

From the Director



The past month has left me short on time to write a new article, so we'll be reprinting this article (with minor edits) from 2019.

Imagine this scene: You get called to help do some post

disaster cleanup at a house. The roof is gone and it is still raining heavily. You are the last one there so most of the individual tasks have already begun, pumping out water, poking holes in the ceilings so water drains out instead of pooling across the whole structure, putting tarp over where the roof used to be, etc. Lots of people helping get stuff done trying to save the building from further damage.

Now you come in and ask what you can do to help. No one knows as they all are focused on their own tasks. As you go among the crowd – you ask what you can do to help and no one can tell you. Even the home owners are elbow deep in projects.

So you step back and look around. As you try to find something to do, you get a sense that at first glance this is the proverbial little Dutch boy out of Hans Brinker, saving the town by putting his finger in the dike to prevent further damage.

But here's the thing – all of this busy work isn't going to prevent further damage. Water is still streaming down out of light fixtures and ceiling joists. The drywall closest

to the ceiling is already bubbling and portions of the ceiling could fall down any minute.

At this point you start asking about getting the irreplaceable stuff out of the house, but no one changes tasks. Photo albums, important documents, and other one-of-a kind items still sit on the shelves. No one seems to acknowledge all of this busy work won't delay the inevitable on the replaceable stuff and no one is trying to save the irreplaceable items.

Disclaimer: This scenario above is inspired by a true-life story, but not 100% accurate to detail. What matters is that we sometimes see people do similar things within their libraries when things start going downhill. Lots of effort put toward small tasks that don't "save" what is worth saving, but no one knowing that it is time to pull back and refocus. This could be literally saving physical aspects of a library, or figuratively looking at the organization as a whole.

I urge you to look at a couple of things. For the physical – look at your emergency plans. Who is in charge if something happens, what do you try to save first, where does it go? For the organizational – have someone who pulls back and looks at the big picture. Sure everybody may be working hard, but is it on things that make a real difference? Do people know why they are being asked to do things certain ways, or even why they are doing them to begin with?

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Calendar

March 16, National Freedom of Information Day

March 17, [NLA Advocacy Day](#)

March 19, National Let's Laugh Day

March 20, [CASTL, Fairmont Public Library, "Food and Libraries"](#)

First Day of Spring

March 23, National Puppy Day

April, [School Library Month](#)

National Poetry Month

April 2, National DIY Day

April 4, [Online SELS Event: "Fleshing Out Your Summer Reading Plans"](#), p. 8

April 5, National Nebraska Day

April 6-12, [National Library Week](#)

April 9, National Library Workers Day

April 12, [D.E.A.R - Drop Everything and Read](#)



Photo of the Month



The SCC-Beatrice campus library puts out a puzzle in the hallway outside the library as an ongoing activity. More on p. 4.

CASTL Wrap-up

Upcoming CASTL Meetings

March 20

Fairmont Public Library
“Food and Libraries”

April 25

Osceola Public Library
“Volunteers in the Library”

May 23

Falls City Library & Arts Center
“Policies for Use of Library Space”

June 27

Via Zoom

July 25

Clay Center Public Library

August 21

Pawnee City Public Library
“Summer Reading Successes”

Our CASTL on May 20 was about “Creating Effective and Enforceable Policies” and was hosted by Melissa Juilfs at Syracuse Public Library.

We first talked about how an effective policy must be enforceable. For example, what are the consequences for the violation of behavior policy?

Also, a policy is best when it is not overly restrictive. An policy with many specific rules takes away staff flexibility to address situations as they arise.

We discussed the importance of the regular review of policy by the library board. It is helpful for the library board to realize that while it delegates most responsibility for carrying out policy, it is ultimately responsible for the formulation of policy. When the board participates in policy creation and review, this also equips board members to be better able to defend library policies.

After policies are approved by the library board, a notation of the date of the approval or last review should be made on the policy for a few reasons: 1. For internal tracking purposes, 2. So that the public knows review has occurred, and 3. For accreditation, which requires policies to have been reviewed within the last three years.

Every policy should also state why the policy exists. This helps patrons understand staff or library actions, sometimes defusing tense situations. In addition, the library board and the staff need to understand the reasoning behind a policy so that they can be comfortable defending and implementing it.

Sources for policy are diverse. Foundational sources include the First Amendment, State Statute, and ALA Statements. The policies of other libraries are often a fantastic source of information and inspiration that can be used and adapted as needed. For the recording of this discussion [click here](#).

Upcoming Basic Skills Classes

To see the list of basic skills classes, [click here](#). Here’s what’s coming up next:

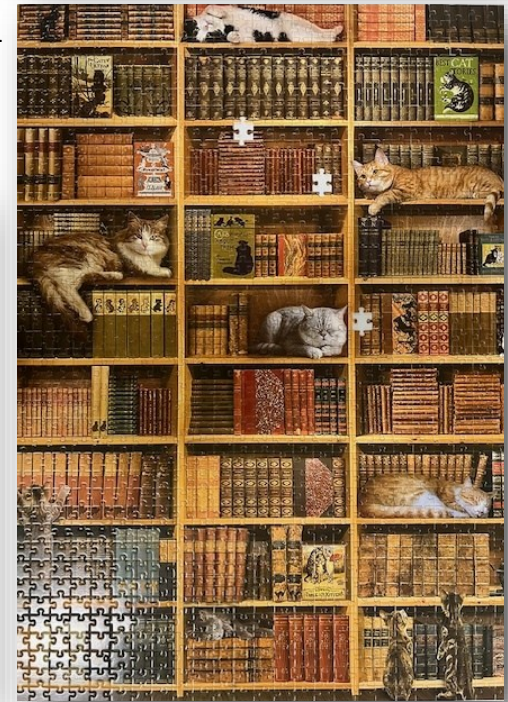
Dates of Class	Topic	Registration
April 1 - April 30	Introduction to Cataloging (Organization of Materials)	February 17 - March 21
April 14 - April 25	Library Finance	March 3 - April 4
May 5 - May 16	Intellectual Freedom / Core Values	March 24 - April 25

News Around the System

Puzzles as a Passive Program

Provided by Dianne Cooper

The SCC-Beatrice campus library put out the first puzzle on National Puzzle Day 2024. Since then, it has been an ongoing activity in the hallway outside the library. Students and staff are encouraged to stop and put in a piece or two as a break or stress relief activity. Some puzzles are out longer than others, depending on the difficulty level and interest. The Grinch puzzle to the right took about a week. The cost is minimal as a lot of the puzzles have been donated or traded. As you will notice, the cat and the bookshelf puzzle has three missing pieces. Whether they were misplaced or missing when the puzzle was received by the library is anyone's guess...



Cat-tastic!

Provided by Sabra Prusia, Photo by Danielle Luetze

The Gresham Public Library had a Cat-tastic Story Hour with a book reading and snacks on March 1st!

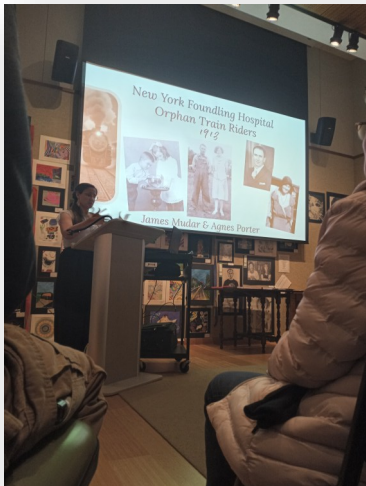
There were some pretty cool cats in hats as they celebrated Dr. Seuss's birthday week!



News Around the System

Orphan Train

Provided by Jame Coonce



It was a full house February 27, 2025 as Falls City Library & Arts Center hosted the curator of the National Orphan Train Complex for a program entitled, "Orphan Train Journeys



to Nebraska". The presentation featured information on the history of the Orphan Train movement, how the system worked, and even included heartfelt stories of real Orphan Train riders as each found their way home to Nebraska. This program was supported by a grant from the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation.

A Thank You from SELS to You

Back in January, we sent out a survey to help us plan our continuing education for this year. We're thrilled to let you know that we're already incorporating a significant amount of your feedback into our offerings.

The topics for both our March and April CASTL meetings were inspired by your suggestions, and the opening session of the SELS Training Extravaganza/PLTS Eastern Spring Meeting in May is also based on your input. Additionally, our virtual session on April 4, "Fleshing Out Your Summer Reading Program," was directly suggested by you.

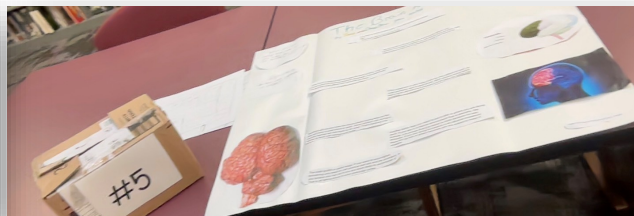


We're still actively exploring ways to cover more of the topics you mentioned in the survey. Your input has been invaluable to us, and we truly appreciate the time you took to share your thoughts!

News Around the System

Mini Science Fair

Provided by Heather Kavan



East Butler held our 1st Mini Science Fair for a reading class after completing Gordon Korman's *Unteachables*. The kids researched some topics of their choice, but didn't actually conduct the experiments.

Future attempts may include a more extensive [rubric](#) and other visuals than just a poster. Students from various classes that visited the Library had a week to make their selection to [vote](#) for the "best" project, while explaining their reasons for their choice.

4-H Reading Connections Resources Available for 2025

Provided by Jennifer Hansen

We are excited to share with you the 2025 4-H Reading Connections resources! This year's theme, "Color Our World", aligns with the Collaborative Summer Library Program theme and integrates 4-H programming. The 4-H Reading Connections resources offer youth valuable opportunities for extended 4-H learning.

The Nebraska 4-H Reading Connections Resources are adaptable. These resources are available for download after completing a brief survey at the following link:

<https://go.unl.edu/0gzj>

This year, all resources are compiled into one document. Remember, these lessons can be customized for various

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to Jennifer Hansen at jhan-sen6@unl.edu or any of the team members listed on the left-hand side of each lesson plan.

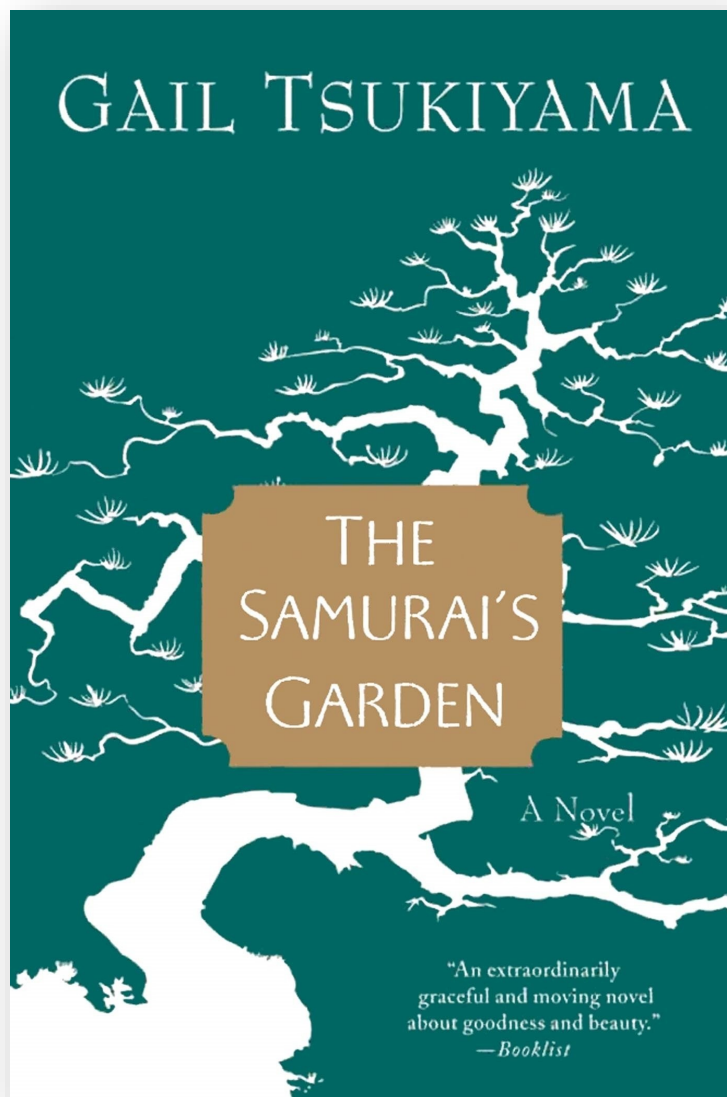


News Around the System

NLC Book Club Spotlight: *The Samurai's Garden*

Provided by Mackenzie Marrow; edited version of the [blog post](#)

All the young and able men are off fighting in China for the Japanese Empire, with each loss and success clouding those they have left at home. But despite the war, life goes on in the peaceful seaside village of Tarumi. And nestled on the outskirts of town is Chinese student Stephen, who has come to his family's summer home to recuperate from tuberculosis. There, he finds a quiet spirituality in Japan that he never had in his busy Hong Kong home, watching as the diligent and quiet groundskeeper Matsu tends tirelessly to the expansive landscape garden. Over the course of a year, amongst the peaceful moss and trees, the story of Matsu and the people of the village come into focus as the pain of the past is superimposed on the pain of the present. Love is forged and lost, while Stephen's heart is torn by the brutalities his people are facing at the hands of the very country in which he is finding peace.



Although Stephen is far from all he knows, he is not the only one there who is struggling with the isolation of illness. In a nearby leprosy village, Stephen sees first-hand the repercussions of the historical ostracization of these outcast people, if they even made it that far to begin with. Tsukiyama explores that while living in turbulent and painful times, we can find peace and beauty in nature and each other, how we can choose kindness and acceptance, even if the world is telling us to turn to hate.

If you're interested in requesting *The Samurai's Garden* for your book club, you can find the Request Form [here](#). **There are 8 copies.** (A librarian must request items)

Fleshing Out Your Summer Reading Plans

April 4

10-11:30

Via Zoom



A time to share with and get ideas from
colleagues.

[REGISTER HERE!](#)



TRAINING EXTRAVAGANZA
PUBLIC LIBRARY AND
TRUSTEE SECTION EASTERN
SPRING MEETING

MAY 9

9:30 - 3:00

Topics include:

- Marketing the Value of the Library & Getting the Board Involved
- Using Google Tools to Raise the Profile of Your Library
- Cricut **Design Space** Tips and Tricks
- Canva
- Reader's Advisory
- The Nebraska Library Commission and the Role that a Commissioner Plays

More information and registration coming soon!

SEWARD MEMORIAL LIBRARY

SAVE THE DATES!

APRIL
23

KEARNEY PUBLIC LIBRARY
1:00 - 4:30 pm

MAY
9

SEWARD MEMORIAL LIBRARY
joining the SELS Training
Extravaganza!

PLTS SPRING MEETINGS 2025

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



Join Us for
Golden Sower
Reading Day

MAY 28, 9:00- 12:30
SEWARD MEMORIAL
LIBRARY

System Spotlight

Book Discussion Kits

Any school media center or public library within the Southeast Library System may borrow multiple copies of a book to use for classes, book clubs, or discussion groups. In some cases we are able to send book kits to Nebraska libraries outside of our service area. Due dates are negotiable, but are usually six weeks from the checkout date. To check out a book kit, please contact the SELS office by calling 402-467-6188, or send us an email at selsne@gmail.com. To see all the titles we have to offer, [go to our book kit page](#) (covers and descriptions are included as shown to the right). If we don't have the book you would like, and neither does the NLC, we may be able to add it to our collection! To have your request considered, email Scott at scott.childers.sels@gmail.com.

Book Discussion Kits

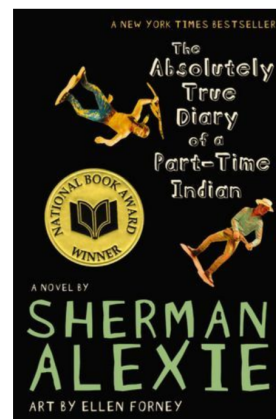
Any school media center or public library within the Southeast Library System may borrow multiple copies of a book to use for classes, book clubs, or discussion groups. In some cases we are able to send book kits to Nebraska libraries outside of our service area. Due dates are negotiable, but are usually six weeks from the checkout date. To check out a book kit, please contact the SELS office by calling 402-467-6188, or send us an email at selsne@gmail.com.

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian
by Sherman Alexie

(10 copies – Hardcover)

Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation is determined to take his future into his own hands. He leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.

Heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully written, this book is based on the author's own experiences and chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he was destined to live.



SELS Book kit Page

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