and LGBTQ2SA+ applicants. We look forward to hearing from you!

2021 Critical Pedagogy Symposium

Vikki C. Terrile

Assistant Professor, Public Services and Assessment Librarian & Co-Coordinator of Information Literacy, Queensborough Community College, CUNY

What began as a conversation among librarians grew into three days of dialogue, disruption, community, and passionate commitment to justice and criticality. The first [Critical Pedagogy Symposium](#) was jointly organized and sponsored by the METRO Reference & Instruction Special Interest Group (SIG), the Library and Information Literacy Committee (LILAC) of CUNY, and ACRLY/NY's Information Literacy/Instruction Discussion Group, with financial support from New York University (NYU) Libraries, ACRL/NY, and Library Juice Press. The planning committee represented the three core organizations:

- Kate Adler, Director of Library Services, Metropolitan College of New York
- Emma C. Antobam-Ntekudzi, Instructor/Librarian, Bronx Community College, CUNY
- Elvis Bakaitis, Interim Head of Reference, The Graduate Center, CUNY
- Dianne Gordon Conyers, Associate Professor & Periodicals Librarian, LaGuardia Community College, CUNY
- Stephanie Margolin, Associate Professor & Instructional Design Librarian, Hunter College, CUNY
- Linda Miles, Assistant Professor, Head of Reference & OER Librarian, Hostos Community College, CUNY
- Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz, Associate Dean, Teaching, Learning & Engagement, New York University Libraries and Visiting Assistant Professor, Pratt School of Information
- Vikki C. Terrile, Assistant Professor, Public Services and Assessment Librarian & Co-coordinator of Information Literacy, Queensborough Community College, CUNY

To support and inspire this work ahead of the Symposium, the METRO Reference & Instruction Special Interest Group (SIG) hosted "Case Studies in Critical Pedagogy" programs in [November 2020](#) and [February 2021](#).

After (many!) months of meeting, planning, and discussion, the Critical Pedagogy Symposium opened its call for proposals on February 1, 2021. In the spirit of collaboration, creativity, and congeniality, proposals were requested in many different formats, covering a wide range of topics centered in our definition of critical pedagogy in libraries: "teaching and learning in the library that interrogates power structures, distributions of labor, histories, queer and racial inequities, environmental and social justices, and other forms of anti-oppression frameworks."

We received proposals from across the United States and around the world on an incredible array of topics, everything from LGBTQ Cataloging to anti-carceral librarianship to race-centered and trauma-informed reference to using critical information literacy in faculty discussion groups. Even chair yoga!

The Symposium ran for three days, May 17 through May 19, 2021, and opened with a keynote presentation by Jamillah R. Gabriel, soon to be the first Critical Pedagogy Research Librarian at Harvard University. Her presen-

tation, "[Let's Get Critical: Thinking Expansively About Criticality in LIS Scholarship](#)" served as an inspiring introduction to critical theory in libraries and problematized LIS education and research. The Q&A and discussion following the presentation, moderated by Emma C. Antobam-Ntekudzi, set the tone for the symposium.

The [closing keynote](#) was a conversation between Christen Smith, founder of [Cite Black Women](#) and Jaimee Swift, founder of [Black Women Radicals](#), moderated by Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz. It was a powerful conclusion to three days that were humbling, radicalizing, joyful, thought provoking, and action inciting.

More than 1000 participants registered for the Symposium, and we received excited and grateful comments about the need for a space like this through the registration form, in comments throughout the Symposium, and in the closing evaluations.

What's next for us? We'll be keeping the Symposium email address (criticallibrarysymposium@gmail.com) and invite suggestions and ideas so that we can continue the conversation and see what develops. The participants and presenters exchanged ideas, resources, and contact information, so we know that this Symposium is just a beginning and we are excited to see where it goes.

Reflections on the Critical Pedagogy Symposium

Stephanie Margolin, MA, MLIS

Associate Professor, Instructional Design Librarian, Hunter College, CUNY

Criticalities are hard. I should know. I've spent the past 8 years as an academic librarian, and I've yet to get a handle on critical pedagogy, critical race theory, or critical librarianship, despite recognizing that these concepts are important. I was resistant because these topics intimidated me.

However, as a member of the planning committee for the inaugural Critical Pedagogies Symposium, I was (finally) given a proper introduction. From the outset, my co-planners engaged in the language and the theories, collaboratively creating an open, respectful, and inclusive event where participants were invited to tell their own stories in their own authentic presentation styles.

As with the planning, the presentations were also wildly educational. While I personally favor the practical over the theoretical, I felt engaged with both. I've emerged from this event with new ideas to mull over, new strategies to try with my students, and a big reading list to dig into. As I reflect on my experience, here is what I am carrying with me:

1. I am no longer (quite so) intimidated. I can continue to learn about criticalities, and I don't need to master them.
2. In my own struggle to learn, I can gain greater empathy for my students. They, too, might waver as they strive to learn new things, or explore uncomfortable ideas.
3. The idea of more diverse voices really resonated with me. Everything we want to know is not contained in a single library. I need to get better at seeking out these other stories, and to encourage the faculty and students who I work with to do so, too.
4. Community-building is important, and I don't want to read alone. To that end, as a small first step, I've started a reading group with other interested librarians on my campus. We're starting with Sofia Y. Leung and Jorge R. López-McKnight's "Introduction: This Is Only the Beginning," from *Knowledge Justice: Disrupting Library and Information Studies through Critical Race Theory* (The MIT Press, 2021).



In each issue of the SRRT newsletter, we include a brief excerpt from a past newsletter. This issue's excerpt is from the June 1990 issue, number 96. Archived issues are available here: <https://www.ala.org/rt/srrt/newsletter-archive>

SANDY BERMAN GAGGED

SRRT member Sanford Berman, well-known for his timely mailing of information packets to an extensive network of interested persons, is no longer allowed to send out, via the Hennepin County Library mail, information or materials to groups and persons unless the content is strictly and narrowly library-related. Neither Berman nor any of the staff at the Hennepin County Library (Minnesota) are now permitted to express opinions on such issues as AIDS hysteria, homophobia, racism, and poverty using library stationery and metering, as this is not construed as "official business."

If you are concerned that this restriction will adversely affect the flow of information among concerned citizens, write to:

Robert H. Rohlf, Director
Hennepin County Library
12601 Ridgedale Drive
Minnetonka, MN 55343

Book Reviews

The Caring Class, Health Aides in Crisis

Reviewed by **Nancy Sarah Murillo**
Archives/Instruction Librarian,
SUNY Orange Community College

The Caring Class: Home Health Aides in Crisis. 2021. Richard Schweid. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 9781501754104. 192 pages. \$26.95. [See description from Cornell University Press.](#)

As the saying goes, there are only two certainties in life: death and taxes. For those of us in developed nations, growing old could be added to that list. The need for caretakers in an aging population has increased dramatically over the last few decades, and our country could be facing a supply shortage. Certain areas of the country already are. In *The Caring Class: Home Health Aides in Crisis*, Richard Schweid addresses this crisis, analyzing the caretaking industry from various angles and explaining how we as a nation arrived here.

Schweid set out to write a book about cooperatives in the United States, and began with a case study of Cooperative Home Care Associates, a worker-owned agency in the Bronx. He moved to the Bronx to observe CHCA's training programs over several months. Schweid interlaces stories from the training and trainees' personal lives with stark facts and statistics reflecting a broader reality: poverty, gentrification, racism, and sexism have all contributed to the struggles of this mostly female workforce.

Home health care is among the top three fastest growing employment sectors in the nation. In 1975, approximately sixty thousand women were working as home health aides in the United States, while by 2015 over 2.3 million women were doing so. Most do not receive health insurance or any other benefits. Most are paid minimum wage. Schweid observes, "Home care aides perform tasks that make economic sense and save us all a great deal of money. Yet their work is among the least respected and most poorly paid in our country."

The hardships go beyond the financial. There are emotional and physical costs for aides as well as for clients. Schweid outlines all of these while he advocates for higher wages and benefits for home care workers. This would not only improve recruitment and retention, but also the quality of care. At the same time, he berates the large for-profit private agencies, arguing that "the basic idea that caring for our elderly is something from which large profits can be made is odious and needs to change." (90)

If at times the chapters seem somewhat unorganized, it's because Schweid packs a lot of information in a slim volume. The 156 pages read quickly, a testament to Schweid's skills as a journalist. The lengthy suggested reading list at the end also attest to his thorough research.

In the end Schweid is optimistic that change can happen. He cites various studies and potential legislation that would improve working conditions for home health aides and help us all in the long run. As difficult as it is to imagine ourselves needing care as we age, the truth is that either we or someone close to us will need it. *The Caring Class* is a solid introduction to current realities and future possibilities for caregivers and those they care for.

Breaking Things at Work: The Luddites Were Right About Why You Hate Your Job

Reviewed by **Joshua F. Beatty**
SUNY Plattsburgh

Gavin Mueller, *Breaking Things at Work: The Luddites Were Right About Why You Hate Your Job*. New York: Verso, 2021. 9781786636775. 168 pages. Paperback. \$19.95 / £9.99 / \$25.95 CAN.

Gavin Mueller's *Breaking Things at Work* is a brief, readable history of "Luddite" politics — a particular understanding of the relationship between worker, employer, and technology. The Luddites of the title were workers in early nineteenth-century England, who banded together to fight the imposition of new technologies in their workplaces. But their resistance was not so much to machines as to the ways in which the introduction of those machines served to dehumanize them, whether by making work more dangerous, reducing the number of laborers needed, or eliminating the craft and skill of their jobs. In other words, the Luddites were against technology imposed as part of a capitalist drive for profit. From the original Luddites, Mueller explores how that same politics has emerged in different places and times over the past two centuries, up through the present day.

Luddism, for Mueller, is a politics forged in the experience of everyday work, arising when employers force new technologies on workers in an attempt to increase productivity and profits. The politics of Luddism thus values workers' autonomy, understands the workplace as a site of struggle, denies efficiency and productivity are the only important measures, generalizes from individual

Continued on p. 8

Book Reviews

to collective action, and rejects capitalist social relations. Other politics of technology — Silicon Valley boosterism, accelerationist Marxism, and the romantic humanism of much technology criticism — either embrace the hierarchies and inequities inherent to capitalism, whether as an end in themselves or a necessary stage of progress, or fail to root their critiques in the realities of the capitalist workplace.

The first chapter begins with the Luddites before examining two nineteenth-century radicals, finding in Karl Marx a sympathy for Luddism and in William Morris a recognition of the importance of craft and meaningful work. Chapter two studies the scientific management of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, showing how workers resisted the imposition of technocracy in both the capitalist West and Stalinist Soviet Union. The third chapter covers the post-WWII era, in which employers tried to impose automation on factory production and workers fought back. Finally, the final chapter examines the past fifty years of “high-tech Luddism” — workers’ struggles against surveillance capitalism and digital automation.

Mueller concludes with examples of Luddism in practice today. Though library work isn’t mentioned explicitly, librarians may be familiar with one group: the Maintainers, “a research network that seeks to shift focus of technological discourse away from ‘innovation’ toward the vital practices of care and repair of existing technological infrastructures.” (132-133) One wing

of the Maintainers is the Information Maintainers, made up of librarians, community organizers, and many others who “sustain bodies of information, information systems, and the communities that support them.” The Information Maintainers emphasize care as a defining feature of maintenance work, and describe care as being active, collective, organized, scalable, interdisciplinary, and intergenerational and sustained. Though less provocative than *Breaking Things at Work*, the Information Maintainers’ understanding of care echoes Mueller’s articulation of Luddite politics as rooted in the shared workplace experience of resistance to technologies imposed from above — not because technology is necessarily evil, but because its imposition hurts workers and the workplace. Luddism is thus itself an ethics and a politics of care that recurs over time among those who place value in the work itself.

Call for Submissions

The *SRRT Newsletter* is always looking for good articles, essays, and letters to the editor. The next submission deadline is **August 30, 2021**.

The *SRRT Newsletter* invites submissions from library and information workers, students, educators, and all others who recognize the critical importance of libraries in addressing community and social issues. Submission content should align with the goals of SRRT: matters of social responsibility and values, current social needs, and opportunities and problems as they relate to libraries, library workers, or the communities they serve.

Please send your submissions electronically in one of the following formats: MS Word, RTF, PDF, or plain text pasted into the body of an email. Submissions should be 500 to 1,000 words. Graphics are encouraged. If using images that are already on the Internet, the URL of the image and a caption or description may be added to the text of the submission.

Please email original submissions and inquiries to *SRRT Newsletter* Editor Julie Winkelstein at jwinkels@utk.edu, indicating “SRRT Newsletter” within the subject line of your email. A confirmation of receipt will be sent in a timely manner.

Submissions to SRRT Newsletter Reviews

Submissions for book or media reviews should be sent to Madeline Veitch, *SRRT Newsletter* Reviews Editor, at veitchm@newpaltz.edu, indicating “Reviews” in the subject line of your email.

Submissions should be sent electronically in MS-Word format or a Word compatible format. Reviewers should keep their reviews to 300-500 words; any length much shorter or longer should be discussed with the reviews editor prior to submission. Reviewers should avoid conflicts of interest. Full disclosure should be made to the reviews editor when appropriate.

Submissions to SRRT Newsletter Letters to the Editors

The *Newsletter* invites readers to submit letters to the editors relating to social responsibilities and libraries. The letters should be respectful and thoughtful, either respond to specific content in the newsletter or include suggestions for topics of interest to SRRT members to be addressed in future issues. We will only publish letters of more than 200 words in exceptional circumstances.

Letters may be edited for length, grammar, and accuracy. You will be notified if your letter will be published.

Submit your letters to Laura Koltutsky at laurakoltutsky@gmail.com. Please indicate “SRRT Newsletter Letter to Editors” in the subject line of your email. You may submit your letter as an attachment in one of these formats: .doc, docx; or in the body of your email message.

Letters must include your full name, address, a telephone number and email address if you have one. This is for us only -- we don't share this information.



Publication Information

The SRRT newsletter is published quarterly by the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association. ISSN: 0749-1670.

Copyright © 2021 by the Social Responsibilities Round Table. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without permission.

Editor: Julie Winkelstein

Reviews Editor: Madeline Veitch

Editorial Board Members: Jess Costello, Miguel Juárez, Kyle Evans, Laura Koltutsky

Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of ALA/SRRT. The editors reserve the right to edit submitted material as necessary or as whimsy strikes.