

A PROJECT BY:  
 **FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE**

# **AUTHORS FOR LIBRARIES**

**Hundreds of authors are speaking out on behalf of libraries, demanding that publishers and trade associations put the digital rights of librarians, readers, and authors ahead of shareholder profits.**

Authors, inclusive of poets, academics, and those yet to be published, are encouraged to sign on to this statement in solidarity with libraries, asking that major publishers do not sue, intimidate, or smear libraries and librarians for preserving and expanding access to knowledge and stories of diverse experience.

# Letter Text

Libraries are a fundamental collective good. We, the undersigned authors, are disheartened by the recent attacks against libraries being made in our name by trade associations such as the Association of American Publishers and the Publishers Association: undermining the traditional rights of libraries to own and preserve books, intimidating libraries with lawsuits, and smearing librarians.

We urge all who are engaged in the work of getting books into the hands of readers to act in the interests of all authors, including the long-marginalized, midlist, and emerging authors whom librarians have championed for decades. We write to ask that all publishers, distributors, and trade associations:

- 1. Enshrine the right of libraries to permanently own and preserve books, and to purchase these permanent copies on reasonable terms, regardless of format.** Many libraries would prefer to own and [preserve](#) digital editions, as they have always done with print books, but these days publishers [rarely](#) offer them the option. Instead, when libraries have [access to ebooks](#)

at all, the prices libraries pay to rent ebooks are often likened to extortion.

Digital editions are more affordable to produce and often more accessible, but libraries are already relying on emergency funds and may only be able to license a small selection of mainstream works in the future. In turn, readers will have fewer opportunities to discover the more diverse potential bestsellers of tomorrow.

It is past time to determine a path forward that is fair to both libraries and authors—including a perpetual model for digital ownership based on the cost to maintain a print edition.

- 2. End lawsuits aimed at intimidating libraries and diminishing their role in society.** The interests of libraries are the interests of the public, and of any author concerned with equity and longevity for themselves and their fellow writers. We are all on the same side. Yet a unanimously passed Maryland state law ensuring libraries pay “reasonable fees” for digital editions died after the AAP sued. And after a previous suit failed, several publishers are currently suining the Internet Archive Library in an

attempt to prohibit all libraries from [lending out scanned copies of books they own](#). While undermining libraries may financially benefit the [wealthiest and most privileged authors and corporations](#) in the short term, this behavior is utterly opposed to the interests of authors as a whole.

- 3. End smear campaigns against librarians.** Recent comments likening library advocates to “[mouthpieces](#)” for Big Tech are as tasteless as they are inaccurate. Also concerning are the [awards](#) recently given to legislators who have advocated in favor of the [dangerous surveillance](#) of [library patrons](#), and of laws that [criminalize librarians](#). As a [last bastion of truth, privacy, and access to diverse voices](#), libraries’ digital operations grow ever more essential to our society—and their work should be celebrated, not censured.

We fear a future where libraries are reduced to a sort of [Netflix](#) or [Spotify](#) for books, from which publishers demand [exorbitant licensing fees](#) in perpetuity while unaccountable vendors [force the spread of disinformation and hate](#) for profit. Publishers must balance profits for the most prominent authors and shareholders with the

right of the public to free, [unsurveilled](#) access to knowledge and information—as well as the right of emerging authors to be collected, preserved, and discovered.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned

**Sign the Letter**

**Neil Gaiman**

**Alok Vaid-Menon**

**Yesika Salgado**

**Chuck Wendig**

**Mark Bray**

**Tom Morello**

**Naomi Klein**

**Mattie Lubchansky**

**Kyle Lukoff**

**Hanif Abdurraqib**

**Stephen D. Crocker**

**Annalee Newitz**

**Cameron Awkward-Rich**

**Molly Crabapple**

**Torrey Peters**

**Hugh Ryan**

**Cory Doctorow**

**Baratunde Thurston**

**Margaret Killjoy**

**Alyssa Milano**

**Saul Williams**

**Barry Eisler**

**Max Collins Eve6**

**Franny Choi**

**Sadie Dupuis**

**Lawrence Lessig**

**Daniel Ellsberg**

**Medea Benjamin**

**Lynne Thompson**

**Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg**

**Laurie Penny**

**Marianne Díaz Hernández**

**Eli Valley**

**Roger McNamee**

**Lilly Wachowski**

**Amanda Palmer**

**David Wain**

**John Markoff**

**Ayesha Muzaffar**

**Sam Sax**

**Binx R Perino**

**Michelle Ruiz Keil**

**Evan Selinger**

**alex benedict**

**Diana Rosen**

**Julianna Douglas**

**Ryan Eckes**

**Hank Bromley**

**Danez Smith**

**Javon Johnson**

**R.M. Haines**

**Amalia Tenuta**

**Michelle M. Wu**

**Rachel Castro**

— — — — —

**Brittany Collins**

**gabriel juan membreno**

**Nathan Schneider**

**Jazzib Akhtar**

**Emma C. Eisenberg**

**Sarah Perchikoff**

**Camonghne Felix**

**Mahogany L. Browne**

**Hieu Minh Nguyen**

**Kim Kelly**

**Christine Cock**

**Elizabeth Metzger Sampson**

**Jean M Russell**

**Dinah Sanders**

— — — — —

**Miles Klee**

**Erik Leroy**

**Harold Feld**

**Denice Frohman**

**Mahi Seid**

**Lia Holland**

**Laura Gibbs**

**Jonathan Rosenberg**

**Jake Flores**

**Ashia Ajani**

**Omkari Williams**

**Liza Lin**

**Jason M. Karakehian**

**Dan Gillmor**

**Olivia Gatwood**

**Wendy Seltzer**

**Katrine Buch Mortensen**

**Jonathan Poritz**

**Brough Turner**

**Jeremy Hawkins**

**Diannely Antigua**

**Alex Worrell**

**Carrie Baize**

**Joanne McNeil**

**Keith Ammann**

**Mon M**

**Brink Lindsey**

**Talia Rothschild**

**Rachal Marquez Jones**

**Larry O. Dean**

**Elizabeth Kate Switaj**

**Eula Biss**

**Ernie Smith**

**Sasha Costanza-Chock**

**Rebecca Giblin**

**Glyn Moody**

**D.J. Sylvis**

**Robin Marty**

**Joy Young**

**Diana Khoi Nguyen**

**Mirta Wake**

**Spencer Ackerman**

**Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodríguez**

**Aarati Kasturirangan**

**Sangodare Julia Wallace**

**Trevor Timm**

**Laura Stanfill**

**Mackenzie River Foy**

**Anindita Sengupta**

**Scott Carney**

**Kay Savetz**

**Féi Hernandez**

**Shanna Hollich**

**Liz Duffy Adams**

**Margaret Gel**

**Harsha Walia**

**Ted Scheinman**

**Lucy Bernholz**

**Philip Metres**

**Jonathan Mendoza**

**Robert Berger**

**David S. Isenberg, Ph.D.**

**Julian Randall**

**Deborah J. Knuth Klenck**

**Alexandra Kohn**

**David Weinberger**

**Ari Honarvar**

**Jessica Bandler**

**Prof. Dr. Ellen Euler**

**Andrew Revkin**

**Helge Høivik**

**Margaret Gel**

**George Abraham**

**Juheia Kim**

**Ross Hernández**

**Jonathan M. Katz**

**Mary Wilson**

**Nancy Levinson**

**Kimberley Scribe**

**David Wondrich**

**Ilana Masad**

**Saul Aguiar**

**Mason Granger**

**david joseph**

**Sascha Meinrath**

**Micah Sifry**

**Sam Rush**

**Matthew L. Jones**

**Douglas Rushkoff**

**Patrick Roche**

**Robin DeRosa**

**Gustavo A. Rivera**

**Kora Schultz**

**Jillian York**

**Howard Besser**

**Bill Lattanzi**

**Tatiana Johnson-Boria**

**Ola Faleti**

**Chris Costello**

**Rahul Tongia**

**K. L. Mitchell**

**C. Russell Price**

**Karlin Lillington**

**Jerry Michalski**

**Denise Nicholson**

**Steven K. Stroh**

**Mike Masnick**

**Dominick Knowles**

**Isaac Ginsberg Miller**

**Ashton Applewhite**

**Lisa Low**

**Joshua Nguyen**

**Merrill Cole**

**Clayton M. Cunha Filho**

**Brucer Schneier**

**Brian Jackson**

**Catherine Bolten**

**Chris Tilly**

**John Detweiler**

**Gabrielle Civil**

**Oona Hatton**

**Jacob Saenz**

**Joan Donovan**

**Morgan Parker**

**David B. Chandler**

**Raina J. León**

**Emma McDonell**

**Ricardo Dominguez**

**Ilana Gershon**

**David Klein**

**Jill Godmilow**

**Tarfia Faizullah**

**Porsha Olayiwola**

**Brittany Rogers**

**Farrell Greenwald Brenner**

**Sean O'Brien**

**francine j. harris**

**Jennifer M. Fitzgerald**

**Shanelle Gabriel**

**avery r. young**

**Henry H. Perritt, Jr.**

**torrin a. greathouse**

**Tara Betts**

**Ching-In Chen**

**Porsha Olayiwola**

**Danuta Hinc**

**Imani Elizabeth Jackson**

**Sascha Meinrath**

**Shailja Patel**

**Jeff Sharlet**

**William Evans**

**Raych Jackson**

**Theo Priestley**

**Porochista Khakpour**

**John Palfrey**

**Bryan Byrdlong**

**Cyrée Jarelle Johnson**

**Jamila Woods**

**Alice Rothchild**

**Evie Shockley**

**Alex Gladstein**

**Andrea Chalupa**

**Kate Willett**

**Dylan Tweney**

**BJ Mendelson**

**Adrienne Lawrence**

**Jessie Daniels**

**Erin Taylor**

**Mona Eltahawy**

**Kate Bornstein**

**Andre Henry**

**Sarah Combellick-Bidney**

**Kon Karapanagiotidis**

**Tim Shorrock**

**Beth Ann Fennelly**

**Debernierre Torrey**

**Rebecca MacKinnon**

**Harry Hochheiser**

**Amy Sample Ward**

**Joss Sheldon**

**Scott Dworkin**

**Kate O'Neill**

**Matt Haig**

**Brian Cuban**

**John Comaroff**

**Jeffrey Skoller**

**Cameron Russell**

**Catherine Cusick**

**Noah Theriault**

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**Nikita Gill**

**John Pavlovitz**

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**Bryn Grey**

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**Aurielle Marie**

**Maria Pinto**

**Natasha Huey**

**Mark Gibbons**

**Zin E. Rocklyn**

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**Kembrew McLeod**

**Rory Fanning**

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**Dujie Tahat**

**Leslie Reese**

**Erin Hill**

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**Emily Bieniek**

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**Norman Solomon**

**Shaun Richman**

**David Swanson**

**Taylor Sanchez Guzman**

**Autumn Whitefield-Madrano**

**Chip Gibbons**

**Demetrius Amparan**

**Dan Beeton**

**Zenaida peterson**

**Paul Eisenberg**

**Dana Mele**

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**Lynne Nugent**

**John Cayley**

**Rafael J. González**

**Ricardo Dominguez**

**Fabio Castillo**

**Misty Prostko**

**John Ohno**

**John Francis**

**Amanda Glassman**

**Barbara Fister**

**Tracey Lambe**

**Mee Ok Icaro**

**Hayley Brown**

**Gabriella Coleman**

**Benjamin Jackson**

**Andrea Vocab Sanderson**

**Kevin Kantor**

**Matty Selman**

**Maureen Johnson**

**Sarah Diamond**

**G. B. Gabbler**

**AJR Smith**

**Kim Werker**

**Cole AKA Netscape** 😊

**Kurian Thottupuram**

**CJ Paloma**

**John Elrod**

**Diego Olivas Arana**

**Linda Brown**

**Edwin Bodney**

**Ajanae Dawkins**

**Gabrielle Bates**

**Kristina Kim**

**Rosemarie Dombrowski**

**Jacinda Townsend**

**CocoEva**

**Leonora Tindall**

**Alex Eccleston**

**Anina Bennett**

**Aaron Perzanowski**

**Jaki Shelton Green**

**Golden**

**Bianca Phipps**

**Jonathan Jacob Moore**

**Pages Matam**

**Luther Hughes**

**Sierra DeMulder**

**Ariana Brown**

**Dr. Safiya Noble**

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**Hannah Plowright**

**Kimberly Nguyen**

**Meredeth Turshen**

**Joseph Pitt**

**Josée**

**Emeritus Professor Tricia David**

**Rachael Rider**

**Kyle Tran Myhre**

**Marjorie Glazer**

**Rick Prelinger**

**Alan Neff**

**Gabriel Calvert**

**Richard F. Forno, Ph.D.**

**Brian Johnson**

**Marvin J. Ward, Ph.D.**

**Eleanor Roffman**

**Bob Stuart**

**Len Mitchell**

**Taran Trinnaman**

**Brima Seck**

**Leslie Seefeldt**

**Michael Lee**

**Megan Prelinger**

**Rondori Gosamashita**

**Dylan Young**

**Mona Lisa Saloy**

**Melissa Nolas**

**Emma Robinson**

**Francisco Javier Barrera**

**Gordon Dymowski**

**Alecia Marie Magnifico**

**Dorothea Salo**

**Eric Vilas-Boas**

**Maria Bustillos**

**Gregory Cherlin**

**Eugenie de Rosier**

**Tyler Dilts**

**Jean-Pierre Moundou**

**Joshua Bloch**

**Peter Suber**

**Dominic Lowery**

**Johannah White**

**Jen Kramer**

**Guy LeCharles Gonzalez**

**Kelley**

**Paul D. Callister**

**Robin Rose Bennett**

**Sarah T. Roberts**

**Barbara M. Waxer**

**Michael Blackwell**

**Gareth Halfacree**

**Jerry Weinstein**

**April Streeter**

**Christie Wilson**

**Phil Parkman**

**Celerian Rainquest**

**John Leubsdorf**

**Stephanie Kate Strohm**

**Deborah Thelen**

**Sin à Tes Souhairs**

**Jane Hosie-Bounar**

**Leon Osinski**

**Martin Laufe**

**Lanre Akinsiku**

**Casper Parks**

**Lucas Scheelk**

**James Hannaham**

**Celeste Pewter**

**Jessica B**

**William Hemphill**

**Jeanann Verlee**

**martin bidney**

**A. H. Machine**

**Andrew Griffin**

**Ellis Weiner**

**Rachel Cheesman**

**Abram Himmelstein**

**Brooke Hunter**

**Tim Lambert**

**Ash Van Otterloo**

**Gabriel Cortez**

**rochelle spencer**

**Dirk van Nouhuys**

**Rhoda Levine**

**Jacqui Germain**

**Sheila Rubin**

**Denise Rosemary Nicholson**

**Iulia Erdmann**

**Eberhard Ortland**

**Glyn Moody**

**Dame Darcy**

**Eric Botts**

**Ertuğrul İnanç**

**Harry Josephine Giles**

**Carla Power**

**Michael Thériault**

**Prisca Mojica Dorca Rodriguez**

**Marilyn Stasio**

**kim wooten**

**Tammy Vitale**

**Jesse Parent**

**SP Mulroy**

## **What signatories are saying**

**Author Chuck Wendig said:** “Libraries and librarians are champions of both the under-served reader and the under-seen writer. I used to work in the public library, and I cherished that the library helped writers find readers, and readers to find writers — and writers of every level, to boot, from midlist or bestseller or debut. It is vital we make sure these seeds are planted, watered,

and allowed to grow unhindered.”

**Author Cory Doctorow, whose forthcoming book Chokepoint Capitalism with fellow signatory Rebecca Giblin explores the harms of big content to creators, said:** “Anyone who tells you libraries and authors are on the opposite side of \*any\* issue has grossly misunderstood the nature of libraries, or authors, or both. We are class allies and artistic comrades-in-arms.”

**Author, PEN/Hemingway award winner, and first trans woman nominee for the Women’s Book Award Torrey Peters said:** “I flat-out owe my career as a trans author to the unimpeded circulation of digital books: the first trans books that inspired me were digital, my own first books were published digitally. Book stores didn’t carry our books at first. Therefore, any readers that have felt their own emotions changed by my published work—no matter in what medium—ultimately also owe that change to digital books. Everybody benefits when digital books are accessible.”

**Poet Yesika Salgado said:** “Without libraries my peers and myself wouldn’t have had the access to literature that we identify with and encouraged us to tell our own stories. To restrict their abilities to loan books is to stifle voices like ours ”

**New York Times bestselling author Scott Carney said:** “Libraries are a vital

institution to cultivate engaged readers. Allowing them to carry books in formats that readers actually use only helps authors. Not allowing libraries to function puts the control of reading into the hands of big tech companies.”

**Author Marianne Díaz Hernández said:** “Libraries are the guardians and the bulwark of cultural diversity and inclusion, particularly for those who don’t have the means to access culture by other pathways. They are the place where people, particularly children, can access books and other materials about the topics that concern them, embarrass them, or that they don’t feel that they can talk with anyone else. The status of libraries as a place free of censorship and surveillance, to seek knowledge we need and stories that reflect us, is one of the keystones of a free, open, and democratic society, and every inch that we lose in this battle contributes to the disintegration of civic space.”

**Author Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodríguez and founder of Latina Rebels said:** “Libraries should be protected, it is how I first discovered my love of reading. There is no me the author without public libraries.”

**Author Elizabeth Kate Switaj said:** “I write because I want to be read. My most recently published book is on the Internet Archive—and that delights me. I also make use of online archival material frequently in my creative and

critical work. Moreover, as a college administrator in a small-island state (or, more accurately, a Big Ocean Nation), I know how important electronic resources are to global access and equity.”

**Dan Gillmor, author and cofounder of News Co/Lab, an initiative to elevate news literacy and awareness at Arizona State University’s Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, said:** “Big Publishing would outlaw public libraries if it could — or at least make it impossible for libraries to buy and lend books as they have traditionally done, to enormous public benefit — and its campaign against the Internet Archive is a step toward that goal.”

**Award-winning author David Weinberger said:** “Publishers trying to limit the reach of libraries are hastening the death of literacy, of book culture, and of community pride in their educated differences.”

**Author, and Faculty Affiliate at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society Sasha Costanza-Chock said:** “It’s absolutely shameful that publishers would try to destroy the efforts of the Internet archive. The future is open access publishing!”

**Author Ernie Smith said:** “Closing off libraries to fair access in the digital age closes off one of the most important tools for research we have. The Internet

Archive's controlled digital lending approach is an excellent way to quickly research topics from primary sources that may not have digital equivalents. The library should be allowed to reasonably keep up with the times, and we should not allow publishers to attempt to redefine it just because the format is changing."

**Award-winning poet and Guggenheim Fellow Philip Metres said:** "The public library, to me, is the closest thing to a church for everyone—a place where people seek stories and answers to every question under the sun. Those who threaten that sacred space, who seek to reduce access to that temple of learning and exploration, are a danger to democracy itself."

**Author Mirta Wake said:** "Retracting the ability to read from the poor will not net you more sales, it will simply limit the reach that your work could have. Libraries that lend e-books tend to require those borrowing to have devices to read them on, while the electronic lending of books as if they were physical ones via a PDF allows you to access the book no matter what device you are using to read on. Furthermore taking down Internet Archive and forcing all into physical libraries to borrow physical books fails to account for a) the mobility status of the borrower (are they even able?) and b) the availability of libraries in their area in the first place as more and more libraries disappear off the map to never re-appear ever again."

**Author and Professor of Media Theory and Digital Economics at CUNY/Queens Douglas Rushkoff said:** "Libraries rule. They are the clearest example of a commons that we can point to."

**Author Ashton Applewhite said:** "Preserving traditional library rights is essential for free speech and the transmission of information in the digital age."

**Author Diana Rosen said:** "Eternal vigilance is essential not for our democratic principles but for access to information, the key to an informed and responsive public. Long live our public libraries!"

**Author Alex Benedict said:** "Growing up in Brecksville, Ohio, my local parks system and library were my refuges. Beyond demanding that libraries be able to purchase books for permanent use in any format as well as be protected from lawsuits and harassment, I hope that small presses can establish closer relationships with libraries. Cleveland publisher and poet d.a.levy freely shared his books with many libraries across and beyond Ohio. Although many libraries may be resistant to alternative forms of literature, small presses and authors can set an example against conglomerate publisher financialization by taking sharing books with libraries."

**Poet and co-organizer Jonathan Mendoza said:** "I want a future in which

authors and artists are fairly compensated for their work and where their works can still be affordable and accessible to everyone most affected by capitalism and inequity. Libraries, and their ability to lend e-books in a reasonable manner, are key to this outcome. The ever-more-common profit-driven efforts of major publishers to drive up the cost to access literature should distress us all. I encourage authors to join this letter in support of libraries and of the more equitable and accessible future that our works so often seek to build.”

**Engineer, VTuber, comedian, voice-over artist, digital content creator, and author Margaret Gel said:** “Humanity will never be free, never colonize the stars, never advance as a species, as a people, as a civilization, as long as information remains shackled by Capitalism.”

**Author and retired University of Oklahoma Professor Laura Gibbs said:** “I make sure to upload all the books for which I control the rights to the Internet Archive: it’s the library I use most, and I am proud to see my books there.”

**Prof. Dr. Ellen Euler said:** “Libraries are crucial for a functioning democratic knowledge society. In times of multi-crisis and populist propaganda, they should be able to fulfill their mission in the best possible way, including via digital and networked media!”

**Author and poet Dominick Knowles said:** "Solidarity with library workers, archivists, and all those who make public knowledge possible against the privatizing forces of capital."

**Author Robert Berger said:** "Enough of Corporations trying to shove Artificial Scarcity down our throats!"

**Author Steven K. Stroh said:** "The Internet Archive is an absolute treasure of the modern era. As an author, I want my works to be made widely available to the public, in perpetuity, through non-commercial organizations such as Internet Archive."

**Author Jerry Michalski said:** "Through their overzealous overprotection of intellectual property, the copyright industries have set civilization back considerably. Profit maximization and collective intelligence are at odds with each other."

**Author Ricardo Dominguez said:** "Free Archives are the only manner of making sure that information will be available to all people now and in the future. We cannot fully depend on current and developing platforms for pay-only access to make knowledge available to all."

**Author Chris Tilly said:** "Libraries are a cornerstone of democracy. They are

at their best when they introduce people to new ideas, so it is critical that they present diverse views and experiences, and provide a wide range of published work.”

**Sean O’Brien of Yale Privacy Lab said:** “Just as the printing press and pamphleteers democratized the sharing of text and artwork centuries ago, we must fight to ensure that 21st Century reading and sharing includes creation and dissemination of digital copies as well as backups of books. Libraries are a public institution we should cherish, and librarians must be supported in their mission to archive and distribute public knowledge and creative works.”

**Poet and writer Raina J. León said:** “Ideas, imagination, compassion, community are the ways of life. Let us walk with that alignment and attunement!”

**Poet and Pulitzer Finalist Evie Shockley said:** “Let libraries & librarians do their job! As someone who couldn’t afford to buy even a fifth of the books I hungrily read growing up, I find it devastating to see the limitations that digital books are placing upon what library patrons will have access to.”

**Author Jeff Sharlet said:** “Libraries saved my life as a young reader, and I’ve seen them do as much and more for so many others. At a time when libraries are at the frontlines of fascism’s assault on democracy, it is of greater

importance than ever for writers to stand in solidarity with librarians in defense of the right to share stories. Democracy won't survive without it."

**Author Erin Taylor said:** "The Internet Archive is a public good. Libraries are a public good. Only the most intellectually deprived soul would value profit over mass access to literature and knowledge."

**Author Kate Bornstein said:** "I grew up in the 1950s and 60s. There was no internet, but there was the Asbury Park Public Library. That's where I discovered books about the Weimar Republic, Magnus Hirschfeld, and American ex patriots living in Paris. I learned the word invert, and I knew that was me. It was a public library that laid open my horizons. with today's attacks on LGBTQ people, we need libraries now more than ever."

**Author Mike Godwin said:** "When you consider how many library patrons will become (or already are) lifetime book buyers, the shortsightedness of the publishers who attack libraries and librarians is stark. Fortunately for the rest of us, the librarians by temperament and training are used to taking the long view. America, I'm putting my geek shoulder to the wheel in support of librarians. (The librarians will quickly catch the allusion.)"

**Author Zin E. Rocklyn said:** "We must support libraries, librarians, and what they stand for: the freedom of diverse education."

**Author Andrea Vocab Sanderson said:** "Representation is so important. Empowering people to share their narratives with the largest audience possible will be the most impactful for all generations."

**Author Rafael J. González said:** "Libraries are sacrosanct keepers of the word; nothing must stand in the way of their sacred function."



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