

SUMMER 2020

# The Next Chapter



Photo by Bill Wright

## SPL wins most prestigious library award

The Seattle Public Library was named the 2020 Gale/Library Journal Library of the Year, the most distinguished recognition in the library industry.

This honor culminates years of groundwork bringing Library access to more people and in new ways throughout Seattle.

*Library Journal* points to the Library's equity work as a deciding factor in its decision. Specifically, it lauded the Library's Change Team, working to make the Library more equitable for its patrons and employees alike, and its work with community organizations to let them take the lead on determining what they need from the Library to flourish.

In particular, *Library Journal* recognized, among other initiatives:



- Turning the Library's century-old summer reading program into the Summer of Learning in 2012, expanding its focus to science, engineering, technology, arts, and math to prevent the "summer slide" and extending its reach to underserved areas of the city;
- The Library's work with patrons experiencing housing instability, including issuing temporary library cards for those without proof of residence, employing social workers to help patrons access resources, and loaning Wi-Fi hotspots to tiny house villages and shelters;
- Legendary Children, a music and dance event with the Seattle Art Museum celebrating LGBTQ+ communities of color;
- The work with Clear Sky Native Youth Council on documenting Licton Springs' role as a sacred indigenous site and securing its landmark status with the city.

CONTINUED INSIDE



A recent remodel of the Lake City Branch allowed for more space for programs such as Homework Help. (Photo by Chloe Collyer)

*“SPL has turned its attention outward, actively listening to community needs and transforming its work to make equity a top priority.”*

**- EXCERPT FROM LIBRARY JOURNAL’S LIBRARY OF THE YEAR ANNOUNCEMENT, JUNE 2020**

#### CONTINUED FROM FRONT

“This award goes to each of our 700 staff members for their commitment to centering equity and community in our work,” says Marcellus Turner, the Library’s executive director and chief librarian. “From prioritizing preschool children in low-income households with our Bookmobile stops to breaking barriers to access for the insecurely housed, Library staff have been leading the way. It’s also important to recognize the dedication of the staff who keep our buildings well-maintained and clean, the security staff who make patrons feel welcome and safe, and the finance staff who ensure we are good stewards of public tax dollars. It is our entire organization responsible for our success and receipt of this award.”



Legendary Children is an annual event with Seattle Art Museum that celebrates queer culture among the indigenous community and people of color with fashion, dance, and visual arts. (Photos by Naomi Ishisaka)

The Foundation has followed the Library’s lead in working to create a more equitable community and emphasize racial and social justice in the programs we support. Together, we strive to enact a cultural change in our institutions to better reflect our community and we proudly support the Library’s forward-thinking approach.

We owe gratitude to you, our entire donor family, Library volunteers, and community partners, who have joined our effort to make The Seattle Public Library the best it can be for each of our neighbors. It is our collective values that have propelled the Library to become the industry-leading institution it is, providing information and opportunity to all who seek it. We take this recognition not as validation for a job well done, but as a push to keep improving. ■





*The Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) is one of the partners of the Library's Wi-Fi hotspot loan program. Here, hotspots are installed at Georgetown Village, a tiny house community for the insecurely housed. (Photo by LIHI)*

## Library-loaned Wi-Fi brings connectivity to more neighbors

Wi-Fi hotspots are The Seattle Public Library's most-circulated item, with 675 devices checked out nearly 8,000 times last year, bringing free internet access to people three weeks at a time.

But another set of hotspots are intentionally distributed to local organizations and housing communities in need for up to six months at a time to help people most likely to be affected by Seattle's digital divide – those who don't have the devices or internet access to perform basic tasks that now require an internet connection. When Libraries closed in the wake of COVID-19, that need for easy internet access grew.

Donor support to The Seattle Public Library Foundation allowed the Library to acquire 125 additional hotspots after the branch closures for this special outreach program, building the stock to 375 hotspots for community partners. Since then, the

*“Internet means you can connect to people, information, apply for relevant resources you need in order to live.”*

**- NADIYAH BROWNE, SPL OUTREACH PROGRAM MANAGER**

Library has outfitted several groups and schools with internet access for their clients.

Fifty hotspots went to Seattle World School, a culturally and linguistically diverse school in the Seattle Public Schools district that serves more than 300 immigrant and refugee secondary students.

Additional hotspot outreach is targeted to serve people experiencing housing instability, immigrants and refugees, English language learners, and people who identify as LGBTQ+, among many other people in need of internet access to pursue learning opportunities, seek information, or look for jobs and housing.

People living in poverty are five times more likely to lack internet access, according to a 2018 study by the City of Seattle. Of the city's 5 percent of residents without internet, 61 percent say cost is a primary barrier to obtaining access.

“Internet means you can connect to people, information, apply for relevant resources you need in order to live,” says Nadiyah Browne, an outreach program manager at the Library who manages the Wi-Fi hotspot distribution. “What exists in our city is a gap between people who have access to internet (and those who don't) that holds people back from fully engaging in society.”

The Library has worked with organizations like the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) to distribute hotspots to some tiny house villages and an emergency shelter, as well as the Asian Counseling and Referral Service, Villa Comunitaria, and Solid Ground.

“Having the hotspots at the villages is especially important now,” says Andrew Constantino, LIHI site coordinator at the Georgetown Village tiny house community. “They allow residents to stay in contact with family members and friends, stay informed about the crisis, and not feel isolated and alone. They return a sense of normalcy and dignity during this time.” ■



A community member independently posted a sign near Capitol Hill's Volunteer Park encouraging people to check out the Library's "Reading About Race" collection, which features more than 30 always-available titles about race issues. (Photo by @nbd1232/Twitter)

## 'Reading About Race' collection meets surging demand

The Monday after nationwide protests first broke out decrying the May death of George Floyd, Frank Brasile found that demand for digital books about race at The Seattle Public Library suddenly skyrocketed.

The Library tries to keep the holds down to five or fewer people for every book. But Brasile, a selection services librarian, found that holds grew to 15 to 1 on a wide array of titles covering race issues—"remarkable demand," he says.

*"By having unlimited access, we're able to meet patrons where the demand is."*

**- FRANK BRASILE, SELECTION SERVICES  
LIBRARIAN AT THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Brasile immediately sought approval to buy more licenses for digital titles such as "Sister Outsider" by Audra Lorde and "Black Liberation" by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor.

"We really want to be able to provide patrons with as much access as possible," Brasile says.

Demand continued to surge within days, building to 400 holds per day per certain titles, prompting another large acquisition of digital licenses, supported in part by donors to The Seattle Public Library Foundation.

Today, the Library offers more than 30 "always available" titles in its "Reading About Race" collection, offering immediate access to some of the most popular books addressing anti-racism and issues that have historically affected people of color. These include "Me and White Supremacy," "The End of Policing," "Ain't I A Woman," and "Redefining Realness."

The "Reading About Race" collection consists almost entirely of e-audiobooks. Because the Library was closed to checking out hard copy books to protect the public from COVID-19, it was limited to acquiring digital materials to build its stock. And publishers tend to offer more generous and accessible licensing for e-audiobooks than for e-books, Brasile says. But by offering these e-audiobooks, people can listen to them immediately and absorb them while driving or doing other activities around the home.

“By having unlimited access, we’re able to meet patrons where the demand is,” Brasile says.

This surge in popularity for these titles highlights a movement in recent years to promote “own voices,” or stories written by people of the very population the subject affects—for example, “The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee” (2019) was an effort by Native American writer David Treuer to reclaim the narrative of indigenous Americans put forth by the white-written “Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee” in 1970.

Last year, Treuer was the Library’s featured speaker at the A. Scott Bullitt Lecture in American History, supported by a Foundation endowment.

Brasile has selected titles for “Reading About Race” written mostly by people of color who can lend their own experience or viewpoints to the issues they spotlight.

“Elevating and amplifying those voices highlights their importance and it puts them on the same level as all of the familiar voices, historians, and writers we know about,” he says.

Patrons have noticed the expanded offerings.

“Y’all I beg you to download the OverDrive app,” college student Alina wrote from her Twitter account. “Seattle Public Library has a bunch of books on race, including audiobooks, that are always available. Including Freedom is a Constant Struggle (read by Angela Davis), Sister Outsider, The New Jim Crow, Citizen. The best free resource.”

OverDrive and Libby are apps patrons can download on their devices to access and check-out digital materials. Alina has listened to at least four of the Reading About Race titles already during her commute to work and plans to check out more.

Another Twitter user spotted a poster near Capitol Hill’s Volunteer Park that read, “Learning about systemic racism isn’t hard.... When you have a library card!” It listed several titles from the “Reading About Race” collection.

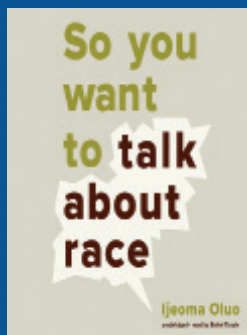
“It’s the beginning of what I hope is a sea change, that we’re going to see more diversity in authors, which is going to create a more diverse slate of books that people will read,” Brasile says. “Hopefully it will change people’s minds.” ■

Find the “Reading About Race” collection at [www.spl.org/ReadingAboutRace](http://www.spl.org/ReadingAboutRace).

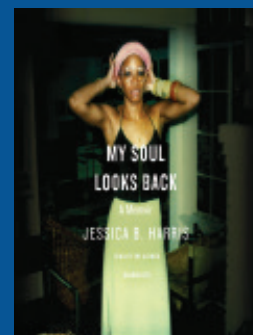
## Titles we suggest

Here are just some of the audiobooks included in the “Reading About Race” collection that you can check out any time at

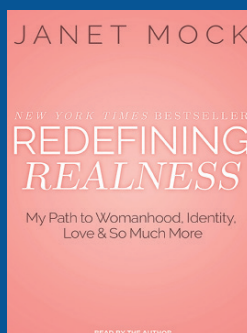
[www.spl.org/ReadingAboutRace](http://www.spl.org/ReadingAboutRace):



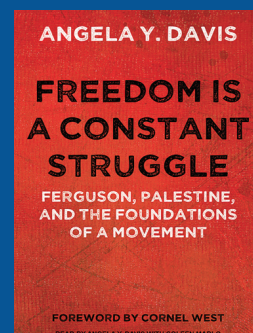
*So You Want to Talk About Race*  
by Ijeoma Oluo



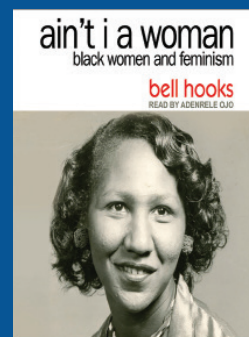
*My Soul Looks Back*  
by Jessica B. Harris



*Redefining Realness*  
by Janet Mock



*Freedom is a Constant Struggle*  
by Angela Y. Davis



*Ain't I a Woman*  
by bell hooks

(Tantor Media, Blackstone Publishing)



*Library Link gives automatic Library access to all Seattle Public Schools students, allowing them to check out books and access the Library's online educational tools.*

## Library Link brings wealth of resources to Seattle students

In a partnership with Seattle Public Schools, The Seattle Public Library has offered middle and high school students automatic access to Library books and resources since 2017 through a program called Library Link.

But when COVID-19 shut down in-person schooling, SPL accelerated its plans to expand the program to elementary grades, bringing access to all 55,844 students in the school district.

Library Link eliminates the need for Seattle Public Schools students to sign up for a library card. If they're a student, they're automatically assigned a library card

number and PIN, unlocking availability of not just books, but online databases for research, digital picture books and graphic novels, and educational videos.

"The idea that there is nothing that anybody has to do to get a library card—that you automatically have one – is the center of Library Link," says Erica Delavan, a children's services librarian at the Northeast Branch who also helps to manage Library Link.

Together, SPL and Seattle Public Schools are trying to close learning and access gaps for those with barriers to remote education, through efforts like Library Link, the school district's distribution of donated Chromebook laptops, and the Library's issuance of Wi-Fi hotspots to communities like Seattle World School families.



*“Teachers are like, ‘Holy smokes, I didn’t know the Library had all of this!’”*

**- TUESD CHAMBERS, BALLARD HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER-LIBRARIAN**

“It’s amazing,” says TuesD Chambers, teacher-librarian at Ballard High School. “We are so lucky to have it.”

Her students can check out books that may not be available at the school library, and she also makes use of SPL’s “always available” books that can be checked out by an entire book club, class, or grade level.

Additionally, Chambers and her colleagues have made extensive use of SPL’s digital resources such as Biography in Context for history projects, ProQuest for cited sources, Kanopy for historical videos, and Flipster for magazines. She also assigned students to use SPL’s Your Next 5 Books service to compile summer reading lists.

“Every single time I teach, I use it,” she says. “Teachers are like, ‘Holy smokes, I didn’t know the Library had all of this!’”

Ellie Ratliff, teacher-librarian at Licton Springs K-8 School, was a pilot user of Library Link when it was first rolled out. It was a useful way to teach fourth- and fifth-graders about how to find information.

“I try to teach them about technology, using computers, and learning to search (using Library Link),” she says.

When she shared Library Link with fourth-graders during quarantine, they were excited to see the selection of “always available” children’s e-books and audiobooks, and the television shows and music they could access on Hoopla.

“I would use it a lot because it is the free digital resource that I and my students all have access to without having to purchase anything additional,” Ratliff says. “It’s getting books into kids’ hands right now.”

Thanks to donor support, the Foundation helped launch the Library Link program with a 3-year grant in 2017. ■

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## Other ways you can support your Library...



**FREEWILL** 

The Seattle Public Library Foundation has partnered with FreeWill to help supporters like you plan your legacy.

In 20 minutes or less, you can create a will that details your wishes for your loved ones and your charitable bequests—all for free. You can then secure the signatures to make it legally binding or review it with your attorney.

FreeWill guides you through the steps and makes it easy to include the Foundation in your estate. See for yourself at [FreeWill.com/SeattlePublicLibrary](https://FreeWill.com/SeattlePublicLibrary).

## Turn your car into books for your library



If your clunker is crowding your driveway, put it to better use and donate it to The Seattle Public Library Foundation.

The Foundation has partnered with the nonprofit CARS (Charitable Adult Rides and Services) to accept used cars so you can help provide books and free educational programs to your community.

CARS will tow your vehicle for free and ready it for auction. After the sale, they send The Foundation a check for 80 percent of the vehicle's value.

To donate your vehicle, visit <https://careasy.org/nonprofit/seattle-public-library>, or call 1-855-500-7433.