



Director's Report March 2024

Rogue Reads Recap

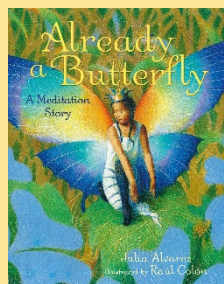
This year, JCLS focused on self-exploration with four books written by highly acclaimed Dominican American author Julia Alvarez, whose works delve into the complexities of cultural identity, migration, and the immigrant experience. More broadly, her works reflect a deep understanding of displacement, belonging, and the enduring power of family and culture. Patrons around the county enjoyed engaging with the books and themed programs throughout the winter months.

The selection for youngest readers was *Already a Butterfly*, a gentle picture book tale about self-soothing practices and self-confidence beliefs. This was paired with a “Mindful Movement” yoga and a meditation program for children that helped them quiet their minds and develop a stronger connection to their bodies.

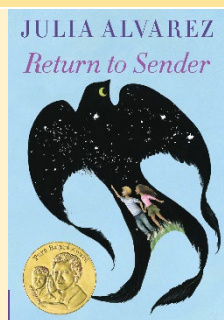
The Middle-grade selection was *Return to Sender*, which explored similarities and differences between cultures. In the book, Tyler’s father is injured in a tractor accident, and his family decides to hire migrant Mexican workers to help save their farm from foreclosure. Tyler is not sure what to make of these workers – particularly Mari. The book asks if Tyler and Mari can find a way to be friends despite their differences. Programs paired with *Return to Sender* were a Rice and Beans Take and Make, and “Ballet Folklorico de Hector Zaragoza,” a class that taught children traditional folk dances from across Mexico. These programs sought to celebrate Mexican culture and encourage consideration about cross-culture similarities or equivalents. For example, the Take and Make discussed how food is a defining characteristic of a culture. It also represents how people come together and provides an opportunity for connection. In almost every country, there is a unique cultural dish that features rice and beans as ingredients.

For teen readers, Alvarez’s book *Finding Miracles* was chosen, which explores themes of cross-cultural adoption and identity. This book was paired with an “All About Me Box” program. In the book, the main character’s family has a box of keepsakes from her life back in Latin America. In this program, teens decorated a box with meaningful imagery to hold their own keepsakes.

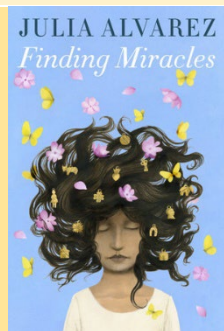
Finally, for adults, the book offered was *Afterlife*. Antonia Vega, the immigrant writer at the center of the book, has had the rug pulled



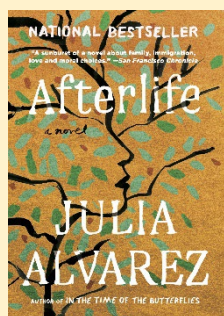
Already a Butterfly was one of the most popular titles, with 171 checkouts



Return to Sender circulated 72 times, and the Spanish-language version, *Devolver al Remitente* circulated 13 times



Finding Miracles was checked out 58 times, and the Spanish-language version, *En Busca de Milagros*, circulated 13 times.



Afterlife had 171 checkouts, and the Spanish-language version, *Más Allá* was circulated 19 times

out from under her through a series of hardships, one of which is the sudden death of her husband. This novel raises the question: how do we live in a broken world without losing faith in one another or ourselves?

Exploring the themes of grief and brokenness, programming tied to *Afterlife* saw patrons making Meditation Strands. Patrons chose beads representing their grief – whether they were loved ones or other losses – and strung them onto a short cord. The repetitive action of stroking beads has been shown to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, creating a sense of relaxation and solace. It also serves as an item they can keep around in a pocket or drawer for moments when they need a tangible source of comfort.

One of the most popular components of the annual Rogue Reads program is the author talk, which was held on February 1. Julia Alvarez was a huge hit with the audience. Along with discussing her books, she talked about how and when she became interested in reading and writing her own novels, and her approach to writing for different age groups. On January 31st, Ms. Alvarez joined local school students in a special author talk about *Return to Sender* and again engaged the audience, answering a wide variety of questions from facilitator Area Manager Carrie Turney Ross. Indeed, there were so many questions for her that there was not enough time during the program to answer them all. Going above and beyond, Alvarez asked Turney Ross if she would email any remaining questions to her, saying that each deserved a thoughtful answer.



Throughout the branches, staff created incredible displays to celebrate Rogue Reads, ranging from community ancestry maps and collages to hand-crafted displays of the selected titles. With the titles circulating more than five hundred times, and over one hundred patrons attending the author talks, it was a successful Rogue Reads season, and staff are already looking forward to next winter.

Public Services

Blind Date With a Book

White City and Ashland played matchmaker for their patrons during February with Blind Dates with a Book. This type of display or program features books which are wrapped and the only information the patron has about them is brief bullet points on the front written by staff. The title is a surprise until the book is checked out. These blind dates are always popular around Valentine's Day, invite readers to sample materials in fun ways, and often try something new.



Librarian Brianna Levesque spearheaded the effort in the Ashland branch, and the books were flying off the display near the self-checkout stations. The bullet points she used to describe the books were so succinct that at least three Ashland patrons said that, though they were excellent choices, they knew they had already read the book by their description and left them on the shelf to be matched with a future patron. Each book also contained a bookmark with a brief speed-dating style form for patrons to rate their experience. Once completed, they were entered for a chance to win a Bloomsbury Books gift certificate. Only a few books were left by Valentine's Day, and staff look forward to hearing what people thought of their date.

In Butte Falls, Library Associate Katie Misfeldt put on a Date a Book event for the 6th and 8th grade classes from Butte Falls Charter School. Designed a little more like speed dating, she picked a wide variety of books ahead of time and arranged

Book Speed Dating!

BOOK: _____

FIRST IMPRESSION (title/cover): 1-2-3-4-5

SMALL TALK (blurb/back summary): 1-2-3-4-5

DEEP CONVERSATION (first few pages): 1-2-3-4-5

OF PAGES READ: _____

INTERESTED IN A SECOND DATE? _____

WHY? _____

BOOK: _____

FIRST IMPRESSION (title/cover): 1-2-3-4-5

SMALL TALK (blurb/back summary): 1-2-3-4-5

DEEP CONVERSATION (first few pages): 1-2-3-4-5

OF PAGES READ: _____

INTERESTED IN A SECOND DATE? _____

WHY? _____

them in the room. When the students arrived, they spent a couple of minutes with multiple books and rated each one on whether they would be interested in a “second date.” Misfeldt commented that this is a program that teachers keep requesting, as many of their students are not sure what type of books interest them, and the book review forms provide a handy reference for when they are stuck for ideas later. After the program, many of the kids checked out books that they had previewed during the trip. This event is easily adaptable for all ages, and staff anticipate continuing to offer it regularly throughout the year.

Bear Creek

Ashland

February was a particularly tasty month, as the Ashland Children’s team embarked on a series of food programs. Each program offered a story and an opportunity for children and families to get creative with different types of food. The first week featured a rice and beans program as part of Rogue Reads, and the second week focused on pizza. Patrons were given heart-shaped mini pizzas and got to choose from a wide variety of toppings while learning about the fascinating history of pizza. The third week’s theme was Soup. Children and families gathered to hear *Stone Soup* and make their very own delicious soup. The month “wrapped” up with a tortilla program. Families loved the hands-on fun of making their own flour and corn tortillas. The book *Big Moon Tortilla* was read while children sampled their tortillas with butter and cinnamon-sugar or lime toppings.

In keeping with the February food Series, staff put together displays of fiction and nonfiction books with food related themes. Over 100 books were displayed throughout the branch in February, and most were checked out.

Library specialists Kelly Steiner and Cody Walburn set up a Black History Month display and activity at the Ashland YMCA. Folks were encouraged to check out books, get library cards, and work on a freedom quilt square.

Teen Librarian Katie Fischer and Teen Library Specialist Miki Hocker continued outreach by visiting the Ashland Middle and Ashland High School's Queer Straight Alliance Clubs during February. They discussed with faculty and students the various safe and affirming resources that the public library offers, such as books and events.

Sabrina Prud’homme of BASE (Black Alliance for Social Empowerment) was the guest speaker for the Big Ideas Series, a collaboration with the Ashland branch of the American Association of University Women. She shared information on what her organization does for the local community, such as helping to organize events for holidays like Juneteenth and Martin Luther King Jr. Day and promoting community and a sense of belonging for Black youth, families, and individuals in Southern Oregon. The event was well attended by engaged community members, many of whom lingered afterward for small-group conversations.

On Thursday, February 22nd, the library was filled with music by a flute and violin duo, as part of the monthly Music in the Library series, in collaboration with the Rogue Valley Symphony. Many people attended this casual program, including several families with small children who were lured over from the Children’s area



by the music. This program continues to be a happy discovery for new patrons and has turned into a monthly high point for others. The format is conducive to patrons of all ages enjoying it.



Phoenix

Fourth graders from Phoenix Elementary visited the Phoenix Library for a fun science program all about rocks, gems, and minerals. Branch Manager Jody Fleming brought in specimens from her own collection, and students got hands-on experience while learning about what made the difference between rocks and gems. They were excited to see examples of opal, garnet, topaz, quartz, agates, and jasper, and they were amazed by Oregon's state thundereggs. Local rock shop

Dragon Crystals generously loaned the library their high-powered UV-flashlight, and the kids were wowed to see the specimens of calcite and fluorite glow bright orange and purple under the beam. They all agreed: this talk really rocked!

With an eye to improving circulation, Fleming made some changes to where new arrivals are shelved in Phoenix. Organized by principles she learned about in a webinar on successful displays, new books for adults, teens and kids have been moved to the front of the library, giving them as much display space as possible. Patrons who come in to get their holds are immediately arrested by the plethora of colorful, new volumes to check out.

Talent

Patrons of the Talent library had a wonderful time with John Jackson's Mammals of Southern Oregon program. One mom with three young kids commented: "We always enjoy John Jackson's programs. He is so funny, and we learn a lot." In anticipation of the popular program, staff put together a display of books connected to the animals that Jackson discussed. Sure enough, many families tucked them into their book bags on the way out for further learning at home.

A lively group of kids and adults also came to Talent for the Valentine's Day scavenger hunt, take & makes, and storytime. Staff promoted this event with a bulletin board of images and words from patrons who were asked to respond to the phrase "I love the library because..." Here are some of their responses:

"The train set-up calls to my grandson and gets us here and checking out books."

"The personnel are always so helpful and knowledgeable."

"I love that one can check out things as well as books, and the Event Calendar is indispensable."

"It is a quiet place where me and my friends can hang out and play Roblox together."

"I love the library because the librarians are really nice to me and my sister and her friend."

"All the staff (everyone) helps me and everyone who asks for help with warmth and a smile and all the books and magazines are a wonderful gift to my life."

"I love that the employees are so nice, checking out books is great – the library makes me calm and happy."

"It is my happy place!"

Central Area

Central Point

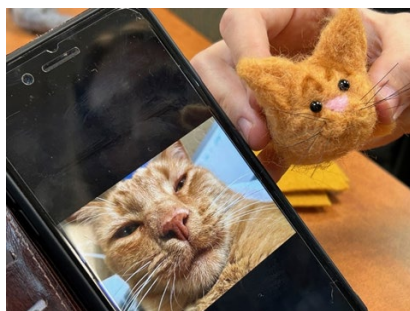
Central Point was very excited to feature their first Kid Librarian: Emmy! Children fill out a "job application" to participate, and Library Specialist Noel O'Brien selects a child from the responses to be Kid Librarian of the Week. They then work together to put together a display of recommended titles and a brief featured article.





Emmy, who usually visits the library with her grandfather, was accompanied by her very proud parents to show off her display. She writes that she is very smart, and she goes to the library every week. When she grows up, she wants to be “a veterinarian by day, a substitute teacher or tutor on the side, and an author in my spare time.” When asked why she wanted to be a Kid Librarian she writes “I love books and the library is my happy place.” Her first book recommendation as Kid Librarian? *The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate. Great job, Emmy!

February’s cat felting program was a huge hit. Patrons flocked to the branch to try their hand at needle felting cute little kittens out of soft fluffy wool. People had a great time, and many of them used their own cats as models. Staff were delighted by this program, as it meant that there were plenty of cat pictures being shared around as people swapped stories of their sweet and mischievous companions.



A young boy came into the branch and commented on the Lunar New Year decorations. Originally from China, he now lives in Central Point and said he was so happy to see his culture represented with the New Year decor.

Medford

Library Specialist Jackie McGarry and Adult Services Librarian Carrie Tannehill facilitated the Death by Chocolate program for adults. Attendees chuckled at chocolate jokes and humor and had their knowledge tested with chocolate-themed trivia. In addition, each attendee received a treat bag filled with seven types of chocolate, which were then put to the best sort of test: a taste test. In the lavender sea salt caramel battle, Lillie Belle Farms received more votes than Branson’s Chocolates. Harry & David beat Hershey’s and Lindt for milk chocolate; Lindt won over Hershey’s in the dark chocolate contest. Nine raffle winners went home with a chocolate bar from Branson’s Chocolates or Lillie Belle Farms, and one lucky person won two tickets to the upcoming Oregon Chocolate Festival in Ashland.



The February Writer’s Workshop monthly program saw its largest attendance since beginning last October. The group discussed tips on writing descriptions and shared responses to a prompt provided by Library Specialist Jackie McGarry. The group is still working through Ruta Sepetys’ non-fiction title *You: The Story: A Writer’s Guide to Craft Through Memory*, but has mentioned that once they have finished, they want to meet to meet more often and evolve into a critique and prompt group. The Writer’s Workshop attracts a wide variety of participants from every age and walks of life with many different genre writers, including playwrights, fantasy,

poetry, horror, and historical fiction. The discussions are informative and fun. Though writing is often a solitary endeavor, the library is providing a welcoming community for the writers who attend these programs.

Children Services hosted two school groups in the library this month: a preschool group from HeadStart and two second grade classes from Jackson Elementary. The second-grade group involved a Spanish immersion cohort, allowing the team the opportunity to test run a bilingual version of the class tours for the department with the help of staff from Outreach to Childcare. All students received library cards and browsed the collection.

In a collaboration with Digital Services Specialist Luntha Tahuna, Medford Teen hosted a Black History Month Movie and Discussion series throughout February. These programs explored issues relating to Black and African American people through the lens of movies like *Sarafina!*, *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom*, and *The Great*

Debaters. The first meeting resulted in a small group discussing *Sarafina!*, a 1992 movie based on the musical of the same name, depicting the Soweto Uprising in South Africa. After the film, the teens talked about apartheid and the ways that the American education system largely ignored the atrocities that were enacted against a large population of people, including school children.

Madrone Trails and Innovations Academy visited the Medford Library in February. While Madrone Trails is a regular visitor to the Medford Library, Innovations Academy is a new partnership. Their students, grades 11 and 12, were given a tour of the library, new library cards, and a lot of browsing time to explore, check out books, and use library resources that are not available to them in their own facilities.

Lower Rogue

Gold Hill

During February, Gold Hill experienced a noticeable increase in their regular program participation. The twice monthly Cribbage Club began in mid-January, and a solid group of around ten have joined each session. The Troll Party on February 24th was a smashing success. The branch was decked out in fantasy attire, and patrons flocked in for the story time and headband craft. Participants stayed afterwards to watch the animated movie for even more family fun.



Applegate

The Applegate Valley Historical Society placed a charming display in Applegate's display case. Patrons have marveled at the historical significance and relevance to their lives.



Rogue River

Rogue River has been busy preparing for their Tiny Art Show. Patrons were given mini art kits and instructed to create something wonderful, so long as it was no bigger than 3" by 3". The submissions have been returning to the branch, such as this painting of the aurora borealis over the mountains, done by one of the branch's tween patrons. Staff are looking forward to having the art on display during the month of March.



Ruch

Class visits from the Ruch Outdoor Community School are still going strong. Ruch staff have facilitated 110 of these events so far this school year. Preschoolers through first graders enjoy a storytime; grades 2-5 engage in a read aloud and discussion of a chapter book; and the middle schoolers hear a book talk or learn about a new library service or resource. Of course, every student also has some time to browse the shelves and check out books to see them through till the next visit, too.



The McKee Bridge Historical Society installed a local history display that showcased Takelma elder and spiritual leader Agnes Baker Pilgrim, artifacts and photos of the Historic Forest Creek School, and several everyday items that offered insight into the lives of women in the turn of the 20th century.

Upper Rogue

White City

Kids enjoyed a special holiday program making party poppers filled with candy and stickers for Valentine's Day. While the kids enjoyed their treats, their parents had time to browse the Blind Date display and choose their next favorite book.



Shady Cove

On February 13th, Shady Cove hosted an elegant tea party, sponsored by the Friends of the Library. Several kinds of tea were served and sampled, along with some delicious snacks such as cucumber sandwiches, scones with lemon curd and Devonshire cream. Patrons enjoyed the tea and snacks, and, most of all, each other. The purpose was to bring people together and socialize with each other, as this was Shady Cove's first tea party since the pandemic. It was wonderful to see patrons forget about their cares and simply enjoy a warm cup, a tasty treat, and a new friend.



In preparation for the branch's annual seed giveaway event later in Spring, volunteers gathered in early February for a marathon session of seed packaging. Many happy workers came to lend a hand, including Ruch Branch Manager Megan Pinder and Medford Adult Services Librarian Jonathan Ulrich. Both Pinder and Ulrich are interested in starting a seed library at their branches and came to see the details of how Shady Cove makes their system work. It was so nice of them to come up and help, and it was also great to have a chance to catch up on other goings-on inside the branches, too.



Prospect

Did you know that American pet owners spend over \$2.14 billion dollars on their pets for Valentines Day? Prospect decided to offer a much more budget-friendly option for people to celebrate their furry friends with a pet toy Take and Make. Using leftover craft materials, participants made dog and cat toys together while enjoying more human-friendly brownie bites. Who needs BarkBox when you have the library?



Prospect welcomed the Rogue Valley Genealogical Society on February 17. Participants learned how to find resources and keep track of their research efforts, then began building out their family trees.

Library visits from young readers have been made even more fun by an ongoing hunt for Sass. This little Bigfoot is delighting the kids, and the game of Finding Sass in the Children's section has proven so popular that her brother Squatch will soon join in the game as well.



Eagle Point

On February 2, the staff celebrated Bubblegum Day by teaching children how to make their own bubblegum. It was a sticky, high-paced program, and everyone had a great time making and chewing the gum they made. Laughter echoed in the program room as people tried to blow bubbles with the gum. At the end of the program, extra bubblegum was handed out to enjoy later.

A local bird photographer provided an exhibit in the display case this month on "Birds of the Rogue Valley." The Rogue Valley Audubon Society also provided information and pamphlets on where the best birding spots in the valley are. It was a hit with patrons who loved seeing the variety of birds in the area, and there were plenty of materials on hand for the amateur ornithologists to check out. Once the display wraps up at Eagle Point, it will move to the Central Point Library for their patrons to enjoy.

Butte Falls

The team continues to host the Art Adventure Club every other Saturday. An enthusiastic group of kids and parents regularly attend, and staff are glad to have such a wonderful core of patrons.



Community Resources

The Community Resource Spotlight bulletin board highlighted the Jackson County Maternal Child and Family Program in February. As a result, the team was able to connect several expecting mothers with essential prenatal care and guidance.

The Community Resources team has been hosting a movie matinee program that focuses on connecting disadvantaged patrons in a relaxing and welcoming environment that continues to see an increase in attendance. The team has received feedback from many patrons on how much they look forward to this program and how important the library is to them.

Outreach, Programs, and Digital Services

Education Services

Education Services had another wonderfully busy month. Community Librarian Evelyn Lorence and Education Services Specialist Bella Silva tabled at Orchard Hill Elementary and Applegate School's literacy nights and were received warmly. Applegate's Love of Reading Night was particularly impactful as staff utilized the generosity of the Bixler Fund to issue an annual non-resident card for patrons free of charge.

February's Open Book Newsletter for Educators featured an interview with Mary Taylor, an ELA teacher at White Mountain Middle School, and an overview of the Novelist K-8 Database.

Digital Services

With a new partnership, the department continues to expand its reach, aligning more fully with the mission of the Outreach department to engage the community when and where needed. In February, Specialists Leia Pastizzo and Christopher Davis held the initial visit at the Golden Rule ReEntry center, a non-profit organization that assists formerly incarcerated individuals. They spent a pleasant couple of hours assisting with Google Workspace tools and getting to know some of the people there. Future programs and monthly sessions are planned.



In addition, Digital Services Specialist Nicole Vukcevic conducted a short program for the P.E.O. International Women's group on February 20th at the Talent Library, providing an overview of JCLS digital entertainment and education offerings.

Human Resources

Volunteer Coordinator Sarah Devine traveled around the District delivering handmade Valentine cards to all active volunteers. This act of showing appreciation to valued volunteers with a sweet treat and thank you for their service and dedication is part of an effort to recognize volunteers on a consistent basis throughout the year.

Marketing

As Rogue Reads wound down in February, Marketing was already looking ahead to Summer Reading. The team is lining up new advertising ventures and partnerships, which will be announced throughout the spring. Also, in honor of Leap Day, the Marketing team created a special sticker that was available at all branches and a special pin for staff to wear.

One of the storytime videos on the JCLS YouTube channel passed 20,000 views, which is a huge milestone, and another is not far behind. Storytime videos typically get hundreds of views, and occasionally thousands. In February, Day of the Dead/Dia de los Muertos, which was produced in Oct. 22, 2020 reached 20,286 views, and Penguins!, which was produced in December of 2023 has already shot to 19,111 views! These are the only two videos in the JCLS catalog that have five-figure view counts.

Dear Jackson County Public libraries,

Hi! My name is Sundew Drossos I am 10 years old and in 5th grade! I am a library Card holder and I love to visit the library in Ashland! I bike to and from school every day! (About 2.1 miles) and I collect stickers on my helmet I was wondering if you a few you could send me? I love your books!

Marketing was flattered to receive a request from a young library fan for more stickers to put on their bike helmet. Always happy to oblige, the team sent an envelope stuffed full of stickers from previous Summer Reading Programs, Rogue Reads, and a few special exclusives, along

with this letter of appreciation:

Dear Sundew,

We were so excited to receive your letter.

As fellow sticker fans and collectors, we'd absolutely love to share some of the ones we've made with you. That's so cool that you collect them on your bike helmet! Hopefully these will be a good fit among what you've already collected, and there might even be enough to share a few with your friends, too.

As far as we're concerned, you're now an honorary member of the Jackson County Library Services marketing team.

Media Coverage:

KDRV on Community Survey: <https://bit.ly/3Vfp49k>

KDRV on Community Survey (2): <https://bit.ly/48FaWtn>

Ashland.News on BASE: <https://bit.ly/3Tyrv5J>

KDRV on Ashland BASE Discussion: <https://bit.ly/3wKdfOB>

KDRV on Ashland BASE Discussion (2): <https://bit.ly/4a2i3gn>

KDRV on Leap Day Sticker: <https://bit.ly/3ToUGlw>

Press Releases:

March Big Ideas Discussion: <https://bit.ly/49TSWfM>

March Windows in Time: <https://bit.ly/48FdzeJ>

Notable Video:

February Read This! Video: <https://bit.ly/49IK9D9>



Support Services

Collection Development



The February Database of the Month was Tumblebooks. Tumble Book Library, or TumbleBooks, is an online collection of e-books for children grades K-6. There are over 1,100 titles, including 250 animated talking picture books. There are no downloads or waitlists: books are instantly streamed right to a device at the click of a button. The site also features Spanish and French books, read-along chapter books, non-fiction books, graphic novels, and much more.

Baker and Taylor, the vendor whose product was selected for the collection diversity audit, finished the preliminary analysis of the collection in February, and the Collection Diversity Audit Committee (CDAC) was able to look at the dashboard for the first time. It revealed that 20.3% of JCLS's fiction collection and 21.5% of the nonfiction collection (all ages) feature diverse characters and issues. For next steps, the CDAC will compare the information to county demographics and national statistics. Data & Analytics Coordinator Regina Mannino has been helping with the effort and created a DEI Teen Fiction Dashboard, utilizing the data provided through the diversity audit software to assist with this step.

The Book Club Bag Committee (BCBC) has assembled, and now that members have been appointed, this diverse group of JCLS staff are looking forward to meeting to select new titles for book club bags, weeding book club bag titles that are no longer popular, and creating discussion guide questions for each bag.

Technical Services

February marked the beginning of the annual magazine and newspaper subscription renewal process. Collection Development Manager Laurin Arnold worked closely with Acquisition Specialists Diana Truly and Laura Irwin to create spreadsheets for Branch Managers to use to budget for the periodical needs at each of the branches. Once branch title selections have been confirmed, the renewals will be submitted to W.T. Cox, the vendor who works with the publishers to ensure subscription fulfillment.