

CBHL Board Update

Kristine Paulus

Head of Acquisitions and Technical Services

LuEsther T. Mertz Library

The New York Botanical Garden

58th Annual Meeting

The 58th Annual Meeting of CBHL, held last month, was a resounding success. The Board extends its sincere thanks to Longwood Gardens for their generous hospitality. We are especially grateful to Gillian Hayward and Hannah Rutledge, whose exceptional efforts made the conference truly memorable. From the stunning setting to the inspiring presentations, including keynote addresses by Sir Peter Crane and Marta McDowell, the week offered a perfect blend of learning, professional development, and meaningful connections.

Board Transitions

Following the Annual Meeting, the CBHL Board is pleased to welcome Holly Hubenschmidt as Vice President and Anne-Marie Parrish as Treasurer. Holly serves as Director of the Peter H. Raven Library at Missouri Botanical Garden, and Anne-Marie is Director of Library and Archives at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. The Board also extends its deep appreciation to Kristen Mastel for her dedicated service as Vice President, President, and Past President, and to Gillian Hayward for her many years of service as Treasurer. Erin Aults has stepped into the role of President, following her term as Vice President, while Kristine Paulus now serves as Past President.

New CBHL Website

The Board has been working with ClubExpress on the new CBHL website, which is expected to launch around the time that this issue is published. This new web service is one that can be more easily maintained by board members and CBHL member volunteers. We would like to thank Céline Arsenault and Jeremy Easterbrook for their expertise and for the many years of hard work, time, and effort they put into the original CBHL website.

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American Public Gardens Association

Past President Kristine Paulus will represent NYBG and CBHL at the American Public Gardens Association (APGA) Annual Meeting in San Francisco this June. She will participate in the panel discussion “*Cultivating a Book: Turning Your Garden Expertise into Published Work.*” Fellow panelists include Alice Kitajima and Cricket Riley (*Designing the Lush Dry Garden*), Andrea DeLong-Amaya (*The Texas Native Plant Primer*), and Paul Mills (*Lotusland* contributor). Together, they will share insights into transforming horticultural expertise and garden collections into published works.

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CBHL Members’ East News

Edited by Nicole Font

Shelby White & Leon Levy Processing Archivist

LuEsther T. Mertz Library

New York Botanical Garden

Arnold Arboretum Update

Lisa E. Pearson

Head of the Library and Archives

Arnold Arboretum Horticultural Library

I spoke at the New England Archivists conference in Portland, Maine, on March 20. My presentation was called "Image Recataloging / Reparative Image Cataloging : Updating Image Catalog Records of a Well-Used Collection." I discussed our collection of historical images taken during our plant collecting expeditions in eastern Asia in the early 20th century, the use and scholarship the collection has generated over the past 20 years, and our plans to enhance catalog records with information gained from that scholarship.

New York Botanical Garden News

Kristine Paulus

Head of Acquisitions and Technical Services

LuEsther T. Mertz Library

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ALA Fellowship

Rhonda Evans, Director of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library at the New York Botanical Garden, has been selected as a 2026 Lois Ann Gregory-Wood Fellow through the American Library Association (ALA). This fellowship recognizes emerging leaders in librarianship and supports deeper engagement with the Association's work and the broader profession. Through this opportunity, Rhonda will connect with colleagues nationwide and contribute to important conversations shaping the future of libraries and information services.

[Read More Here.](#)

CCAHA at NYBG

In April, the LuEsther T. Mertz Library invited the [Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts](#) to hold two workshops taught by Preservation Specialist Katie Lowe for the Library and Herbarium staff: one on integrated pest management and another on mold identification and remediation. Both workshops were fascinating and informative.



Rhonda Evans



Calendar of Upcoming Events

Compiled by Rita M. Hassert

Library Collections Manager

Sterling Morton Library, The Morton Arboretum

June 8-12, 2026

American Public Gardens Association (APGA)
2026 Conference
San Francisco, California
<http://www.publicgardens.org>

June 23-26, 2026

Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)
RBMS (Rare Books and Manuscripts Section)
Conference
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
<https://rbms.info/>

June 25-29, 2026

American Library Association (ALA)
Annual Conference and Exhibition
Chicago, Illinois
<http://www.ala.org>

July 13-16, 2026

American Horticultural Society (AHS)
34th Annual National Children & Youth Garden
Symposium
Pasadena, California
<https://ahsgardening.org/ncygs-2026/>

July 18-19, 2026

Guild of Natural Science Illustrators (GNSI)
2026 Virtual Conference
Virtual
<https://www.gnsi.org/visual-scicomm-conference>

July 29-August 1, 2026

Society of American Archivists (SAA)
Annual Meeting
New Orleans, Louisiana
<https://www2.archivists.org/am2026>

August 1-5, 2026

Botany 2026
Tucson, Arizona
<http://botany.org>

September 16-18, 2026

American Society of Landscape Architects
(ASLA)
Conference on Landscape Architecture
Los Angeles, California
<https://www.asla.org>

October 1-3, 2026

American Society of Botanical Artists (ASBA)
Annual Meeting & Conference
Denver, Colorado
<https://asba-art.org/>

October 5-9, 2026

Visual Resources Association (VRA)
Annual Conference
Virtual
<http://vraweb.org>

October 15-18, 2026

American Horticultural Therapy Association
Annual Conference
San Francisco, California
<http://www.ahta.org>

November 2-6, 2026

Charleston Conference
Charleston, South Carolina
<https://www.charleston-hub.com/the-charleston-conference>

Conference Recap: 2026 STEM Information Mini Conference NYC

Nicole Font

Shelby White & Leon Levy Processing Archivist

The New York Botanical Garden

On March 19th and 20th, the third annual STEM Information Mini Conference for information professionals took place at Barnard College in New York City. The event was co-sponsored by the Metropolitan New York Library Council (METRO), New York University, Penguin Random House, and the Barnard Center for Engaged Pedagogy. The goal of the conference was to bring together science librarians, archivists, museum workers, library staff, and other information-focused professionals interested in learning more about information and research services in the sciences. Sessions focused on topics including podcast creation, the business of scientific publishing, research integrity in the age of generative AI, aerospace grey literature discoverability, and more.

As information professionals in a STEM-focused library without subject expertise, my colleague Ashley Aberg and I often discuss the unique challenges of working with STEM-based collections with which we have little familiarity, particularly when scientists are engaged in complex and highly specialized research. These discussions led us to develop and present a talk titled “Lost in the Weeds: Working with Scientists’ Archival Papers as a Non-Subject Specialist.” In this session, we discussed the transition from a non-STEM role to a STEM-focused one, the challenges of processing scientists’ papers without subject expertise, considerations for performing advocacy work as a humanities-centered discipline within a larger STEM institution, and the experience of providing reference support to users with a wide range of scientific inquiries – from broad topics to highly specific research questions.

Overall, it was a pleasure to have the opportunity to meet colleagues from institutions we don’t often cross paths with (and some that we do!). While many attendees did not work in botanically focused libraries, they shared similar challenges and goals related to providing access to STEM-based collections, highlighting the relevance of these issues across the board.

Book Reviews

Edited by Gillian Hayward

Library Manager

Library and Information Services

Longwood Gardens

Local: a search for nearby nature and wildness

by Alastair Humphreys. Shropshire, UK: Eye

Books, 2024. 367 pages. \$18.00. ISBN:

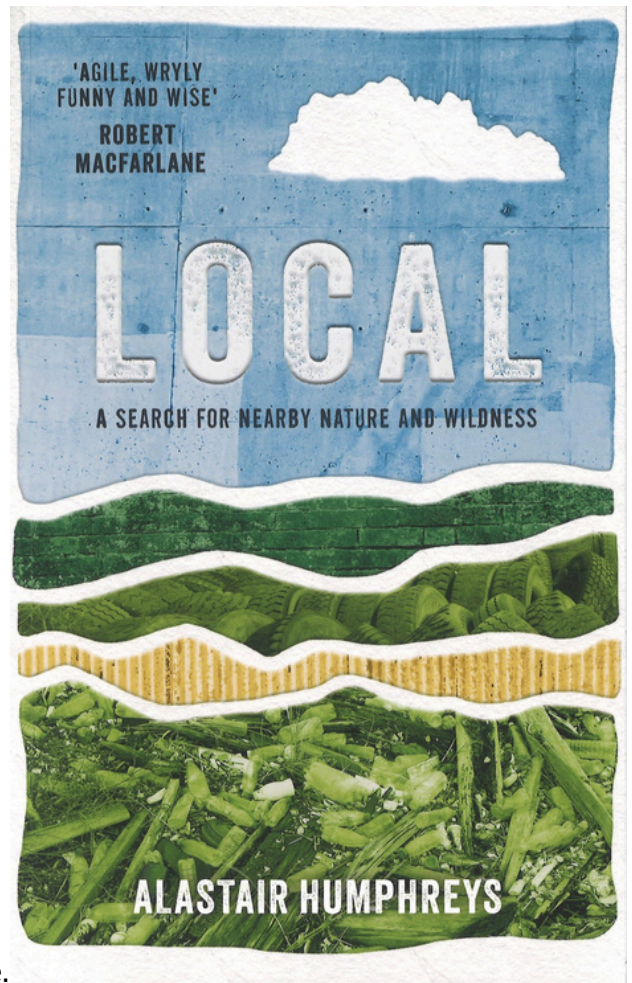
9781785633676

Reviewed by Donna Herendeen

Lenhardt Library

Chicago Botanic Garden

Sometimes you encounter a book that has been overlooked and needs better exposure. The book *Local* was brought to my attention by a library patron saying, “You really need to read this book.” I had the same reaction – you really need to read this book – and that has resulted in this review to encourage libraries to make this book more widely available.



Local is surprisingly scarce in libraries, only 4 libraries in my state had the book, only 14 in my region and a total of 82 in all of OCLC. I discovered its rarity when trying to set up a book group with library copies. We were told we couldn't use that title due to a lack of availability.

I wondered why this book was not widely held. Very different from the author's previous adventure books, it may not appeal to his regular audience, and on the surface might appear to be a niche book about biking. But in reality, it describes a relatable and very modern take on the topic of observing the world around you to enrich your life, from the interesting point of view of a stay-at-home dad, who is also a widely-traveled adventure writer.

There is a long tradition of nature writing of this type: *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau (Massachusetts, 1854), *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold (Wisconsin, 1949), *Desert Solitaire* by Edward Abbey (Utah, 1968), *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* by Annie Dillard (Blue Ridge Mountains, 1974), *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer (Central New York, 2013), and now *Local: a search for nearby nature and wildness* by Alastair Humphreys. Published in 2024 and exploring suburban London, it has a valuable message for a damaged modern world that previous works have not had to address.

The premise of Humphreys' book is to bicycle to local locations and observe the environment closely. The author uses a topographic map of his area divided by a grid of kilometer squares, and visits randomly selected squares weekly for a year, recording his experiences, observations, and thoughts. What makes this book a new take on an old tradition is its unique location. It is the modern suburban environmental chaos that makes the book relevant and special. We cannot all experience the environments of Walden and the other landscapes of earlier nature writers, but many of us do experience the world of *Local* on a daily basis. Seeing our everyday landscapes as precious and worth caring for is an important new story that this book tells well.

The author is fully aware of the historical tradition he is following and frequently quotes a large number of interesting authors; you are sure to find a muse of yours among them: Albert Einstein, Anne Michaels, Annie Dillard, David George Haskell, Emily Dickinson, G. K. Chesterton, George Orwell, Henry David Thoreau, Hubert Reeves, Jack Kerouac, Jesse Owens, John Muir, Laurie Lee, Mary Oliver, Matthew Arnold, Maya Angelou, Paul Auster, Philip Larkin, Ray Mears, Roald Dahl, Robert Lloyd Praeger, Sherlock Holmes, Sir Edward Grey, Thomas A. Clark, W. H. Davies, Wendell Berry, William Shakespeare.

One special moment in the book is in the chapter titled: "Stillness." It opens with a quote from Mary Oliver. In the chapter, Humphreys introduces the history and concept of stopping everything and just observing. The exercise is to put away the phone, note pad and any other distractions, set a timer for sixty minutes, and just sit and observe. It is worth trying and not as easy as it sounds. The author's reaction is interesting.

One criticism of the book is that parts of it are repetitive, but I believe that is intentional. I would recommend you find the book *Local* – it is readily available in paper and digital copies, but not so common in libraries. I hope that changes. The geographical conversion from the experience in London to other locals is easy; the back of the book gives resources for finding maps all over the world and further reading. This might be one of those books you'll think about long after it's finished.

**CBHL Board of Directors
2026-2027**

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Member Spotlight

Edited by Will Jones

Technical Services Librarian

Richmont Graduate University, Chattanooga, Tennessee

Beth Brand

Head Librarian

Schilling Library

Desert Botanical Garden

Where do you work, and what do you do there?

I work at the Schilling Library at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix, Arizona. My official title is “Head Librarian,” which I find amusing, because I’m the only librarian. As for what I do, everything *[laughs]*. The Schilling Library is a small collection—a focused, specialized library which coordinates with the overall mission of the Desert Botanical Garden to

study and conserve desert plants and habitat in the Southwestern U. S., Latin America, and around the world. I’m happy that it’s a small, focused collection because it’s not always easy to manage so many things. I buy and process library materials, I manage the budget, I interface with staff, library volunteers, and the public, the whole shebang. I’m currently working with some of our education staff to design science programs for school-aged children, which will be a fun change of pace.

My library occupies one corner of the research building, and I’m officially part of the research department. They’re probably who I serve the most. Our collection’s scope includes plants of the world’s arid regions, with a strong emphasis on cacti, agaves, and other succulents, so I would say our collection is a little older than many scientific libraries (because there aren’t books published constantly about cactus studies and so forth), and a little deeper as well. It’s a research collection—botany, plant systematics, taxonomy and so forth—but with a good helping of other subjects added in: books on natural history, desert gardening and landscape design, botanical art, ethnobotany. Particularly ethnobotany, as we are located here in the Southwest.

I work rather autonomously to build our collections, but I also take suggestions from our experts on staff. This collection has developed organically with the different interests of the people who have worked here over the years: if a staff member had an ethnobotanical focus, the librarian would acquire the resources they needed. Howard Scott Gentry, the author of *Agaves of Continental North America*, was our garden’s first research botanist. He retired from the USDA and was interested in “useful” plants, like jojoba and guayule, that could grow in the desert and produce oil and rubber. So now we have Gentry’s materials about agaves and useful crop plants. But what all the items in our collection have in common is a focus on the plants that grow in arid lands.

What has been your career path?

I've worked here for 24 years. I've had a...I don't like to say the word unusual...I've had an unconventional career path. I had a career in local television first, and then, when I decided that wasn't what I wanted to do forever, I thought that a library would be a great place to work. I've always loved libraries so I got a job at the Phoenix Public Library's main branch. After five years, a friend who worked at the Desert Botanical Garden asked if I was looking for another job. At the time, I was only working part-time at Phoenix Public so I applied to DBG and was hired full-time. I worked both jobs for the next eight years.

It was all very surreal: my interview at Desert Botanical was September 11, 2001. I was watching the news horrified. I thought the interview would be cancelled, but it wasn't. That day I interviewed with Wendy Hodgson, an expert on agaves and Grand Canyon flora. She told me, "You need to move the collection to a new building." And I was like, "Okay, sure." I didn't even know what was in the collection at that point *[laughs]*. That was the beginnings of my work here.

My first job was to move the collections out of the old building within the first month and a half, order furniture, clean up the new space, and move the books in. It was only after I started moving things that I see there are boxes and pictures in the closet that look like the history of our garden. There's a portrait of the founder just sitting on top of an open cardboard box, no protection, nothing. I thought, "This is not okay." So I created the archives here, even though I'm not an archivist. To get started, I hired an archivist, but then I had to figure things out on my own, with a volunteer or two. We have a special room now, where we try to keep the temperature and humidity within the right parameters for archiving.

If I could start over, I would do it differently. I just didn't have the budget. Now the archives include historical papers about our garden, of course, which has really served me well because I get a lot of questions about our history you know, and I'm able to answer all different departments. But it also contains some very old books—an herbal from the 1500s, books from the 1700s and 1800s on cacti and agave.

What does a typical day at work look like?

I like the variety of my job. I might have a list of things I'm working on, maybe resources for one of our researchers here. Yesterday I was emailing because our research team got a request from a botanist about another [long-dead] botanist's work on cacti, genus *Echinocereus*. I found out through the International Plant Names Index that he described two species, which were mentioned in a book from the 1930s which we had here in the library (that's what I meant when I said our collection runs deep), and I found that he had deposited plant samples at the University of Southern Arizona, University of Arizona, and Cal Berkeley, so I started calling and emailing herbaria. I might also help out our living collections team by sourcing articles related to changing plant nomenclature. And then I might be supervising a volunteer—coming up with projects for them to do and then overseeing those. Then I might have to call someone to get these doors repaired *[laughs]*. I've been through four rounds of technicians to fix the new electrical locks on the doors. A bit of everything.



Do you have a favorite book about plants? A favorite plant?

I actually brought the book here. Oh, God, it's heavy. What a tome. It's *The Cactus Family*, by Edward F. Anderson. Most plant librarians know of this book because it was the first treatment of cacti that had really been done since Britton and Rose, back in the early 1920s. So nobody had really written anything this encyclopedic, which is what this is. It's descriptions of, I can't remember how many genera, but he tried to cover the entire cactus family in this one book. And it's a favorite book because the author, Ted Anderson, worked here for nine years and so he spent the last years of his career finishing this book. It's not a sexy book, but it's a useful book that our staff referenced for years, and still do. Unfortunately, Ted died right before his book signing party, which was to be held in the library's original location. His death was a complete shock to everyone.

As for plants, golly, I don't like this question *[laughs]*. I love *Mammillaria*, because when they bloom, they bloom in a little circle. I just think they're very sweet, and when you walk along one of the paths here in spring, they are some of the first ones you can see blooming.

What are your earliest garden-related memories?

My mother loved to garden. She was from northern Kentucky, and when she moved out to Arizona, she dug up a little orange star lily to plant in our yard. And darned if that thing didn't live for years. I don't know how it survived, but it did. She brought a bit of Kentucky with her to Phoenix, and that's what a lot of people did. There was no formality to her garden—it was very catch-as-catch-can, and I inherited that from her.

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Submissions Welcome!

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