

# Mississippi Libraries

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# MISSISSIPPI LIBRARIES



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On the cover: Photograph by Kara Roberts, Assistant Director of Starkville-Oktibbeha County Public Library System.

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# President's Page

As I write this, I am working remotely from home due to the current water crisis in our capital city of Jackson. Thankfully, the past two years of the pandemic helped us at the State Law Library discover ways we could still provide legal research and resources to our patrons while not being physically in the library space. However, I would much prefer being within the confines of the Library as I work. At work in the Library, I feel like I have everything readily available to me. I feel safe knowing I can answer a patron's request with a certain degree of confidence.

Let me tell you a story from the recent Mississippi Book Festival about a different type of feeling safe within the walls of a library. MLA Administrator Paula Bass organized a wonderful and effective table for us at this year's Festival. Paula and volunteers were on hand throughout the day to meet attendees and promote MLA while braving the summer heat and afternoon downpours. During one of my volunteer shifts at the table, I, along with Paula and Joyce Shaw, met a recent college grad named Cherish. Cherish noticed the word "Library" on our promotional materials and decided to stop by to tell us she fully supports libraries. During her chat with us, she spoke highly of the libraries she visited as she grew up and spoke of them as safe spaces. "I always felt safe at the library ... I could just be myself" were some of the words she used to describe her love and appreciation of libraries as a space. It was encouraging to us hearing these words.



Mississippi libraries do a great job at providing this safe space for its patrons. In the past few months alone, First Regional, the Jackson-George Regional Library System, and the Madison County Library System have introduced and opened new centers with a focus on teens. Angie Stewart, Director at Jackson-George, stated that the new teen center in Pascagoula would be "a clean comfortable, welcoming environment where [patrons] feel like they belong, where they can find books to read, where they can learn things, where they can socialize." Creating new and reinforcing existing library safe spaces is vitally important in this current climate we are in. As challenges to library collections and resources continue to rise, we must strive to promote our libraries as places where all are welcome to come and, in the words of Cherish, "just be [themselves]."

I look forward to seeing you all in Meridian October 12-14 as we hold a joint conference with our colleagues in the Southeastern Library Association. An informative, exciting lineup of Libraries Uncensored conference sessions is being organized along with a free pre-conference

session, From Advocacy to Activism, to be held on Tuesday, October 11. We all have much to share and

catch up on after two years of virtual meetings, and it is my hope that you all will consider attending.



**LIBRARIES  
UNCENSORED**

**MISSISSIPPI LIBRARY ASSOCIATION &  
SOUTHEASTERN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**



*Image created by Janessa Ullendorf*

The Southeastern Library Association (SELA) is joining with the Mississippi Library Association (MLA) for the annual conference during October 12-14, 2022; October 11 is the pre-conference. Together the associations are developing a hybrid conference that will encourage networking and professional development for the region. This year's conference will be held in Meridian, Mississippi at the MSU Riley Center ([msurileycenter.com](http://msurileycenter.com)).

In recognition of the unprecedented number of censorship attempts occurring nationwide and the librarians fighting for the rights of their patrons, the theme for this year's conference is Libraries Uncensored. The deadline for early registration is Friday, October 7, 2022. On-site registration will be available but tickets for special events will be limited.

#### **Ticketed Events:**

- SELA Awards Breakfast - Wednesday, October 12, 8:00 a.m. - \$25
- President's Reception & Scholarship Bash - Wednesday, October 12, 6:00 p.m. - \$30
- Authors' Awards - Thursday, October 13, 6:30 p.m. - \$40

For a full schedule of speakers, panels, and events visit [misslib.org/conference2022](http://misslib.org/conference2022).

The conference will include a Hybrid Silent Auction via RallyUp. To donate items to the auction, contact Justin Easterday at [Justin.Easterday@usm.edu](mailto:Justin.Easterday@usm.edu) or 228-214-3461. Proceeds from the auction help to fund three scholarships: Peggy May Scholarship, Virginia Brocks-Shedd Scholarship, and Terry Lajaunie Annual Conference Scholarship.

For more information about the MLA and SELA, visit:  
Mississippi Library Association (MLA) - <http://misslib.org/>  
Southeastern Library Association (SELA) - <https://www.selaonline.org/>

# Graphic Medicine: A Guide to Increasing Health Literacy

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## INTRODUCTION

Graphic novels offer readers of all ages a unique way of learning. The brain perceives pictures and text together differently. Graphics and text may increase retention rates and critical thinking skills, offer diverse ways of learning, cross language barriers, and entice reluctant readers. High school English students that read graphic novels outperformed students that read the traditional text of the same Edgar Allen Poe novels (Cook, 2017). Though initially believing graphic novels were for children, middle-grade students became engaged, reported multiple perspectives, and reluctant readers reported they enjoyed reading *Persepolis* (Sun, 2017, p. 26). Those subscribing to the idea that comics are “just for kids” may be surprised at how helpful comics can increase literacy. They are affordable, making them especially useful for libraries, often constrained by budgets while remaining committed to providing the best materials.

Graphic medicine is one genre of graphic works. What is graphic medicine and how might it assist patrons to increase their health literacy? In 2015, Dr. Ian Williams defined graphic medicine as, “the intersection between the medium of comics and the discourse of healthcare” (Czerwiec et al. 1). In short, it is comics meets healthcare. Graphic

medicine has immense potential to teach health literacy to various ages and reading levels. These works may also cross language barriers, helping family members who speak and write primary languages other than English to gain a minimal understanding of healthcare challenges. In turn, this may guide them to more difficult texts.

## WHAT IS HEALTH LITERACY?

According to the Office of Health Equity (2019), in the Health Resources and Services Administration, “Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information needed to make appropriate health decisions.” This is especially important as the global health literacy rate is devastatingly poor. Poor health literacy rates directly affect healthcare decisions. To make potentially life-altering decisions about healthcare, people must have a basic understanding of the health and illness process, especially as it pertains to health issues, they (or a loved one) may experience. Low health literacy is a deterrent to making sound health decisions. In the United States, only 12% of adults 16-65 years of age achieved the highest literacy proficiency level on a scale of one to five (Centers for Disease Control).

The use of graphic medicine is not new, despite the term originating in 2015. Nurses drawing funny cartoons to explain a procedure or doctors using a comic book in their office to explain diabetes are

examples of how health educators use graphic medicine. A healthcare fair poster in cartoon format is graphic medicine. Like other genres of graphic works, the stigma that comics are for children continues to affect the universal use of graphic medicine, though such uses are increasing on a global level. A recent study showed that using comics in pediatric and adult electronic health records (EHR) revealed increased interest in their EHR (71-71.6%), long-term memory recall of seeing the comic (90-100%), and almost half (42-46%) recalled at least one best-practice behavior from the comic (Alkureishy et al., 2021, n.p.). A study of medical students using graphic medicine comics showed promising results when students reported using comics increased empathy and reduced feelings of burnout (Sutherland, 2021, np). Sometimes, educators and librarians find that traditional health texts may not cover the human experience. What does a person report they go through when they have cancer or a mental illness? How can a first-person perspective increase overall understanding of any health-related process? This was a question at the University of Southern Mississippi. Nursing instructors found a lack of personal perspectives in nursing textbooks and asked for supplemental material to help students understand how people expressed firsthand experiences with various health challenges. Enter graphic medicine in University Libraries via



library instruction in classes and the creation of a health disparities research guide featuring graphic medicine works (Stanfield).

## RECOMMENDING READING

### ON CANCER

Cancer is a global disease. It can often be a lonely diagnosis and coping can be a challenge. *About Betty's Boob*, *Cancer Vixen*, and *Kimiko Does Cancer* offer first-person perspectives about breast cancer, the psychological ramifications, and living with this diagnosis. The fictional, *About Betty's Boob*, is primarily graphics. Betty suffers social trauma at the hands of coworkers and loved ones but finally frees herself from the proverbial cage when becoming a dancer. *Cancer Vixen*, and *Kimiko Does Cancer* are nonfictional autobiographies tackling difficult topics with humor and insight. Children may relate to Medikidz publications such as *Understanding Osteosarcoma*, *What's Up with Richard?: Medikidz Explain Leukemia*, or *What's Up with Rachel?: Medikidz Explain Brain Tumours*. These are useful for children experiencing cancer diagnoses, or if they have loved ones experiencing this, using superheroes named after the system they represent. For example, nervous system expert Axon, or integumentary system expert Skindy, explains difficult topics in easy-to-understand language, while still teaching medical terms. For young children, *When a Kid Like Me Fights Cancer* or *The Puddle Jumper's Guide to Kicking Cancer* offers a meaningful understanding of pediatric oncological events affecting all family members.

### ON DIABETES

People of all ages live with Diabetes Mellitus Type 1 and Type 2. It can be difficult to understand and manage, regardless of age. Because it is becoming more common, or diagnosis rates are increasing, it is important to understand it in meaningful ways that help people to make educated choices to help increase survival rates and increase well-being. Most graphic works target younger audiences. Works targeted at adults are lacking, though there is a clear need for works targeting all ages because Diabetes has no age limit. *Diabetes and Me: An Essential Guide for Kids and Parents*, provides children and adults with a basic understanding of both types, tips for nutrition, and blood sugar regulation by incorporating faces and characters. Middle graders might connect with *Medikidz Explain Type 1 Diabetes: What's Up with Ashleigh?* or a graphic novel based on a popular series, *The Baby-Sitters Club* by Ann M. Martin, *The Truth About Stacey: A Graphic Novel*. Younger children benefit from *Even Superheroes Get Diabetes* and preschoolers may recognize *Caillou: Emma's Extra Snacks: Living with Diabetes*.

### ON NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS

Neurological disorders pose significant challenges to those diagnosed and loved ones helping to care for them. These can be isolating diseases and pose a significant danger to those experiencing them while trying to conduct routine activities of daily living. Selfcare or caring for a family member with dementia is especially challenging, as this causes loss of cognitive functions. Alzheimer's disease is a common cause of dementia. Paco Roca's *Wrinkles* is the story of a gentleman admitted

to a long-term care facility due to memory loss. Roca's work also exposes the lack of healthcare workers in the facility, as they make medication mishaps and seem to lack of true insight into resident needs. Parkinson's disease is also debilitating. *My Degeneration: A Journey Through Parkinson's*, may provide comfort to those newly diagnosed or those with long-term experience, as this book discusses specific treatments, medications, and physical characteristics of Parkinson's disease. In *Mis(h)adra*, Issac struggles when college begins, like others his age. Isaac also suffers from epilepsy and finds this new world triggers increased seizure activity. Young adults, allied health students, and others may benefit from Isaac's journey, experiences of isolation, new environments, and other activities of daily living issues. Younger children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), or who know someone with ADHD, may benefit from *A Dragon With ADHD: A Children's Story About ADHD*. Diggory the dragon struggles with concentration, hyperactivity, organization issues, and even anger. This work can help children learn more about ADHD, recognize symptoms and employ coping skills and strategies in positive ways.

### ON MENTAL ILLNESSES AND DISORDERS

Mental illnesses and disorders challenge entire families, in addition to those suffering from these often debilitating ailments. For adults, the autobiographical, *RX: A Graphic Memoir* highlights the first-person perspective of someone struggling with increasing mental illness, who also works for a major

pharmaceutical company making anti-depressant drugs. Quite the conundrum, Rachel's first-person experience combines thought-provoking images, infused with amazing humor. Young adults may relate to *Swallow Me Whole*. This work depicts teenage stepsiblings' daily life experiences such as rebellion, family issues, and the death of a loved one, in addition to each struggling with a mental challenge. Ruth copes with obsessive-compulsive disorder and Perry with Schizophrenia. *Lighter Than My Shadow* tackles depression and eating disorders using pictures in black, white, or gray, providing powerful imagery and symbolism of Katie's despair. Younger children, or adults wishing to engage young children, may learn from and relate to, *Blueloon*. *Blueloon* is a blue balloon suffering from depression. With help from a rock, *Blueloon* learns skills to battle depression.

## SUPPORTING LANGUAGE

### DIVERSITY

As graphic works increase globally, the availability in multiple languages also increases. For example, graphic medicine websites exist in English, Spanish, Japanese, and the newest graphic medicine website recently launched in Italy. Works originating in French, Spanish and Japanese have been translated into English. A sample of original works translated to English includes the Spanish work, *Mi Padre Alcohólico es un Monstruo* (*My Alcoholic Father is a Monster*), the Japanese work, *AIDS-Why did the Boy Die?*, and the Dutch *Toen David Zijn Stem Verloor* (*When David Lost His Voice*). There are more available that offer diversity in languages to help readers. The

Newberry Award-winning *El Deafo* is also available in Spanish. *Mom's Cancer*, an Eisner Award winner is now available in Italian and other languages. Manga works are often in their original format, Japanese but several medical manga are translated and published in other languages. A variety of languages represented in graphic medicine benefits larger numbers of people and their learning journey.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The above works represent a tiny introduction to the topics covered in the graphic medicine genre, but they also only cover traditional print works. One of the most lucrative aspects of using graphic medicine to teach health literacy is its affordability. While most libraries will want to include select readings as they begin incorporating the genre, other formats offer supplemental materials for outreach, education, and other opportunities. For example, outreach activities might include making a comic book! Zines are a fun, easy, and affordable tool to promote health literacy. A sheet of paper with specific folds becomes an eight-page booklet perfect for opening discussions about health topics. A quick internet search of zines will provide videos and tutorials about making zines. Printing out a comic infographic or making fliers and posters is also a creative way to publicize or teach about health topics. There is no need for a graphics design degree. Some online programs are available with free versions or reduced costs for educators and librarians.

Webcomics also provide affordable materials to learn about health and illness. The *Annals of Internal*

Medicine has over two hundred webcomics in the *Annals Graphic Medicine* to help teach about a variety of healthcare topics. Penn State College of Medicine offers a course, *Graphic Storytelling and Medical Narratives*, where fourth-year medical students create comics as coursework. Each year since 2009, these are uploaded to the *Graphic Narratives* site and available for public viewing. There are free comics and posters available about various health concerns. Jive Media in partnership with the United Nations offers free COVID-19 posters in sixteen languages. Revolve Comics offers free printable or downloadable comics about diabetes.

Additional resources to assist librarians and educators interested in adding graphic medicine to libraries abound, as do resources about how to incorporate supplemental materials and activities essential to outreach. One of the most helpful books is the *Graphic Medicine Manifesto*. Available in print and electronic form, this work is a collection of essays from authors experienced with using comics in healthcare. Graphic medicine websites in English, Italian, Spanish and Italian are available. *Graphic Medicine* offers reviews, a database of works, podcast links, informal virtual discussions, and a host of activities for anyone wishing to learn more about this genre. The site provides links to graphic medicine sites in multiple languages. The National Library of Medicine's "Graphic Medicine: Ill Conceived and Well Drawn," provides a collection of free resources and ideas about using graphic medicine. They also offer videos about using graphic medicine to teach



health literacy. A YouTube search using the keywords, graphic medicine, offers recorded presentations about specific books, activities, or how to create a collection.

## CONCLUSION

Graphic medicine can help reshape poor health literacy rates. Librarians and educators are on the front line where literacy, or the lack thereof, is concerned. Information literacy is the hallmark of a library's essential goals. The benefits of using graphic medicine in libraries and schools include affordability and age-level customization. They often offer a first-person perspective missing from medical texts, which may help decrease feelings of isolation and increase empathy. It provides in-depth understanding from those walking complicated and often sensitive, health-related journeys. Graphic medicine may cross language barriers to medical topics. Studies show using graphic medicine increased perception and memory recall about healthcare, which is often a difficult language to understand. It is no wonder this language is referred to as "medical jargon." Try buying a few titles, hosting a zine-making night, or making graphic bookmarks at an event. You may be surprised at how well patrons of all ages receive it, learn from it and teach others about it.

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# SLIS Notes

## *What is a library in crisis?*

**Stacy Creel**

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What is a library in crisis? One definition is that a crisis is an event beyond the normal situation that acts as a disruption to library operations and services and can damage the library's reputation (Pedraza, 2010). These situations draw attention, usually negative attention, and scrutiny by the library's user population, political/government entities, and even at times, the attention of the nation via outlets such as social media. Crisis management requires action in three phases—before, during, and after. The goal of crisis management is to prevent or reduce the impact of the crisis on the library. “The response by a library to a crisis is often initially defined by the amount of preparation, if any, the library is able to engage in” (Bengston, 2021, p. 5). While Bengston was speaking specifically to IT crises, the sentiment certainly applies across a variety of situations. In today's climate, it is extremely important that libraries prepare for challenge or censorship crisis. It is no longer a matter of if but when.

In Jamestown Township, Michigan, a campaign to vote down renewing library funding in response to displaying LGBTQ+ materials resulted in a budget loss of over 84% (Stein, 2022). Libraries in Lafayette, Louisiana can no longer host displays about any distinctive group—so no

Black History Month, Pride Month, or even for them, French Cajun culture (Burnett, 2022). Librarians have faced personal attacks on social media, like school librarian of the year Amanda Jones (Yorio, 2022). A library in Iowa closed its doors after the majority of the staff and librarians quit over LGBTQ+ complaints (Kilander, 2022). Libraries and librarians are facing censorship issues at a higher rate than recent years. “ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked 729 challenges to library, school, and university materials and services in 2021, resulting in more than 1,597 individual book challenges or removals. Most targeted books were by or about Black or LGBTQIA+ persons” (American Library Association, 2022, para. 1).

Although coming from business or corporation perspective, Pedraza (2010) offers some preplanning strategies that libraries can incorporate for developing the library's crisis management team. First, who is going to be the library's designated spokesperson? This person needs to be higher up in the library's administrative team. They should be prepared to handle the hard questions with truth, calmness, and confidence. The spokesperson gets the information out to all the key personnel (the crisis management team), the media, and the constituents. Second, who on the crisis management team is going to disseminate the information to your library team—from pages to managers? It is important that library staff do not speak about the issue outside of

the pre-determined message on any platform. In order for that to happen, someone has to share that message and has to keep them abreast of the situation. They should not be left to speculate and, as front-line workers, they deserve honesty. Third, pre-prepare a statement to build that serves as springboard so the library is ready to move with speed. Libraries no longer have days before a story breaks or days to write a response. With news channels, library customers, and the larger community using social media platforms, it is important to get an accurate message out quickly. Attempt to be positive and constructive. The message needs to be honest and transparent. Fourth, who is gathering the information on the crisis and keeping the crisis management team informed as a whole? By having someone designated to monitor the news and social media, it allows everyone to focus on their specific tasks. Fifth, who is reporting to the American Library Association, any parent organizations, and state library associations? This informs organizations for record keeping and reporting and alerts surrounding libraries that issues may be on their horizon if the complaint is coming from an organized group.

In addition to having a crisis management plan in place, the library should have clear path of communication for when the censorship crisis begins. Does the staff at the circulation desk know what to do when a challenge is initiated? Does the branch manager know when to



report it and to whom? Having an escalation plan will be essential for keeping administrators informed and for giving them time to activate the crisis management team. The library director and administrative team should not hear about a crisis for the first time as it is being reported on the news! If possible, test the escalation plan with different training and exercises (Pedraza, 2010). When you are crafting the statement to build upon it will be important to keep the following management principles in mind:

- “1. Understand the media interest in a crisis situation.
2. Define the problem that caused the crisis situation and determine the best strategy to follow.
3. Ensure compliance with all legal and regulatory matters.
4. Manage the flow of information.
5. Assume the situation will escalate and get worse.
6. Remember all constituencies when dealing with a crisis situation.
7. Measure results in real time.
8. Identify the facts that need to be measured.
9. Avoid looking or sounding too defensive and resist being drawn into a situation that could weaken the position of the business corporation during the crisis situation.
10. Speedy communication is essential, especially with the media and the public” (Pedraza, 2010, pp. 11-14).

Besides these applications from the business sector, the other important thing you can do pre-crisis is advocacy. A solid definition of advocacy in relation to libraries is “organizing community residents and others to promote the library, its services, and its overall importance

in the community” (McClure, Feldman, & Ryan, 2007 p. 139). Libraries can no longer rely on the idea that communities see the library as this great equalizer held in their minds (and hearts) in high regard. Libraries must be constantly putting their message out to their communities on their relevancy, importance, and contribution to their communities (Singh & Trinchetta, 2020). Use every opportunity to get in the print and television news for positive things. Use your social media. Publicize the libraries service and the number of people served. Get quotes from people about their personal library experience and publicize it. Make close connections to key community members—invite the alderman or council member to read at the library, have important business leaders do workshops, have members of the library board do talks, etc. Make close connections with library regulars. Value and utilize the library’s Friends Group. Be sure that they are some of the libraries strongest supporters and understand inclusive service to the community. Get to know the people on the library board or other governing body. Present the successes of the library to them every chance that is given. Have regular library attendees speak and present about the positive things at the meetings—or at the very least share video clips with them. Share information on “library basics” and tenets with them. If there is any way to have input on the library board make up, give it.

Lastly, talk about intellectual freedom in a way that makes it appealing to library users. Talk about how it protects their right to choose for themselves and keeps other people

from choosing for them. Make it part of your everyday conversations and use language that does not include library buzzwords and library branding. Create posters (Image 1 and Image 2), bookmarks, and branding saying, “Protecting your choice of books,” “You do you! We’ve got your READS,” or “Whatever search you need help with? Find it here!,” or other non-library language to get the public to understand and value intellectual freedom and rights of access without the field’s buzzwords. Having these conversations pre-crisis are essential, especially if the library plans on being ready for that censorship crisis on the horizon.

## READING RESOURCES ON ADVOCACY & CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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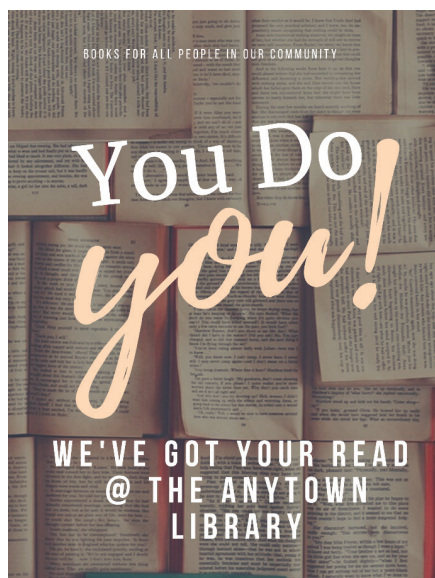


Image 1: "You Do You" poster created using Canva by Dr. Creel

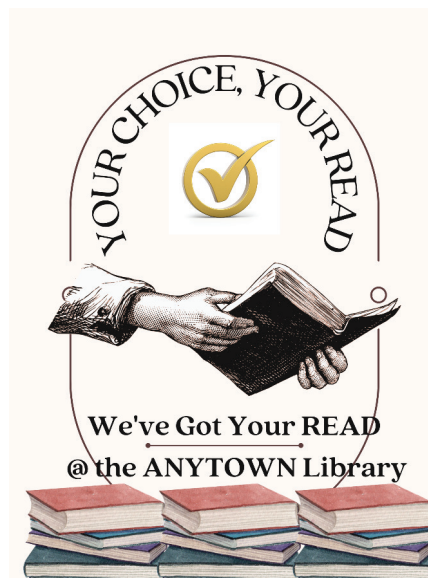


Image 2: "Your Choice, Your Read" poster created using Canva by Dr. Creel

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Feedback and suggestions are welcome – send to [slis@usm.edu](mailto:slis@usm.edu) or call 601-266-4228.

Visit <https://www.usm.edu/slis> for additional information about the ALA-accredited MLIS degree program, Graduate Certificate in Archives and Special Collections, and Graduate Certificate in Youth Services and Literature.

SLIS also offers a Bachelor of Science degree in LIS as well as a LIS minor. All classes are online and typically meet once each week during the evening hours.



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2022 MLA Executive Board Minutes:

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## News Briefs

**Brenda Comfort**

*Serials & Reference Librarian  
Hinds Community College*

### WAYNESBORO-WAYNE COUNTY LIBRARY RECEIVES AARP COMMUNITY CHALLENGE GRANT

AARP Mississippi announced last week that four organizations throughout the state are receiving 2022 Community Challenge Grants, part of the largest group of grantees to date. The program so far has provided \$3.4 million to 260 organizations nationwide. Grantees will implement quick-action projects that help communities become more livable in the long term by improving public places; transportation; diversity, equity, and inclusion; digital access; and civic engagement with an emphasis on the needs of adults aged 50 and over.

Library Director Patsy C. Brewer stated that the grant will help

purchase 11 GrandPads, a tablet designed for older adults. The devices will then be used in computer classes and available for check out, just like traditional library books. Library staff members will provide tech support."

"AARP Mississippi is committed to working with communities to improve residents' quality of life through tangible changes," said AARP Mississippi State Director Kimberly L. Campbell, Esp. "We are proud to collaborate with this year's grantees as they make immediate improvements in their communities to jump start long-term change, especially for Mississippians 50 and over."

AARP Community Challenge grant projects will be funded in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. True to the program's quick-action

nature, projects must be completed by Nov. 30.

The grant program is part of AARP's nationwide Livable Communities initiative, which supports the efforts of cities, towns, neighborhoods, and rural areas to become great places to live for people of all ages.

Since 2017, AARP Mississippi has awarded 11 grants through the program to nonprofit organizations and government entities across the state.

A total of 260 grants were funded among the 3,200 applications that were received nationwide, and only four grants were funded in Mississippi this year.

*Submitted By:*

*Patsy Brewer*

*Library Director*

*Waynesboro-Wayne County Library*

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## People in the News

**Joyce M. Shaw** received the USM Excellence in Librarianship award in May 2022. This award recognizes a faculty member who has significantly contributed in the practice of librarianship through excellent performance that enhances the dissemination of knowledge and through the advancement of learning. The Excellence in Librarianship Award is presented every other year (even-numbered years).

Shaw serves as the Head of Gunter Library at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory. Since 2011, she has hosted the popular public program, GCRL Science Café. In 2012,

she co-authored "Ocean Springs," a part of the Images of American series.

Shaw is chair of the Mississippi Library Association Special Libraries Section and Atmospheric Science Librarians International, a member of the executive board of the USM-AAUP chapter, and a new member of the Gulf Coast Faculty Council. She is a Past-President and current member of the Rotary Club of Ocean Springs and an associate member of the North Bay Civitan Club. Over the last 26 years at Gunter Library, she has mentored 18 undergraduate students, 7 graduate students, and 2

tenure track librarians. She enjoys volunteering and collecting Matchbox and Hot Wheels toy work vehicles, especially concrete mixers.



Let us share your good news! Please send your news and announcements to Brenda Comfort ([Brenda.Comfort@hindscc.edu](mailto:Brenda.Comfort@hindscc.edu)) or Hali Black ([Hali.Black@usm.edu](mailto:Hali.Black@usm.edu)) to be featured in *Mississippi Libraries*

# Book Reviews

**Tori L. Hopper**

*Children's & Teen Services  
& Programming Coordinator  
Columbus-Lowndes Public Library System*

**Carter, Hodding III.**

*The South Strikes Back.*

Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi. 2022. 159 pp. \$30.00 (Paperback).

*The South Strikes Back*, a description of the founding and activities of the Citizens Council by Hodding Carter III, is one of seven books in the University Press of Mississippi's Civil Rights in Mississippi series. It is a reissue of the 1959 book with a 31-page introduction by Stephanie R. Rolph, a Millsaps University associate professor of history and former president of the Mississippi Historical Society. Rolph has written extensively about the Citizens' Council and has a strong history foundation augmented by a body of her scholarly work. She brings 60 plus years of past events and critical thinking to Carter's work.

Carter, who identified with the "separate but equal" moderates, returned home after graduating from Princeton University to a Mississippi that seemed very different from the place that he left four years earlier. His father, the award-winning publisher/editor of *Delta Democratic Times*, was a respected voice of moderate state politics. Carter III tackled a hot subject when taking on the Citizens' Council. His hometown of Greenville is about 25 miles from Indianola the birthplace of

the Citizens' Council and the group would have been covered extensively by his father's newspaper. While he does not have a bibliography accompanying his work, he drew almost exclusively from the Council's own publications and while not documented, likely from the *Delta Democratic Times*, as well. Carter was called naïve by a New York Times book reviewer, but he accomplished more with his overview of the Council than a host of reporters and journalists were doing during those turbulent times.

In a six-chapter book, Carter described the political environment that led to the formation of the Council which began as a response to the 1954 Supreme Court's *Brown vs. The Board of Education* desegregation decision. Chapters cover the Council's relationship with Mississippi politics, its influence in Black and white communities, and what the future might hold. Mississippians know well how the "future" played out, including murders, protests, wade-ins, threats of eliminating public education, the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, and Council schools.

It is startling how the themes, actions, and political climate Carter described in the mid to late 1950s reflect the political environment in current day Mississippi and the US. Carter devotes a chapter on the impact of the Citizens' Councils on the white community and how influencers holding positions of power in banks, government, and other institutions came together to silence "moderates" with social pressure,

ostracism, and name calling—like how social media is used to today. In both cases, the polarization is racial and supports an environment of fear and anger that cuts through communities using social pressure bolstered with economic and political power that controls media, local politics, and social and educational institutions.

The reissued work with an extensive introduction is noteworthy and recommended for academic and public libraries with an interest in the history of civil rights in Mississippi. It is available in three formats.

Joyce M. Shaw  
*Head of Gunter Library and Professor  
Gulf Coast Research Laboratory  
University of Southern Mississippi*



**Hagenston, Becky.**

*The Age of Discovery and Other Stories.*

Columbus, OH: Mad Creek Books. 2021. 200 pp. \$21.95 (Paperback).

A baker whose wife is dreaming things into his bread, a man who lies about finding a date's severed finger, a board game researcher with a Service Robot who has masochistic requests: These are just some of the intricate, memorable characters in *Age of Discovery and Other Stories* by Becky Hagenston. This collection of short stories offers strange, wonderful tales about who are we and who we might discover ourselves to be. Hagenston, an English professor at Mississippi State University, won the 2022 Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters award for fiction



with this work, as well as The Journal Non/Fiction Price in 2020. This is her fourth collection.

The book begins with "Perishables", a story set in a Mississippi town where a man is driven to record his dark thoughts on little notes. Without internet access, he can no longer troll comment sections and is forced to cleave to the small community of his neighborhood with a motley collection of conservative neighbors: a community he both resents and clings to. In the title story, a couple is on a food tour in Lisbon, but are constantly interrupted by strange texts on the husband's phone: "Don't be afraid! A very important person is calling you! I cannot hurt you through the digital airwaves!"

One of the most memorable stories, "Basic Commands", starts with a pair of Bigfoot hunting sisters and poses questions about how abuse can shape us, and how trauma inflicted on someone can be passed on as they lash out and inflict trauma of their own. Hagenston presents a fantastic collection of stories, tales of strangeness and heart that explore connections to each other and ourselves. This is a strong addition to any public or academic library collection that features Mississippi writers or literary fiction.

Hannah Madonna  
Assistant Professor, Arts and Humanities  
Librarian  
University of Southern Mississippi Libraries



### McPhail, Diane C.

*The Seamstress of New Orleans.*

New York: John Scognamiglio Books. 2022. 346 pp. \$26.00

(Paperback).

*The Seamstress of New Orleans* follows Connie and Alice as the women navigate the world without their husbands and try to come to terms with their deaths. Connie discovers her husband is gambling and decides to catch him in the act, disguised as a young man. While on a train, her husband dies, and Connie believes she is responsible for his death. Meanwhile, pregnant Alice realizes that her husband is not the man she thought he was when she goes to report him missing. Alice travels to New Orleans from Chicago, looking for information about her husband. In New Orleans, Alice is lead to an orphanage Connie is associated with, and she begins to teach the women there how to sew. Alice and Connie develop a friendship as Alice helps to design a dress for Connie to wear to the Mardi Gras Ball. As their relationship grows, Connie helps Alice continue searching for information about her husband, while Alice helps Connie defend her family against the Black Hand her husband is indebted to. Connie soon asks Alice to come and live with her. However, the close friendship between Alice and Connie is threatened by a secret that could tear them apart.

*The Seamstress of New Orleans* is set within the movement towards suffrage for white women in the early 1900s and highlights the inequalities women experienced during the time period. The novel weaves threads of organized crime, single motherhood, gender roles, class, and more into a richly detailed setting. Alice and Connie's well-developed characters would be a great addition to the historical fiction

section of a public library, while inspiring readers to discover more about New Orleans during the early 1900s.

Audrey Beach  
Reference Librarian  
Mississippi Delta Community College



### Morris, David Rae, and Willie Morris.

*Love, Daddy: Letters from My Father.*

Jackson, MS: The University Press of Mississippi. 2022. 280 pp. \$35.00 (Hardback).

*Love, Daddy: Letters from My Father* is a memoir of David Rae Morris's relationship with his famous father told through letters written between 1976 and 1999. The book separates the letters into three sections, organized in chronological order, each contextualized by the younger Morris at the beginning of each section. Also included is a foreword by Kaylie Jones, a friend of the Morris family and the daughter of author James Jones, and an introduction and epilogue by David Rae Morris. Over 100 beautiful black and white and color photographs are interspersed throughout the text.

Through the letters, readers gain insight into the life of Willie Morris and the complex relationship between him and his son. They see a man who embraced the nightlife and always surrounded himself with a circle of eccentric friends, many of whose names the reader will know. Not surprisingly, the elder Morris often found himself indulging too much in intoxicating liquors, which often put a strain on his relationship with his son. Through their many disagreements, the reader sees a father who is his son's

biggest supporter and never offers any discouraging words in his written correspondence.

Some of the other topics examined in the letters include: Willie's beloved pets, his relationship with and return to his home state, his take on important events of the time, his friendship with Bill Clinton, David Rae's academic and occupational journey, the writing process, and Ole Miss sports. The book may appeal to those interested in the history of Mississippi, especially its literary history. This visually appealing work has a place in academic and public libraries that collect the work of Mississippi authors.

Jeffrey Martin  
Library Manager  
Itawamba County Pratt Memorial Library



### Nicholas, Teresa.

*The Mama Chronicles: A Memoir.*

Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 2021. 243 pages. \$28.00 (Hardback).

Teresa Nicholas straddles the divergent paths of returning home to Mississippi while establishing a new one in Mexico, and examines the harm endured from her mother while finding comfort in her presence. For Nicholas, caring for her aging mother has not been as easy as "P-I-E" as her father would say. The repeated pilgrimages home to assist with her mother's care challenge Nicholas to confront the emotional rifts and contentious memories of her upbringing that grind against the stretches of maternal love she has long yearned for.

Teresa left her hometown of Yazoo City, MS with a distaste for home

life to study at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. The initial, eagerly imposed distance between mother and daughter was compounded with 25 years away, in what became her adopted home of New York City. When Nicholas is called home decades later to care for her mother, it becomes clear what has been lost to the void of time: unspoken words and distorted memories of the past. The same eagerness that propelled Nicholas to leave Yazoo City is the same eagerness that ignites her desperation to salvage what is left of her home and of her mother. Her mother is, unintentionally by nature, a challenging figure. Her mother was raised dirt farming, cotton picking, and in grueling poverty, and has always dodged intimacy. Now, Nicholas's mother engages in behavior that denies the realities of advanced aging and clings to illusive creature comforts. Nicholas's solution and potential solace, whether forced or a natural transition, is in mothering her mother.

The Mississippi Delta shines as one of three main backdrops in this work. Teresa brings the reader on her windy road trips down unmarked backroads that snake through fields dotted with cabins, shacks, churches, and cemeteries. Her depictions of the Delta are rich and speak to the romance of rural Mississippi. Once impressed upon the heart with all its beauty and all its terror, no matter the distance or time spent away, one never truly forsakes the Magnolia State. Nicholas realizes this during her many journeys home and supplements the memoir with photographs of her family that humanize them. Historic photographs of 20th century Mississippi held in archives,

historical sites, libraries, etc., further complement the spells of Nicholas's literary visualizations. This work would serve well in public, academic, and archival settings.

This memoir is an examination of identity, place, family, and how these institutions shape a person's experience and perception. Teresa grapples with reexamining her own wounds while tending to the medical needs of her mother who is faintly slipping away as her health deteriorates. What Teresa discovers, and what this memoir clearly articulates, is that the path through old wounds is where one's healing begins. *The Mama Chronicles* adds to Nicholas's memoir writings that also includes *Buryin' Daddy: Putting My Lebanese, Catholic, Southern Baptist Childhood to Rest*, published in 2011.

Danielle N. Townsend  
Audio Visual Special Collections Librarian  
and Assistant Professor  
University of Mississippi Libraries  
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Interested in reviewing a book for *Mississippi Libraries*? Contact Tori L. Hopper ([thopper@lowndes.lib.ms.us](mailto:thopper@lowndes.lib.ms.us)) for more information.