

## *Take A Bow:* HLF Delivered a Whopping \$200,000 Last Year

**In** times of economic uncertainty and tight public budgets, private donations are more critical than ever to keep our libraries dynamic and welcoming. Last year, through funding from our donors, the Humboldt Library Foundation was able to provide \$200,000 to fund programs, special projects, and the purchase of books and materials for our local libraries.

“Through the generosity of our donors, we all help to provide that most essential public resource—free and equitable access to knowledge for all. Now, it is more important than ever that we pull together, and for that the Foundation is enormously grateful to partner with fellow library devotees across the county,” said HLF Board President Alison Talbott.

The Foundation’s ongoing commitment reflects the fact that libraries remain vital community institutions. With



more than 100,000 library cardholders countywide, usage is climbing—not declining—as residents continue to rely on their local branches for learning, connection, and access to information.

“We are so grateful for the generosity of the Humboldt Library Foundation and to everyone who has donated in support of the library”, said Corin Balkovek, Manager of Acquisitions and Technical Services. “The funds are essential to maintain collections of materials that are vibrant, current, and needed within our communities.”

Once again, the Foundation funded nearly two-thirds of the library’s book acquisition budget. It also provided funds for color printing at branch libraries, supported the Library’s First 5 partnership, purchased a genealogy laptop for family researchers, and helped sustain the digital collections and dynamic databases like OverDrive/Libby. The funds were also used to purchase a new microfilm scanner, new shelving for the Eel Valley branches and staff development opportunities.

“From the latest bestsellers to quality non-fiction that helps inform our patrons on topics rife with misinformation, to board and picture books to help inspire our youngest readers, the support from the Humboldt Library Foundation is what allows the Humboldt County Library to remain a critical resource for the communities we serve,” Balkovek added.

## HIGHLIGHTS THIS ISSUE

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## From the President's Desk

### ALISON TALBOTT

**My** day job has recently “licensed” me to become an Artificial Intelligence user. Many colleagues and friends are making significant use of this new tool. I will make an effort, but based on my experiences so far, I don’t think I will be a super-user any time soon. Thankfully my work is largely people focused and does not include “vectorized organizational datasets” or “visual system object recognition” nor most of the topics referenced in the training modules.

Perhaps I simply need to understand AI’s possibilities and usage more thoroughly. However, according to *The Last Invention*, an expansive and well-made podcast series on the subject, even the AI creators don’t clearly understand how it works or what it may do next. Even if my personal use won’t be robust, Artificial Intelligence has been a rich well for fiction for years and recently I’ve enjoyed a number of reads that have helped to conceptualize the breadth of possibilities this new tech may produce.

One of my favorites was *Playground* by Richard Powers. Complex, lyrical, and genuinely awe inspiring, the novel explores the “last wild place we have yet to colonize” and deftly intertwines the powers and limits of AI throughout the book. Remember when you read *The Overstory* and never looked at the forest the same way again? The ocean is similarly a new and mysterious universe after reading *Playground*. In February, the Dow Jones dropped 600 points in a day after the release of a fictional essay that laid out the possibilities of AI’s impact on the white-collar workforce, and the

cascading impacts on the economy and society as a whole. Written and released by Citrini Research and Alan Shah, I found both the essay and the War of the Worlds response fascinating. It’s an engaging, long form essay titled *The 2028 Global Intelligence Crisis*. AI will dig it right up for you with a quick Google search.

*The Circle* by Dave Eggers was released in 2013 and not very well received at the time. Many found the concept of a surveillance society, led by a tech company, and blithely accepted by the majority of people, rather farfetched. I’m told it was supposed to be satire but reading it this year, I was struck by how close it managed to come to the real-world impacts of AI and social media on our privacy and our interpersonal relationships. I found it unsettling and have opted not to read the sequel for now.

I’ll keep you posted if I become an AI aficionado, and I hereby promise to tell you if AI writes one of these columns someday. In the meantime, send me a note if you come across a great novel about AI, just not written by AI if you please.

## Introducing new HLF Board member Cindy Hori

**L**ibraries have always held a special place in Cindy Hori’s life. As a child, they were a sanctuary and the one place her parents encouraged her to spend entire days exploring. That early love of reading and research shaped Cindy’s academic path and led to her first college degree in History.

Later, as she transitioned into finance and accounting, she carried that same passion for learning into her professional life. Over the years, Cindy developed an extensive expertise across non-profit and for-profit organizations, including specialties in accounting disciplines such as endowment and gift-giving, fund and governmental accounting, as well as sponsored funds and grant management. She also enjoyed educating others about financial matters, helping to demystify the often-misunderstood world of accounting and fi-

nance. For the past ten years, Cindy has worked as the Finance Director at Cypress Grove Cheese in Arcata.

Joining the Humboldt Library Foundation Board feels like the perfect way for Cindy to bring together her lifelong love of libraries and professional experience. It offers an opportunity to combine her appreciation for libraries with her professional background, helping to bolster the Humboldt Library Foundation’s cornerstones of knowledge and community.



## From the Director's Desk

# CHRIS COOPER



**A**s we celebrate the arrival of spring, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the Humboldt Library Foundation for your unwavering support. We are a stronger library system with you and the HLF donors as partners.

Spring's abundant growth is mirrored at the library. With HLF's support we've seen an increase in usage, checkouts, patron appreciation, and engagement.

Speaking of engagement, four wedding ceremonies were held in the Humboldt Room on Valentine's Day. It was a pleasure to work with County Clerk Recorder Juan Cervantes and his team. Humboldt County Supervisor Mike Wilson served as the wedding officiant. Many thanks to library staffers Althea Christensen, Alyssa Ihle, and Hershey Moreno for conceptualizing and creating wedding gifts for the couples. A member of one of the wedding parties even consulted with Humboldt Room Docent, Joe Bonino for assistance with a Humboldt County history query!

In keeping with the library's mission to be inclusive for all members of the community regardless of financial capacity, we are grateful for the grants to purchase new color printers at Blue Lake, Ferndale, and Willow Creek Branches. The printers are a welcome addition, they enable students to print their assignments at an affordable price as well for community members to print flyers, and other informational materials.

## Wright's Recommendations

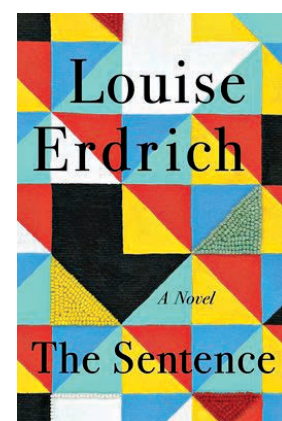
by Erika Wright

**T**he *Sentence* by Louise Erdrich: Jen at The Booklegger said this is maybe one of her favorite books of all time, and if you love Louise Erdrich, you will likely enjoy it too. Set in Minneapolis, the novel plays with the many meanings of the word "sentence." The main character, Tookie, is imperfect but likable. She makes questionable decisions, but she has a good heart. Early on, Tookie goes to jail and after her release, she finds work at a small, independent Native American bookstore. The shop becomes haunted by one of its most irritating, recently deceased, customers. Tookie describes her as a relentless collector of all things Indigenous. As Flora's presence grows more threatening, Tookie sets out to understand why her ghost refuses to move on. The story begins on All Saints

Please join me in welcoming India Broadbent, the new Ferndale Library Branch Coordinator. India grew up in Humboldt County and received their first library card at the Eureka Main Library in 1995, the year it opened. India is passionate about libraries as community care. "To me libraries represent Hope. In a world with so many challenges we manage to keep public libraries free and accessible to every demographic. Public Libraries are the great equalizer of any society, providing patrons access to information, resources and community regardless of socioeconomic status. It's such a valuable and important way to serve the public and I look forward to bringing my passion and enthusiasm to Ferndale and continuing to work with the HCL team." – India Broadbent

In McKinleyville, after seven months of planning and construction, the new charging station is online. We invite you to charge your electric vehicle while you choose your next read or participate in one of the various activities offered like crafting, book clubs, and story hour.

I wish each of you a vibrant spring season and hope to see you at the library one day very soon.



Day 2019 and spans the following year. Midway through, the pandemic hits, and the novel captures the fear and uncertainty of that time quite well. Books are deemed an essential service, and at its core, this is a novel about the power of books; written for people who love them. It even includes a substantial list of recommended reads. Along the way, this story takes on colonialism, intergenerational trauma, the prison system, cultural appropriation, resilience, and the power of connection. It weaves together complex family dynamics, a sharp critique of systemic racism and the oppression of communities of color all with an abundance of big, messy love.

## Library Lovers Raise Record-Breaking Funds



**W**hat a night! Thank you to our wonderful donors for a record-breaking night of fundraising for Humboldt County's libraries. The 2025 Holiday Gala was a smashing success! Amid lights, laughter, and much excitement we raised over \$135,000.

The live auction was led by our own Senator, Mike McGuire, and the audience responded to his infectious energy with enormous enthusiasm. So many local businesses and artists donated luxurious items for both the live and silent auctions. We are ever grateful to them for their support and encourage you to review the list of donors in this newsletter; extend them your patronage, and let them know they are appreciated.

There was one special auction item that raised over \$50,000! If you were there, you are already in the know and probably had a hand in the great success. If not, watch this space for some very exciting news in 2027! See you at the next gala in December!

*(top)* Past and present Humboldt County elected officials with 2025 Helen Everett awardee, Julie Fulkerson. *(middle)* HLF board member Pamela Dressler and guests. *(left)* HLF founder and past president Elizabeth Murguia and Vis Upatirringa.

# Thank You Auction Donors

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HLF board member Maggie Fleming and guests

**“Access to knowledge is the superb, the supreme act of truly great civilizations. Of all the institutions that purport to do this, free libraries stand virtually alone in accomplishing this mission.”**

**– Toni Morrison**

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## Donor Spotlight: Hannah Eisloeffel

**H**annah has loved libraries for as long as she can remember. “I’ve always loved reading,” she says. “Anything that gives people access to books they don’t have to buy; that’s something worth supporting.” Hannah visits both the Eureka Main Library and the Fortuna branch with her daughter several times a week.

Over the years, Hannah has come to see the library as something much larger than a building full of books. “It’s a focal point, a heartbeat of the community,” she says. “There’s always something happening; story times, events, people connecting. You really feel part of something when you’re there.”

Hannah particularly loves the Buy a Book fundraiser. “So many of the children’s books we check out have those nameplates honoring someone. I’ll open one and sometimes I recognize the name. It’s such a beautiful way to remember someone; their name doesn’t fade away, it keeps living on through stories.”

For Hannah, the library is woven into her family’s daily life. “Having the library as part of your life is so rewarding in ways you don’t even realize,” she says. “It’s something that gets passed down. I imagine my daughter will be a library donor someday too, because of what the library has done for her.”

**Hannah’s husband, Nic, reading to their daughter, Yahti.**



## 2026 LEGACY CIRCLE

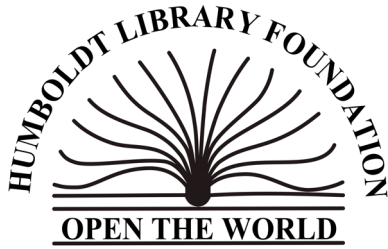
The HLF Legacy Circle comprises a special group of individuals who have remembered HLF in their wills or estate plans. These gifts will grow the HLF Endowment Fund, a long-term strategy to provide enhanced funding for the library in perpetuity.

For every new HLF Legacy Circle member added, long-time supporters Ed Olsgard and Michele McKeegan generously make a \$500 contribution to HLF. So please consider today—your planning will provide immediate and long-term support for the public library.

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### LIBRARY BRANCHES

#### **Eureka Main Branch**

1313 3rd St. 707-269-1900

#### **Arcata Branch**

500 Seventh St. 707-822-5954

#### **Blue Lake Branch**

1100 Greenwood Ave. 707-668-4207

#### **Ferndale Branch**

807 Main St. 707-786-9559

#### **Fortuna Branch**

775 14th St. 707-725-3460

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530-625-5082

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715 Wildwood Ave. 707-764-3333

#### **Trinidad Branch**

380 Janis Ct. 707-677-0227

#### **Willow Creek Branch**

Hwys 299 & 96 530-629-2146

#### **Bookmobile**

707-267-9933

#### **Library At Your Door**

707-269-1954

## Help Build the Collection



**E**very children's book added to the collection represents a new world for a young reader to discover. The books we read growing up shape our perspective and expand our sense of what's possible.

For as little as \$10 per month, you can inspire a child or catapult a teen into a habit of lifelong enjoyment. Help HLF help the librarians put new books in the hands of kids and teens across the county.

It's simple, it's fast, it's easy. Go to our website and click on the DONATE button. Make a one-time donation or join the Book a Month Club! Open the world for young readers to discover.

[humboldtlibraryfoundation.org](http://humboldtlibraryfoundation.org)



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