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**Leah Gregory:** Welcome to *Can't Shelve This*, the podcast where we hammer home the importance of school libraries. I'm Leah Gregory, and I'm joined by my co-host, Janette Derucki.

**Janette Derucki:** Hey, everyone.

**Leah:** And our producer, Ola Gronski.

**Ola Gronsky:** Hi, everyone.

**Leah:** Today we won't have any guests. It is just us. The teachers have left the room, and the kids are now in charge.

**Ola:** After 15 minutes, we can leave, right?

**Leah:** Yes, exactly.

**Janette:** When your instructor doesn't show up.

**Leah:** Oh, it used to kill me when they would show up at 14 minutes, and you're like, ugh.

**Ola:** It really breaks your heart.

**Janette:** Who created that rule anyway? That's what I want to know.

**Leah:** I don't think that is actually a rule. I think somebody somewhere said that once, and it stuck, and honestly, you'd probably be in trouble if you left, if the teacher eventually did show up.

**Ola:** It's shared like it's Bible.

**Leah:** Yes.

**Janette:** Somewhere, it just became etiquette. It was out of respect for the professor and their status or whatever. You just give them 15 minutes, and I'm like, I would love to--

**Leah:** That's 15 minutes of my time. My time is valuable too.

**Janette:** I had an appointment earlier today, and the person I was meeting with was 45 minutes late. I was like, I would love to be in an industry where I could just show up 45 minutes late and everyone's like, oh, it's fine.

**Ola:** I panicked about getting to this meeting five minutes late to you guys.

[laughter]

**Leah:** My husband is compulsively early, compulsively early. He had to drop my daughter off to the airport once. He's like, "We're going to leave at 9:00 AM." Then he's pushing her at 8:15 like, "Are you ready to leave yet? Are you ready to leave yet?" Then she texted me from the airport. She's like, "I barely made it. I only made it through security with two and a half hours to spare."

[laughter]

**Janette:** Oh my goodness. Whatever will you do with that two and a half hours?

**Leah:** Then my husband's like, "Well, it's better than missing your flight." Okay, whatever.

**Ola:** Close call there.

**Janette:** [laughs] Close call.

**Leah:** I have important questions for you today.

**Janette:** I can't wait to hear these.

**Leah:** No, you already know one of them. Are there books--

**Janette:** You're not supposed to tell me that I already know. You're ruining the illusion.

**Leah:** My question for you today is, are there books that you started to read because everybody else that you know loved them, and then you hated it? I will give you an example.

**Ola:** I do that all the time.

**Leah:** I tried to read *Yellowface*. Do you guys know that book?

**Janette:** Oh, yes.

**Ola:** Yes.

**Leah:** Everybody was going on and on and on about how much they loved it, and I hated it. I could not get through it. Also, I hate when it shows up on Goodreads when you've just looked at it on your Kindle, and I'm like, I'm not reading this because I didn't like it.

**Janette:** How about in your Amazon suggestions, and when it's like, "You might like--" I was like, of course I might like it. I just read it, and you know I read it because I got it from Amazon.

**Ola:** I will say I do have a problem where even if I hate something, I will power through it if people are talking about it. I do it with books. I do it with TV shows. I do it with movies because I am a person who needs to know why people are talking about it, and I want to understand the conversation even if I hate it. I've done that with so many TV shows. I'll be like, I don't really like this show, but I'm going to keep watching it because I need to know the discourse. I need to understand it. The most recent one that comes to mind is Miranda July's *All Fours*. People were like, this is revolutionary.

I felt like she included things to shock people in it that I'm like, that doesn't make a good book just because you're like, whoa, so crazy for mentioning this weird thing. I could go on and on about it.

**Janette:** Mine is going to be-- This is funny because Ola just told me recently that she was reading something by John Green. Mine all seemed to stem from or revolve around John Green. I read *Looking for Alaska* and *Paper Town,* and while they are good books, I was like, he's maybe not the writer for me. Aso felt like those two books were the same story just with different characters in different settings. I was like, eh, no.

**Ola:** That's wild you're saying that because I was a John Green stan.

**Janette:** A lot of people are.

**Ola:** Went to his book signings. It's very 2010s Tumblr era.

**Janette:** Very.

**Leah:** I loved Tumblr. I loved it.

**Ola:** That was really my origin story as a person. That's when my personality blossomed.

**Janette:** I'm going to perhaps say something really controversial.

**Ola:** I'm sure you will.

**Janette:** Yes. I'm such a controversial person. Hank is the better Green brother. Sorry, John.

**Ola:** No, I agree.

**Leah:** You feel that way about the Kelce brothers, too, don't you?

[laughter]

**Leah:** It's the other Kelce brother that you like best.

**Janette:** Jason is greater than Travis. Yes, I do feel that way. Sorry. The listeners are going to be judging me hard after this, but no, I feel like Hank is the better Green brother or the more talented. I connect with him better.

**Ola:** He's definitely the more entertaining and personable one. John Green's writing-- It's funny you bring this up because I'm actually reading *The Anthropocene Reviewed*. I know he's just coming out with another one this year, but I never read that one.

**Janette:** Is this the one about the turtle?

**Ola:** No, that's *Turtles All the Way Down*.

**Janette:** Oh, *Turtles All the Way Down*. That would make sense. *Turtles* and *Turtles All the Way Down*.

**Leah:** I love *Turtles All the Way Down*.

**Janette:** See, I gave up John Green after those two books. I never even read *The Fault in Our Stars*. That was another one.

**Leah:** You've got to read *The Fault in Our Stars*.

**Janette:** I will never. I feel like I already know what happens now. I never watched the movie.

**Leah:** You do.

**Ola:** You do.

**Leah:** I think, to me, that was a book I lost to the hype cycle. There was so much hype around it.

**Ola:** So much hype.

**Janette:** Then everyone that I know who read it just talked about how they cried so much, and I was like, I don't want to cry, and I don't want to--

**Ola:** It is devastating.

**Leah:** It is devastating.

**Janette:** Yes. I'm like, I don't need that. I was already on the fence about reading it. Also, let's talk about books that you feel like you've read by osmosis, just from talking to people about them, or you now feel like everything that already happened, so you don't really need to read it. That's how I feel about *The Fault in Our Stars*.

**Leah:** That's how I felt about *Harry Potter* for a long time because everybody, everywhere, was talking about *Harry Potter*. I refused to read them for years because I'm like, I don't like what everybody normally likes. I just was like, I have no interest in reading *Harry Potter*. Then I got a gift card to Books a Million or something like that, and I just could not find anything else that I want. I picked up the first *Harry Potter* and then, of course, I was hooked, and I could not stop. Luckily, it was far enough into the cycle that I could read books one through five straight through.

**Janette:** Oh, nice.

**Leah:** Yes. Then there are books that I feel like everybody loved, and then when I read it, I'm like, maybe I'm just not smart enough. One of them is *All the Light I Cannot See*.

**Ola:** I didn't read that one.

**Janette:** I love that book.

**Leah:** Did you love that book?

**Janette:** I did.

**Leah:** The main thing I felt about that book-- I didn't hate it. I did read it. I read it all the way through, but I'm like, this book could have been written with half the number of words easily.

**Janette:** His writing style is very--

**Leah:** Verbose. [laughs]

**Janette:** It's just extremely descriptive and very embellished. He does a great job painting a picture with words, but you have to be in the mood for that. Sometimes I don't have the patience to read that. I think for me, that book was the right book at the right time. I think that there are other times when I would have picked that up, and I would have been like, why am I reading this?

**Ola:** I totally get that feeling, though, Leah, of being like, am I just dumb?

[laughter]

**Leah:** Exactly. Am I just dumb? That's how I felt.

**Ola:** I've had that feeling before, especially when it's just so hyped up and you're just like, no.

**Leah:** That's how I feel about *Demon Copperhead*. Have either of you read that?

**Janette:** Oh, yes. Barbara Kingsolver. Yes.

**Leah:** I haven't even picked it up yet because I'm like, oh, I just don't want to read it. I don't know why.

**Janette:** Sometimes you have to be in the right mood. You just really do.

**Ola:** That's actually exactly how I feel. This is going to be controversial because I know number one fan of our podcast, Jessica Silva, loves this, but that's how I feel about literary fiction, where I'm just like, maybe I'm just not smart enough for this highbrow literature. Sorry, I like a plot. I like a structure, and I just can't always-- It's interesting because literary fiction seems to be so strongly centered around strong characterization. I love that, but guess what?

**Janette:** That's the whole point of literary fiction.

**Ola:** Great books exist where they have that and a plot, and you can enjoy yourself.

**Janette:** Literary fiction does have a plot. It's just that the character is driving the plot. It's all character-driven.

**Ola:** They do a bad job.

**Janette:** Sometimes it's someone's life story.

**Leah:** It's just slow. A little slow.

**Janette:** Great. Ola's saying, "Glad your life story-- Glad it happened to you, but it's boring."

**Ola:** Janette, coming from the girl who said, "Well, not everyone has a love story that's interesting."

[laughter]

**Leah:** Yes. "You may live happily ever after, but I don't care." No. Jessica recommended a book to me, called *Mexican Gothic*. Have you guys read that?

**Ola:** Oh, it's a great one.

**Janette:** That's a good one. That's a great one.

**Ola:** I love that one.

**Leah:** She recommended it to me because it's based on *Rebecca* or a retelling of *Rebecca*. I thought I could not get into it, and I was really trying. I don't know why. I think there was too many words again.

**Ola:** I get that. Yes.

**Janette:** Do you enjoy reading retellings?

**Ola:** I do.

**Leah:** I'm thinking I don't.

**Janette:** I don't.

**Ola:** It depends. Is it a retelling of something that I don't really care about, or if it's something I'm protective over, like, this is my special thing. I don't want you to mess it up.

**Janette:** I guess that's a really good point. I think for me, it's like I don't always enjoy fairytale retellings. If it's *Beauty and the Beast*, but it's modern day, and I'm like, okay.

**Ola:** *Cinder* did that, the *Cinder* series, the YA one, and I loved those.

**Janette:** I did love that one. You're right.

**Leah:** I guess it just depends.

**Janette:** It depends on the spin. It depends on how it's retold, but also I have friends who they read every retelling of *Pride and Prejudice,* and I'm like, no, still just don't care.

**Ola:** That's too many because there's hundreds.

**Leah:** Yes.

**Janette:** Somebody the other day asked me if I wanted to read something that was a retelling of-- it was one of the Shakespeare plays, and I was like, no, thank you. I do love Shakespeare, all those original works, but I also don't want to read a modern-day retelling of it.

**Ola:** I do. This also translates to movies. *10 Things I Hate About You*, fantastic film. Made me really appreciate *Taming of the Shrew*.

**Leah:** I read *The Turn of the Key* by Ruth Ware, which is a retelling of *The Turn of the Screw*. I love that, but normally, you're right, I don't like retellings. I realized with *Rebecca*. If somebody asked me, what is your number one most favorite book? *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier is probably it. The bar is high.

**Ola:** I will say, as we're thinking about all of this, people can read what they want to read. People are allowed to-- I don't want anyone to be like, "Wow, Ola slammed lit fic. I can't read that." No.

**Janette:** No.

**Ola:** It's like candy and food. People have different tastes, and whatever makes you happy, read it.

**Janette:** I agree.

**Ola:** I'm just letting you know I have strong feelings.

**Leah:** Another coworker that is a super fan of the podcast, Kate, she fast forwards through our talk because she hates romance.

[laughter]

**Leah:** She fast forwards through the banter.

**Ola:** Number one fan of the podcast, fast forwards through the first 15 minutes. Hey, a listen is a listen.

**Janette:** That's a great way, though-- A great example of how some books are for some people and not for others. I also am a huge mood reader. I will go through periods where I read mostly mysteries, and there's hardly any romance in it at all. Then there are sometimes where I just want the formula of a romance. To your point, Ola, about the plot, it's predictable. I might not necessarily know what the journey looks like, but I know where they're going to end up. Sometimes you need that.

**Leah:** We're going to talk about that a little bit later, because I have a whole soapbox to get on about that.

**Janette:** Because this is the episode for rants.

**Leah:** Rants, yes. I feel strangely qualified to rant this month. We're going to talk about it. But we’re going to go to a new little feature that we're calling the State of the Union right now, because we cannot ignore what is going on in the world of libraries.

**Janette:** Speaking of rants.

**Ola:** Kind of on fire.

**Leah:** The library world, as well as other sectors of the world, is currently on fire. We are reeling right now from the cuts by the federal government to the Institute of Museum and Library Services, as well as the fact that they have cut all the staff and sent them home. Initially, we believed that that federal funding was good through fiscal year 2025. Now that is in question, because there is no staff to administer that.

**Janette:** Just to be clear, the reason we thought it was good is that it was passed by Congress. The funds were allocated in the last budget bill that was passed, the stopgap to keep the federal government going. We assumed that they would be dispersed to the states, but they haven't.

**Leah:** This is kind of one of those, the silver lining. Obviously, there's a huge storm cloud, and we still don't know, and couldn't even begin to guess what's going to happen. But what I am seeing, you know how Mr. Rogers says, "Look for the helpers?"

**Janette:** Yes.

**Leah:** I am seeing the helpers. I went to an amazing event that a library organized and invited all of the legislators that serve this area. We met, and everybody just got up and talked about the things that they see libraries doing for their communities, and the things that they see their patrons benefiting from. They talked about a kid who was being forced to go to the STEAM camp that the library was having. He just showed up and didn't engage until they got to the digital photography. Now that's part of his career is digital photography.

**Janette:** That's amazing.

**Ola:** Gosh.

**Leah:** He didn't believe that there was anything at the library for him. Now it changed his whole life. I love to hear it.

**Janette:** You're right. That is the silver lining in all this is the discourse around libraries and how they are bringing to the forefront all the things, the non-bookish things, the things for non-readers that libraries have, and what that looks like. Then, also, I think there was a little bit of a preconceived notion that the IMLS only funds public libraries. There are a number of grants and other programs that go to the states that fund school districts or school libraries in those areas. It's really a loss across the board.

**Leah:** It is.

**Janette:** I saw a story that specifically mentioned a grant that was intended for the Philadelphia Public School District that was going to basically create a pilot program to put a school library and school librarian back in every school in the city of Philadelphia. That was being funded by the IMLS, but they posted that their grant has been cancelled, essentially. Now that's discontinued. I think it was scheduled to begin next year. They are not really sure what's going to happen. Now that's thousands of students in the city of Philadelphia that are going to be impacted by this funding shortage.

**Ola:** It's hard not to feel sad.

**Janette:** Yes.

**Leah:** Yes. I suggest instead of feeling sad, that you get mad and do some micro-activism, as our friend Jessica mentioned in our last episode, which I have been trying to practice ever since she told me about that. I switched for my database deep dives that I do with different schools. I switched from my search terms. I always search something generic, like Charles Dickens or dolphins. I've searched terms like Black Lives Matter or something, that touches other people than people who are just like me.

**Ola:** Love that.

**Leah:** Jessica, way to go. You really impacted me there. I also got up and spoke at the event, and I quoted the Agencies of Impact, the facts. The one that got them was that five times as many packages as Amazon ships. That is just amazing to everybody. Nobody believes that libraries are doing-- Everybody is saying, "Well, libraries are irrelevant. Everything's online." I'm like, no, they're just busier than ever.

**Ola:** Yes. We're seeing a lot more engagement with that report. Janette, do you want to-- It is your little baby. Do you want to talk about it?

**Leah:** Yes. Let's talk about it.

**Janette:** A little bit. Yes. The Agencies of Impact report was a data study that I did. Then I worked with Nicole Zimmermann at RAILS to produce a report version that you can get. It's a little booklet. It's available online or in print from RAILS that basically talks about the value of libraries to their communities and what they do with that investment, and how it comes back to the community as a whole. It shows the return on investment for things like print materials and then also visit rates to libraries. That's probably my favorite metric in there.

I love the circulation piece and the comparison to Amazon and FedEx, and that logistical piece about how we circulate materials, because we are experts at circulation. Libraries, if you do nothing else, you have refined that piece of it. Especially when you consider resource sharing and the delivery that we do, RAILS and Heartland are a big part of that statewide delivery in Illinois. Thank you, IMLS. The funding from the IMLS in part pays for that.

For me, one of my favorites is the page about the library visit rates and how many visitors there are to public libraries annually, compared to professional and college sporting events because I think that there's this misconception, I was just talking about this with someone the other day, that most people don't know what the library is for or don't go to the library. They can just do everything online. I was like, that's not true. Two and a half times as many people visit the library as go to any of those sporting events in Illinois.

Think about the United Center or some of those really large arenas that seem full every time you're there to watch a sporting event. That many people, times thousands, are going to the library every year.

**Leah:** I quoted that statistic as well. One of the representative staff came up to ask because I said-- I was joking. I was rattling off my facts, and I said, because I am a librarian, I can cite my sources.

[laughter]

**Leah:** I gave them the link to the Agencies of Impact.

**Ola:** If anyone's interested in looking at that, you can go to MyLibraryIs.org, and it is located under talking points. If you're located in Illinois, too, if you're a member library, you can request to receive print copies. They're very pretty, glossy booklets that are great to show off to your board members or other strong stakeholders in the community.

**Leah:** I probably need a new print copy because mine is very beat up from being dragged around with me everywhere I go and brought out to show people.

**Ola:** Well-used, well-loved.

**Leah:** Well-loved and well-used, yes. As we stated before, this episode is all about rants, and we invited people to contribute their rants about libraries and library service, and just different things about their day-to-day work life. You may be wondering why would we do an episode like this?

**Ola:** Why would we open up that can of worms?

**Leah:** Exactly. My point of view is that you can love your job, and most librarians I do meet love their job, but there are very many things about being a librarian, especially in this current state that we're finding ourselves in that are frustrating or annoying, or just tedious. I think it's good to get that out. What do you guys think? Are you ranters? I'm a ranter.

**Ola:** I'm definitely a ranter. I feel like our members need a space, too. Obviously, we know you keep these things bottled up, they fester, and you can complain to your family, but if they don't know what library life is, they don't really get it. I am naming you, Janette and Leah, today's unofficial library therapists, because who better to let those frustrations out on than people who get it?

**Janette:** This is a great time to mention again that libraries sometimes can be full of toxic positivity. It's okay to be unhappy while doing something you love. It doesn't mean that you don't like your job or you don't like what you're doing. Not everything about every job is great 100% of the time. We're trying to give people a space to vent their frustrations in a way that's safe, because there's not really a lot of opportunity for librarians to do that.

**Leah:** I also want to emphasize that libraries are doing great work, and they're doing so many important things for their communities, for their patrons, for their students, but just because you're doing work doesn't mean that it's not hard work to do. It is very hard, especially when we're seeing libraries and librarians replace social services needs. There's just so much giving of yourself in librarianship. It's good to have a way to let that out.

**Janette:** Everybody needs outlets. For anything, in every aspect of your life, you need to be able to share the burden. We're happy to be that space for these librarians to share. This is also a great way for us to just talk about some things that are pretty common, I think.

**Leah:** I'm looking at number one, and that is actually very common. I have a funny story about that. Go ahead, let's get started.

**Ola:** Our first submission says, "I love being a school librarian, but something I do not love is when students use non-standard bookmarks. One time, a student returned a book with a mango inside of it. I called our English division assistant to tell her, and she shared that the same student actually returned a copy of Sandra Cisneros' *House on Mango* *Street*, also with a mango inside. Were mangoes in season? Were they left over from a snack run? Was this student making a clever reference? We'll never know."

**Janette:** I feel like it's appropriate to put a mango in the *House on Mango Street*.

**Ola:** I think that kid knew what they were doing, and that's hilarious. Comedic genius.

**Leah:** Was it a whole mango? Was it a dried mango? I have questions.

**Janette:** I feel like a slice.

**Ola:** It has to be a slice.

**Janette:** I feel like a whole mango is not fitting in that book.

**Ola:** Whole mango, book's not closing.

**Janette:** Yes.

**Leah:** Yes.

**Janette:** The visual on that is like, how do you--

**Ola:** I hope they took a photo, and I'm going to need that listener to send photographic evidence if they have it.

**Leah:** Evidence of the mango?

**Ola:** Draw it from memory, please.

**Leah:** This one I would say is fairly non-controversial. It is not a thing that makes librarians happy to have non-standard bookmarks.

**Ola:** It happens all the time.

**Janette:** I have a question for you, though. What is the strangest item either of you have ever used as a bookmark?

**Leah:** Used or seen used.

**Janette:** Either way.

**Ola:** Used? I'm a purist. It's bookmark or bust. Although I did make what I thought was a very clever and funny Instagram post of my dog's ear as a dog ear in a book.

**Janette:** Oh, that's funny.

**Ola:** Very funny of me.

**Leah:** Very cute.

**Ola:** Thank you, Leah. The recognition I deserve.

**Leah:** I love that one.

**Ola:** No, I'm a purist. Bookmarks only.

**Leah:** I'm with whatever is handy that is flat. I have used receipts. I have used a torn-off piece of packaging. Also, I crochet and cross-stitch a lot, so a piece of yarn or thread is frequently in there.

**Ola:** Oh, that's cute.

**Leah:** The worst I've ever seen is when a kiddo returned a book to me where they had spilled their Cheerios in it. Then they folded it up with the Cheerios and the milk still inside and put it in the book.

**Ola:** The milk?

**Leah:** Yes.

**Ola:** The milk sets me over.

**Janette:** Now the Cheerios are soggy. It's all pressed together like a flat Cheerio. Gross.

**Ola:** I'm appalled.

**Leah:** When I got it, and I'm like-- The smell tipped me off first because by then it was sour. Then I opened it up.

**Ola:** Honey Nut?

**Janette:** Honey Nut.

**Leah:** No, it wasn't even Honey Nut.

**Janette:** She's like, "What kind of Cheerios were they?"

**Leah:** They were straight Cheerios, which are the worst kind.

**Ola:** Just plain Cheerios?

**Leah:** Yes.

**Ola:** Oh God.

**Leah:** I have found money as bookmarks.

**Janette:** A dollar bill I've used.

**Leah:** It's hard to track down who it belonged to.

**Ola:** I found money in a book once. Actually, when I was a page in Youth Services and it was in one of those *Pugarella* series books. I was obsessed with Pugs at the time. I was like, clearly they meant for me to have this.

**Leah:** "This was for me," yes.

**Ola:** Our next submission says, "A personal rant I have is when school libraries are closed to student and class access. Our high school library is closed for the final three weeks of school in May because AP tests are administered in our space. We have to complete inventory in April, and the last day students can check out books is May 2nd. We are also closed two to four times a month for events, meetings, and testing." Two to four times a month is a lot.

**Leah:** That's a lot. This is not unusual. It happens all the time. Mostly, I think, because there's just not enough space in most schools, and the library has a big space. It gets used a lot.

**Janette:** I was going to say I think a lot of schools, the library is their largest meeting space, maybe outside of the gym, but the library is great for meetings, I think, because it's usually very welcoming. You have all the tables, chairs. It's already all set up. Depending on what you need to do in that space, sometimes it's ideal.

**Ola:** It's just an inconvenience when you have to stop the services. The services are inherent with the space. I feel like in that case, they're just focusing on the space.

**Leah:** I used to hate when they would close the library for a department-specific in-service or training. There's eight teachers that need a place to meet, and they're going to close the library to do that, but all the kids are still in school, and they need the library open. I eventually made a little space where they could meet, and eventually got taken over because we were running out of room every time we turned around there. That's definitely a problem. This also spills into the library getting closed because they've pulled the librarian in to sub elsewhere.

**Janette:** I know there have been a lot of people I've spoken to recently who still talk about subbing or just other duties that they perform outside of the library. This submission really gets to me because of the fact that I think when you're going through something like testing and then finals, don't you need your library then? Obviously, AP testing, you have a lot of AP testing resources that those students are probably using, but not every kid is in AP classes either. How are you impacting the rest of the school when that library is closed?

**Leah:** I think about the kid who just needs the next book in their series, "I'm not taking the AP test."

**Ola:** They just finished that second book, and they need the third one immediately. Heartbreak.

**Leah:** Or they're going to die, because that's what it feels like.

**Janette:** That's a tough one. It's hard for me anytime school libraries are closed. Honestly, the number of people who say that we only have a librarian two days a week, and so the other three days, there's nobody to service the library.

**Leah:** No one there. I used to hate because I was the only one there, and I used to juggle my lunch hours. It was never closed for the same lunch period because I did allow kids to come in during lunch, but it was really, really hard. I think this is where we become the therapist. As tempting as it is to run yourself ragged to keep the library open all the time when you're the only person, you have to take time for breaks and you have to take time to eat lunch, and you have to take the time--

I used to not ever shut the door during planned time or anything. Then it just got to the point where I realized if I don't get the books on the shelves, checked in, and back on the shelf, and if I'm super busy, I get interrupted so much. If I'm not doing that work, then the library is less effective as a whole.

**Ola:** I've got a very juicy submission here, which I feel a lot of librarians are going to relate to, but it's something that we're all ashamed of and don't want to admit.

**Janette:** Juicy.

**Ola:** [Chuckles] This listener writes, "I secretly want to hide all of my *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books from my sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. They are addicted. I show them all of the other amazing authors that read, look, and feel just like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, but they just can't do it."

**Leah:** I am right there with this person. As a matter of fact, I still have a trauma response when I see a *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* book because I also taught sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, and let's just say, if I ever see another one, it will be too soon. However--

**Janette:** It's understandable. Those books are wildly popular. They fly off the shelves as soon as there's another one. He's still writing them, right?

**Leah:** Yes, I believe that-- Let me give my two cents about this because yes, I do completely understand the impulse to put those books away or maybe make them unavailable for students. Here's why you shouldn't, because those kids are probably dealing with anxiety. The sameness and the comfort they feel from knowing, "I can read this book, I can understand this book, it entertains me, and if somebody asks me to read out loud or to read for a half an hour, I can read it." They feel very attached to those books, not only because of the stories, which are great, but because it's like a comfort read for them. Do you guys comfort read? I comfort read a lot. I will go back and reread things.

**Janette:** I do too.

**Ola:** I comfort watch a lot. I know there's a lot of discourse about how that's why people watch the same sitcom over and over and over again, because it feels familiar, it feels comfortable, it's almost like a warm hug. I had never thought to think about that for children's books. It's like you know there are so many other cool new authors that they would be into, but ultimately, it's what brings them joy and comfort.

**Leah:** That's the same reason that a lot of kids are picky about what they eat. If you try like fruit, for example, sometimes it's sour, sometimes it's mushy, sometimes it doesn't taste good at all, sometimes it's the best thing you've ever had. A Ritz Cracker tastes the same every single time. If you need things to be the same every single time, that's why they do it.

**Janette:** It's exactly like that. I have a lot of comfort reads, and I understand the emotional connection that you make to books and how you need that feeling of familiarity. I tell people frequently that not every book you read needs to change your life. Sometimes you're just reading for entertainment. Sometimes you're reading to feel seen and accepted and comfortable and comforted. That's what I think these kids are doing with the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books.

**Leah:** I also have to plug though, that the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* are very high reading level. I had teachers and admin complaining to me constantly about, "Whose reading the stupid *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* book?" I'm like, actually, it's one of the highest Lexile books in the library. Just let them read it. Yes, even though I never want to see one again, as long as I live, I still have to say let your kids read it.

**Janette:** Let's also just shout out to children's literature in general about how much there is and how much high-quality children's literature is available. It's very difficult for kids to even pick. We talked with Mychal Threets on that episode about library kids turning into library grown-ups. I think this is where they're learning some of those habits and the ways that books connect and feed their soul in general. To Ola's point about picking books that she thinks she's going to hate because everyone's reading them, peer pressure sometimes does make friends, unfortunately.

**Ola:** That's my whole life right there.

**Janette:** For me, it's sometimes a one-star review like, the book is that bad? Really? Now I have to read it and see if it really is.

**Ola:** Someone should run an entire marketing campaign of reviews trashing it, and then it'll become viral for being the most hated book of all time. I think that's my new business venture.

[laughter]

**Janette:** I'm sure that already exists.

**Ola:** It's my side gig. This listener writes, "The thing that has really been bugging me is the lack of collaboration with some teachers. They are happy to use the resources we create, but they will not invite us into their classrooms to teach a lesson or work on a project with them. Some teachers just close their doors and have no interaction with any of their colleagues outside of their classroom, even when other teachers on their team are using us for lessons and resources. We have even discovered teachers using old resources created by us years ago that are now out of date because they made a copy. Then we have students coming to us from those classes asking us for help and seeing a lack of quality instruction."

**Janette:** There are so many facets to this. This submission hints at a lack of willingness to collaborate, or an interest in collaboration, but which could be potentially tied back to what a lot of people complain about, which is the lack of time to collaborate or the opportunity to collaborate in a way that's meaningful or beneficial to everyone.

**Leah:** I experienced this, and the only thing that I can say about this is it takes time, and it may take a lot of time to get those teachers who are used to not collaborating to come around to the idea of collaborating with you. Let's face it, every teacher in this country is overworked and stretched to their limit. I know when librarians are like, "Let's collaborate," you are going in with the idea of, "I'm going to make your life easier," but they, I think, are looking at it as, "This is just one more thing I have to find time for."

There were some teachers that it took me five years to get them coming around. I was there nearly 15 years, so by the end, almost everybody would collaborate with me, except for then COVID blew a hole in that. I had to start over.

**Janette:** Sometimes it's a lack of understanding what resources and services you do provide. It takes time for them to learn how they can incorporate your materials. Nobody is out here turning someone away who's going to make their life easier. I think this goes back to a little bit of what we have talked about in the past, that librarians struggle with advocating outside of their own spaces in a way, and educating people about what we do in a way that makes it easy to understand how it fits into their world.

I would say you have to have your elevator pitch ready when you approach those colleagues about, hey, I see you're doing this unit, and here's what I can do for you that would supplement or improve or expand or something what you're already doing.

**Ola:** To Leah's point, maybe emphasize or draw out what that would look like. If that person, you approach them and you're like, "Hey, I want to do this. I have an idea for this," they might feel overwhelmed. I feel like that would be me, honestly. A lot of times when people come up to me, I'm like, whoa, wait a second.

**Leah:** "What do you want now?"

**Ola:** How much is my responsibility? How much is yours? Maybe if you can emphasize like, "I'll take care of this. We're collaborating." You'll both have to put in the work, but maybe just being clear about the expectations.

**Janette:** I think it's the trust and the control. Think about group projects, any group project you've ever done. Think about the one person who never contribute. There's always that one person. You hope there's not going to be, but someone always is, for whatever reason. They don't know if you're the person in the group who normally does all the work or the person who doesn't show up to any of the meetings and does none of the work. It could be a control issue in a sense that, "We don't know if you're going to really show up, and am I going to have to put something together on the fly because you dropped the ball?" That's never the intent, I don't think, but sometimes it does happen.

**Leah:** The best idea I've ever seen for jumpstarting this collaboration is a librarian who would have an open house, like "Come down to the library, and get a drink and a snack." Then she would give them an information sheet that says, "This is what we can do together," and send them back with a drink, snack, and the information sheet.

**Ola:** I want to go. I don't even work there.

**Janette:** There have been a couple of librarians I've talked to who have said some of the most successful collaborations have come from them presenting at a staff meeting about what they do, the services they have, and the types of lessons they teach. Then it's like they can't turn enough people away. The people are beating down the door to collaborate with them, which I think is just fantastic.

**Leah:** Usually, once it gets out and people do see what can be done together, you do come into the opposite problem of having too many people ask you for collaborations.

**Ola:** Yeah, let’s find a happy medium.

**Janette:** Yes. How do I schedule all these things?

**Ola:** This listener writes, "Rarely is there a library curriculum. I must create it myself and locate supporting materials. If I use AASL or ISAIL standards, my principal doesn't understand them and questions why I am using them. I'm still responsible for all the library things, collection development, budgeting and ordering, repairs, shelving, circulation, and so on. I just love it when I'm told it must be nice to read children's books all day."

**Leah:** Let's just clear this up. I have never had less time to read than I have had as a librarian. If you go back to the first episode, you know that I've had many different job trajectories in my life, and all of them had one thing in common. I could go home and read whatever I wanted to read. Now, being in the library world, there's just no time to read. You are reading, but you are not reading just purely for pleasure. You're assessing all of those books and determining--

**Ola:** It's work.

**Leah:** Yes, it is work. We just have to jump on that one right there.

**Janette:** You think about classroom teachers take home grading, librarians take home books to read that are-- They have to book-talk a book. They've got to read at some point.

**Leah:** You have to know it.

**Janette:** If they don't have time to read it during the day, you've got to read it. Nobody's reading the latest Emily Henry and book-talking that to a grade school. That's not happening. You're reading the books that the kids are reading. That's what you're doing. It's still work.

**Ola:** I would say even at a public library, reading at the desk was a big no-no. We were not allowed to do it. I was like, isn't this what I applied for?

[laughter]

**Ola:** I get it. From a customer service perspective, I get it.

**Leah:** A little bit of a slap in the face there, wasn't it?

**Janette:** This job involves 100% less reading than I imagined.

**Ola:** Yes.

**Leah:** It's 100% less quiet than everybody thinks it is. That's another one.

**Janette:** Let's talk about the lack of curriculum. That is something that I think is a struggle in a lot of ways. It's great because you have flexibility, right, to implement whatever aligns well with your district or in your area. Illinois is a state that does not have a state library curriculum. Some other states do, but our State Board of Education has not adopted one.

**Ola:** It's frustrating.

**Leah:** It is frustrating. Obviously, many library standards are in that ELA set of standards. You go through and you pick out, this is a library standard. It's just not called that. It's called the ELA, which is a problem because then everybody's like, "The ELA teacher can just do all of this."

**Janette:** That's a topic for another episode.

**Leah:** Yes, that is another entire different rant.

**Ola:** We'll get there.

[laughter]

**Leah:** The education that is required to bring your administrators up to speed on, A, there is something to teach, B, I'm qualified to teach it, C, I need time to teach it, and I'm not just a circulation clerk. I completely see where this listener is coming from. Unfortunately, I do not have a ton of great advice on this one, except for just keep plugging away and telling them why it's important. It is exhausting.

**Janette:** I think that this is where professional development is very important for school librarians to stay up to date on what the current standards are for a lot of these different organizations, whether it's ISAIL, which is put together by the Association of Illinois School Library Educators, or AASL, which is a part of ALA, and just understanding what your standards are and how they fit into the ELA standards, I think, is going to be half the battle, right?

**Leah:** Having standards would make it so much easier, so much easier.

**Janette:** Let me ask you your opinion on this. Here's a hot take, *CST* listeners. What is your opinion on library as a special, as opposed to core instruction?

**Leah:** At one time, because I was not a special in my school, at one time, I was advocating to become a special because I wanted that uninterrupted time with the kids, because I had a lot to teach them. Eventually, I graciously gave in on that because my principal was very supportive, I did have a lot of collaboration, and I was getting enough teaching in by collaborating with those teachers. On the other hand, I know people who are a special, they are basically just dumped with the kids for too short of a time to teach them anything meaningful, without any help, then must also check out, also manage behavior, also recommend books, and also do all the things, help them find a book.

**Janette:** If it's enough time to have structured library curriculum or library lessons, then it's beneficial to have that time as a special. It depends on how it's used.

**Leah:** I would also say that if you make the library a special, there is no way to do it without having a library aide in there along with the librarian, because if you're a special, then somebody who needs a book randomly can't come in unless you have somebody at the desk who isn't teaching. In the best, the ideal world, I would say it would be great if the library was a special and then you had your teaching time, but you also had somebody to help you keep the library open, and you could have time to do everything that you need to do in that.

**Ola:** The library wouldn't be closed.

**Leah:** The library would not be closed.

**Ola:** We had limitless budgets and supportive administration.

**Janette:** No one puts a mango in a book.

**Ola:** [laughs]

**Leah:** No, not ever. I do see very many librarians being used as a babysitter, and not as a true special, but as this is a way to give a teacher a half-hour break.

**Janette:** I would say that's probably one of my rants. The number of things that teachers have to do during the day that now taking your students to the library is where you get your break. I don't know how they're going to pack everything you possibly need into a school day. It's so much, and it feels like it's more all the time.

**Leah:** My daughter's a teacher. She loves to go to the library with her kids because that's when they talk about books and they plan their reading together. She loves to make recommendations. She's a huge reader. I secretly want her to become a certified school librarian. It may happen still. We'll have to see. [laughs]

**Ola:** We know all of your plans now. This entire career move was all just to inspire her.

[laughter]

**Leah:** I also want my son to go to library school to be an archivist because he works with history. There we go. My secret plan is turn everyone into a librarian.

**Ola:** We say all the time, how do we bridge that gap? How do we get the supply of librarians? It's through Leah's children.

**Janette:** She only has two, but--

**Ola:** This next one, the listener writes, "Admin no longer cares if the school librarian has an endorsement. Anyone with a teaching license can be a school librarian, or, for that matter, anyone at all, no license required. I can't get a job as a reading specialist or a math teacher as I don't hold those endorsements, but anybody can do my job. I'm sure that there are terrific library workers with no formal library training, but it is demoralizing to have 24 graduate hours in a subject area and be told that anyone can do the job."

**Janette:** Ooh.

**Leah:** This is my number one rant.

**Janette:** This is a hard one.

**Ola:** We have a whole episode about it.

**Leah:** Yes, we do.

**Janette:** We do.

**Leah:** It is outrageous to me that more administrators do not understand what a certified librarian is, first of all, and what they can do. It just infuriates me when they think, "Oh, well, all they're doing is checking in and out. I can get a clerk to do that." I'm not saying that the library clerks and the library aides are not out there doing a lion's share of a librarian's job, because they are, and they're doing a good job. I meet them every day. They love it, they love their kids, they love reading, they're committed to literacy, and they're killing themselves to do a job that they're not getting paid for.

**Ola:** Too much on their plate, too. No one person without that formal training should have to be doing all of those things.

**Leah:** They're also doing recess duty, bus duty, lunch duty, detention duty, and everything else. Now, that's not just aides. Librarians and schools have to do all of that, too, but it is very demoralizing.

**Janette:** To this person's point, you get an endorsement for almost every other specialty area. Why do they not respect that endorsement when it comes to library science? Is it just because they don't understand what's happening and the work that goes into that position? Again, I'm going to tie it all back to we're just not good at telling people what we do. Maybe it's because the scope of what we do is so broad that it just becomes like a laundry list of things.

If I want to be a reading specialist, people pretty much have an idea of what I'm going to do. A librarian, it's harder. You're a tech expert. You are a database expert. You have to have a collection management policy. You're doing the collection management, but you're also now a policy expert, because you have to write the policies or come up with the policies. You're collaborating. You have to write lesson plans. There's classroom management. I could go on and on and on.

I know Leah and I constantly are like, we're putting together different documents for advocacy and things. I'm always like, which list of tasks and job responsibilities are we using now? Because it's very long. It's like, how do you pull out and call out the most important of this laundry list of things? I think it's maybe calling to the forefront, these very library-specific duties, and how not having any formal training means that you don't know how to do those things.

It's detrimental to the circulation piece of it. If you want someone there who's just checking books in and out, if you're not managing the collection, it would be like me constantly giving—you know, trying to put on clothes that I wore 10 years ago, that maybe have holes in them. It's not current. I'm not doing myself a service.

**Leah:** You're not managing the collection.

**Janette:** Yes. Right.

**Leah:** Exactly. We also talk about the fact that no administrator certificate require any education or any coursework about what libraries do and what librarians do. If you're talking about an administrator who was not a library kid, this is why I think it's so important that we promote public libraries, too, if you were not a library kid, you didn't spend a lot of time in libraries as a kid, and you don't understand the brand of magic that happens there-- I remember, A, saying that their superintendent in their 40s had not ever seen a book that spoke to them before. I'm like, that is really sad that they've never connected before that advanced age.

**Janette:** That's what makes you not ever want to sever the connection that kids have to, like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, because they're doing it. It's happening. The magic is happening. It's like you don't want to disrupt that or impact it in a way that turns kids off.

**Leah:** I don't have much advice for this one either, except just keep communicating, keep telling, keep putting out the newsletter, keep sharing what you help kids do, and keep showing how many kids visit your library. It's terrible that you have to justify your existence, but you have to show them that not just anybody can do this job. For instance, my favorite is when the administrator is like, "We're going to hire this aide. She just loves reading." I'm like, well, you know what? I love math, but that doesn't make me a math teacher.

[laughter]

I don't actually love math. I hate math.

**Janette:** Loving books and running a library are not the same thing.

**Leah:** Exactly.

**Ola:** It plays a very small role in the job once you think about it.

**Janette:** Yes.

**Leah:** Actually, some of the best librarians are not huge readers. They are more of the organization, the I can read reviews, and I can connect kids with books. Yes, reading sounds like it should be a big part of the job, but it's not.

**Janette:** I want to touch on something that Leah said, too, is we're definitely not saying that library workers don't deserve to be in those positions that they have. If you're hired by your district to do the job and you're doing the job, kudos to you. We support you 100%. We know that there are not enough licensed school librarians in Illinois for every school to have one, never mind the number that is recommended by the State Board of Education.

There's only about 1,400 educators in the state that have an endorsement for library science. We have about 5,000 schools in Illinois, if you count public and private schools. There's definitely no way that we can give every school one, at least right now. Someone's got to be doing that work. People ask me a lot of times, priorities about staffing. I always say, a school library is better than no school library. A librarian with any level of experience is better than no librarian, but a licensed school librarian is ideal.

**Leah:** Exactly. That's what I say. I strongly, strongly prefer that you keep the doors open with a dedicated and wonderful library aide who is doing a great job. I cannot stress enough how great of a job they are doing, because I have seen the opposite. I have seen certified teachers who think that the library would be a great place to ride out the last three years until they retire, and have no interest in doing the work that you need to do to make the library space great.

It ultimately does depend on the person, which I think a lot of jobs do. There are standards and requirements for a reason. No matter how great somebody's bedside manner is, if they don't have the training to be a doctor, I don't want them doing it.

**Janette:** So true.

**Leah:** That's how I think of it.

**Janette:** You wouldn't let your dentist perform brain surgery.

**Leah:** Probably not.

**Janette:** I guess the question I have then is, how do we educate building administrators and then superintendents about the role of school libraries? I think this is something that we at RAILS and Heartland talk a lot about. I know Leah and I have worked on quite a few documents to help librarians advocate for their positions and things like that. It's an ongoing education battle to try to get in front of that audience. School boards are another one. To help them understand the people that they're hiring and the types of training that they need. Even if you don't have the endorsement, they need to support you going out to seek the professional development that you need to run the library efficiently.

**Ola:** What you do is you send them the Let's Get Certified episode of the *Can't Shelve This* podcast.

[laughter]

**Leah:** Exactly.

**Ola:** That's how you win them over.

**Janette:** There you go.

**Leah:** Ola is right. A lot of the tiny bit of ground that we've been able to gain has just been getting in front of them over and over and showing them that we know what we're talking about. I've been in this job three years, and finally this year I have had a few superintendents reach out to me because I am the library expert. They are realizing in this particular case that they do need somebody who knows what they're doing because they got themselves into some, I don't want to say deep doo-doo, but they got themselves into it.

[laughter]

**Ola:** I think it's, if a school librarian can show that there is a larger organization and people behind them saying the same things that they're saying, it carries more weight. It has more power to what they're saying. The administrator isn't just like, "Oh, I just have this wily school librarian who keeps yelling these things at me." It's like, "Oh, no, there's weight to their words and their ideas. This is a bigger thing than just within our school."

**Janette:** To the point Leah made earlier about how they don't receive any education or training about school libraries, so it's all down to their own personal experience and knowledge of libraries in general.

**Ola:** It's almost like it's the role of the librarian to do that education, which is a burden.

**Janette:** It is.

**Ola:** That is a burden.

**Janette:** What I want to say is, don't just assume that they don't like the library; they maybe just are uneducated about the library.

**Leah:** I say reach out. Reach out and bring them in and tell them over and over and over again what you do.

**Ola:** All right. We have one last listener's submission. It says, "Why isn't more information being discussed about the horrible court case rulings against the Internet Archive? During the height of the pandemic, when libraries were forced to close, the Internet Archive was an essential resource to keep information flowing. Losing the Internet Archive is digital censorship at its worst.

**Janette:** 100% agree with that. I do think it's interesting that there isn't more attention being brought to the Internet Archive and all the challenges that it's had.

**Leah:** I admit that I know less about this particular issue. I do know what the Internet Archive is.

**Janette:** The Wayback Machine. I feel like the Internet Archive, the thing I want to talk about the most here, is the work that they're doing in light of a lot of the federal agencies removing things from the Internet. They are archiving websites, data sets, all kinds of resources that are being taken down. They are part of a large project to preserve those types of assets and resources, which I think is really helpful.

That's where, if you want to talk about digital censorship, it's anyone's right to provide information on their own website. You're essentially publishing it for the public. If you decide to revoke that information, it's not necessarily censorship. When you're thinking about things like transparency or data sets or historical data, I think about the IMLS, all the data from the Public Library Survey, a lot of those resources that the IMLS provided are all inaccessible right now. That's in the Wayback Machine.

**Leah:** I would argue that if the federal government, especially, published it, that becomes perfectly fair game to--Now, it's one thing if it's incorrect, and it's out there, but I think it is essential. Information is essential. You can't make decisions and go forward without information.

**Janette:** There have been talks throughout the years about the Internet Archive in general. Do they have the right to preserve content that is essentially published by someone else? Again, I'm not a legal expert, so I'm not going to venture to make a guess about the judgment of what's right or wrong. If it's out there, if I took a screenshot of it, and I still own the screenshot, I still own the screenshot. They're not going to come to me and remove that from my photo archive because I no longer have rights to that since it's not online anymore. That's part of the risk of digital publishing anyway. You don't get to control what happens to your information on the other end.

**Leah:** We talk to kids about this all the time. If you publish a photo or something about yourself that you wish later you had not done, you have lost control over that. I think anybody who publishes anything on the Internet loses a certain amount of control over what is done with that.

**Ola:** I'm thinking about all of those early 2000s college party Facebook photo albums swimming out there in the ether.

**Leah:** Now, see, Janette and I are too old to have to have experienced that. I did my coming of age before the Internet and all of that.

**Ola:** Very lucky.

**Janette:** It's a very different time. It's a different presence, for sure. Everything is online now.

**Leah:** The Internet Archive for me is very low stakes. I usually use it to win a bet or something, to prove something that I remembered was actually like that.

**Janette:** It's been helpful. Sometimes, when you're looking for articles or research that you used that has been taken down or replaced by a journal, you can usually find an archive of something. It is helpful for reference. I don't know what the validity is of some of that as a reference source aside from just anecdotally, because it's no longer published.

**Ola:** To win a bet, like Leah said.

**Janette:** Yes. There you go.

**Leah:** A perfect example is the ALA Effective Library recommendations that they do not publish on their website anymore. It was information that I used a lot. Janette used it a lot. We found it on the Internet Archives so that we can save it for ourselves going forward. Now, I would not cite that information, but I do use it anecdotally.

**Ola:** As you've taken in everyone's grievances and have had to sit in that, now I want you all to have a turn to let it out. Janette and Leah, would you please air your library grievances?

**Janette:** How much time do we have?

**Ola:** If you could do your one big thing, the hill you're going to die on.

**Leah:** The hill I'm going to die on is that reading graphic novels is reading, listening to an audiobook is reading, having a book read to you by your mom is reading, and reading garbage is reading. Reading is reading. You should be able to read what you want. People are like, "Graphic novels, it's just such a cop out. It's just too easy." I'm like, "No. For many people, reading that is what they can do, so they're reading."

**Ola:** I'd argue that you have to do more mental-- Think about that. It's like visual, reading, and all these different cognitive processes.

**Janette:** 100%. It is all cognition. It's just a different modality and a different processing. Look at me in my speech pathology, audiology brain just kicking right in.

**Leah:** That's differentiation of instruction, which is a huge thing that teachers are all about. It upsets me when people complain that they don't want the kid reading an audiobook, for example.

**Janette:** I can remember one of my daughters, she didn't struggle with reading comprehension, she was just having trouble with the reading itself, I want to say. She comprehended the story. It was just she was a slower reader, so she found it difficult to pace herself reading-wise. It would just take her a long time. For me, because I do have a certain amount of background in neuroscience, I had to learn a lot about language processing and things like that in my past life, I told her, I said, listen to the audiobook while you're reading it. She's like, "Wow, this makes it so much easier." I was like, because kids process things so differently. Some kids are very good visual learners. Some kids are very good audio processors. Why not use both? The comprehension part of the story is the same, regardless of how you bring in the language, right?

**Leah:** No, it is. It's so important.

**Janette:** It's just all part of it. To Leah's point, you want kids to learn in a way that is effective for them, the way that they can best receive the message. For some kids, it's visual. That's great. For some kids, it's audio. That's great.

**Leah:** I do get the argument that you want them to challenge themselves, and you want them to improve. Taking away the way that they know they can do it is not going to achieve the results that anybody wants.

**Janette:** My main rant, the hill I will die on, is that read what you want. We talk about this a lot. We joke because we're romance readers and romance gets no love and no respect. If you want to read romance, read romance. If you want to read horror, read horror. If you want to read about gay couples--

**Leah:** Poultry science. [laughs]

**Janette:** Whatever. Yes. You want to read about agriculture. If you want to read--

**Ola:** Literary fiction.

[laughter]

**Janette:** Read what you want to read. Don't let someone devalue your interest and what you're in the mood for as not worthwhile. Everything is worthwhile. If you have no problem sitting down to watch a television show for entertainment, then it's okay to read a book that's just for entertainment. Like I said before, not everything has to change your life.

**Leah:** I call those books brain candy. The ones that-

**Ola:** I do too.

**Leah:** -you read just because they're fun.

**Janette:** I don't know. I think most of what I read is just for fun. Obviously, at work, I read things and do research. I dislike that we live in a society that sometimes you feel like you have to justify what you're reading. You cover things up because you're ashamed for people to know. I had a friend who recently was on a plane, she was like, "I feel really, really strange because I'm reading this really trashy Tessa Bailey novel and the guy next to me is reading the Bible."

**Ola:** [laughs]

**Janette:** I was like--

**Ola:** That's the beauty of diverse literature.

**Janette:** Right?

**Leah:** That's the beauty of the human condition. Isn't it really?

**Janette:** Right. I said, you’re reading what you want to read. He's reading what he wants to read. That's the perfect example of that.

**Ola:** Beautiful.

**Leah:** We hope that you found this episode, maybe a little bit entertaining, but hopefully comforting and a little bit uplifting. Maybe even you got some advice to handle something that's been bothering you in your library career.

**Ola:** If you felt even an ounce lighter after hitting that send button, then our mission was accomplished.

**Leah:** Exactly.

**Janette:** We loved hearing from all of you. Thank you so much.

**Leah:** We're going to transition to our regular little section here called shelf care. Ola, how are you taking care of yourself lately?

**Ola:** Me?

**Janette:** Look at how she perks up.

**Leah:** I know you have been very busy and overwhelmed, Ola. How have you been taking care of yourself?

**Ola:** I am a big puzzler. I love me a good jigsaw puzzle. I even invested in one of those nifty puzzle boards with the sliding drawers to organize my pieces.

**Leah and Janette:** Ooh.

**Ola:** I get really geeky about it. My trick to jigsaw puzzles is I make it a lavish experience by having a Bravo TV show playing in front of me while I puzzle. That feels very meditative to me as I hear all of these people screaming at each other while I sift through pieces.

**Janette:** Somehow, that does not sound relaxing to me.

**Ola:** It's a thing, though.

**Leah:** Yes. I like to calm down by watching true crime shows. It doesn't sound relaxing.

**Ola:** I'm the same way, Leah. For me, it's either Bravo or a true crime docuseries. Those are the rotating designated puzzle shows.

**Janette:** I would say for me, it's like I'm still just disassociating into books. It's probably my most-used coping mechanism right now. Almost always sports in the background. I can ignore it.

**Leah:** Sports is good.

**Janette:** My husband is a big sports watcher.

**Ola:** Bravo to me is sports to you. Good background noise.

**Leah:** My shelf care is I have been crocheting up a storm because it's just enough that I have to concentrate, but it's also a little bit mindless. I'm too productive. I'm making too many crochet items to store in our house anymore. I think I'm going to have to give them away, sell them, or something.

**Ola:** Just give them away to *Can't Shelve This* guests.

[laughter]

You get a blanket, and you get a blanket.

**Leah:** You have to take a blanket. It's required.

**Janette:** We don't care if it's summer, you need a blanket. Yarn work and things like that, crochet, knitting, those are all great. I remember my grandmother once telling me it's a great hobby to have because it keeps your hands and your mind occupied. I feel like that is a really important thing when you're thinking about shelf care or how you calm down or separate yourself from a difficult day, or things like that.

**Ola:** I imagine that would be a good hobby for fidgeters, right?

**Leah:** Yes.

**Janette:** Oh, yes.

**Leah:** I am a huge fidgeter. I can't sit still. My husband, one of his friends started crocheting. He told him, "That's weird. Do you sit there like a maniac, like my wife does?"

[laughter]

I go, "What do you mean like a maniac?" He does this imitation of-- Me crocheting.

**Ola:** Oh my God.

[laughter]

**Leah:** I was just dying laughing. I'm like, "I did not realize I came across like manic when I'm doing it." Okay. That's our show. Thank you, everyone, for joining us. Ola and Janette, it's always a pleasure to spend time with you.

**Ola:** Hopefully we were interesting for our listeners without a guest.

[laughter]

**Janette:** Yes. It was just us. You're brave if you made it this far.

**Leah:** Yes. For our listeners, please let us know if you have any questions or topics you'd like us to cover. We'd love to hear from you. You can email us, and you can now leave us a voicemail on our hotline at 630-734-5015. Next month will be our final episode of the season. We're planning a special summer send-off you won't want to miss. Until then, stay legit and don't quit.

[music]

**[01:07:24] [END OF AUDIO]**