



empowering women since 1881

Ithaca Insights

September 2025

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Ithaca Insights is the monthly publication of the Ithaca, New York, Branch of AAUW

AAUW Mission

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) advances gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.

In principle and practice, AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization based on age, ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status.

Fall Programs

Sunday, Sept 14 • 2:00 p.m. Kitchen Theatre

Bad Books

The first Ithaca Branch event of 2025-26 is the first play of the Kitchen Theatre's new season. The Theatre Group will be attending this Sunday, September 14. All members and guest are invited to join us. Order your own ticket through the website: <https://www.kitchentheatre.org> or by calling (607) 272-0570.

We will be staying for the Talk Back afterwards, led by two librarians from Tompkins County Public Library. We will then adjourn to The Westy at 516 W. State Street for further discussion. The Kitchen Theatre is located at 417 W. State Street, Ithaca. Join us!

Here's how the Kitchen Theatre describes this play:

"In *Bad Books*, a mother declares war against her local library for loaning her son a "vile" book. In the real world, the Parental Rights movement has been picking up steam across the US. Parental Rights advocates argue that parents should have the ultimate say in all the books, media, and educational materials that their children experience. Where is the line between censorship and a parent's right to raise their child as they see fit?"

Questions? Contact Jeanette Knapp at 607-272-3367 or jdk454@gmail.com

Friday, October 3 • 11:00 a.m. • Ithaca College

Implementing Cost-Effective Climate Solutions on Campus: Ithaca College Energy and Sustainability

Scott D. Doyle, Ithaca College's Director of Energy Management & Sustainability, will offer some insights into how IC is working to reduce its carbon emissions through cost-effective projects with the IC campus community. The challenge is to balance this reduction with equally important priorities related to enrollment, educational focus, deferred maintenance, and energy and sustainability. All campus communities face these issues. We may gather for lunch afterwards. Stay tuned.

Join us Friday, October 3, at 11:00 a.m. on the Ithaca College Campus at IC's LEED Platinum- Certified Business School (Business 202). It will be Fall Break at IC. Parking is available at the nearby Visitor's Lot just off Route 96B. (Turn right at traffic circle, visitor's parking is at right.) Or take the TCAT Route 11 bus up the hill from downtown.

Need a ride? From your home or the Visitor's Parking Lot? Call or email Diane Doyle (585-259-0778) dianedandoyle@gmail.com

President's Letter

107 Years of Action

At the New York State AAUW Convention in June, our Ithaca Branch was awarded a plaque commemorating 100 years or more since its founding. Also receiving recognition were Elmira-Corning, Jamestown, Oswego, Greater Rochester and Poughkeepsie.

One hundred and seven years ago, on May 16, 1918, twenty-five women met at Ithaca High School to form the Ithaca Branch. The founding mothers include Gertrude Martin, the first woman elected to the Ithaca School Board, and Juanita Breckenridge Bates, the first woman to be ordained as a minister in the Congregational church and the chair of the Suffrage Party in Ithaca.

Since our founding in 1918, our Branch has been advancing gender equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy.

Here are **just some** of our highlights:

1924 • One of the country's first cooperative nursery schools, the East Ithaca Preschool, is formed by the Ithaca Branch and mothers in the Bryant Tract area.

1949 • Great Books study groups are organized for the community

1959 • Fellowship dinners for international graduate women students are inaugurated.

1967 • A study group on population leads to the establishment of Ithaca Planned Parenthood.

1980 • Ithaca Branch supports the Cornell 11 and persuades National AAUW to establish the Legal Advocacy Fund, which provides legal assistance for women denied equal employment opportunities.

1993 • Workshops on gender bias demonstrate how schools shortchange girls and propose solutions.

2000-2011 • sister2sister • Programs for middle-school girls to explore their potential

2016 & 2017 • Ithaca-Cortland Tech Savvy programs for girls in grades 6-9 are held at TC3.

May 16, 2018 • Ithaca Branch Centennial Celebration.

Our advocacy does not rest only in the past. We continue to honor our commitment to our mission through:

2023 • A Public Panel, Open Books-Open Minds, on book banning held at TCPL.

2024 • A Community Essay Contest, informing voters about the New York Equal Rights Amendment. **The AAUW Ithaca Branch Scholarship.** Our ongoing support helps women returning to school at Tompkins Cortland Community College.

Our branch has a legacy we can be proud of. And yet there is still much to be done. What interesting new adventure do you see us taking on?



P.S. If you'd like a bit more history, check out NY State website aaunys.org. Look under "About AAUW NYS, History." It's a beautiful review of the founding of AAUW in 1881 and the contributions of NY State.

—Lin Tollefsen, President (ltollefsen11@gmail.com)

Hail & Farewell

Remembering Alene

We were all saddened to learn of the death of Alene Wyatt on July 29, 2025. Alene was a long-time member of the Ithaca Branch. Over the years she held almost every office including president, treasurer, secretary and newsletter editor. Most recently she has been our webmaster, Zoom master and tech expert. This spring, we were charmed by the program she presented on her life, "87 Years of Unexpected Adventures."

She told us that it was at an AAUW board meeting that she volunteered to help out at the Gathering Place. That work led to a new career in early childhood education and the Day Care Council. I enjoyed attending AAUW NYState Board meetings with Alene when I was Membership Chair and she was Communications Chair.

Alene volunteered for many groups including the League of Women Voters, the City Federation of Women's Organizations, The Human Services Coalition, the Health Planning Council, and The Social Services League. She sewed costumes for the Savoyards and worked at elections. When she moved to Kendal, Alene very soon became involved in all things technical, especially running the internal television station. "Who ever imagined I would grow up to be a television producer!" she said.

To quote from her beautifully written obituary, "Alene's sons, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, sister, sisters-in-law, friends, colleagues, and neighbors remember her with words like these: strength, courage, stability, kindness, inspiration, generosity, compassion, patience, grace, hospitality, wisdom, light, and love."

—Jeanette Knapp

Book Group

Charles Dickens at His Best

Join us in person this Monday afternoon, September 15, to discuss *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens. We will be meeting at Kendal in Conference Room C at 1:30. Come to the Cafe at noon if you would like to have lunch with Betta Hedlund and me and perhaps other Book Group members. Bring a credit card to pay for lunch. Both the Cafe and Conference Room C are near the front entrance.

Please join us whether or not you have read *Bleak House* (or seen the PBS series). Your life experiences with family secrets, court cases, and other Dickens' books are important.

I (Jeanette) liked A Tale of Two Cities, Great Expectations and David Copperfield when I read them in college, but *Bleak House* is another matter. His female characters are more dimensional and believable and he has learned how to make tedious characters less tedious. Best of all are the haunting descriptions and the biting social commentary.

All members and guests are welcome. Directions will be sent to the Book Group e-list. Contact Lin to be added to the list.

For October, we are reading *We Solve Murders* by Richard Osman. We will meet Monday afternoon, October 20, at the home of Phyllis Rappaport to discuss this murder mystery.

—Lin Tollefsen (ltollefsen11@gmail.com)
& Jeanette Knapp (jdk454@gmail.com),
Book Group Co-Chairs

Help! Ithaca Branch Needs a New Web Master

This is a fun, work-from-home at your leisure, creative chance to make a big difference.

How important is our branch website? Very! Anyone new to the Ithaca area or interested in women's issues will check us out there first. If we have no website, the assumption these days is that we do not exist. Keep us in the current century!

For many years Alene Wyatt managed our website. She is no longer with us. Help is available from National AAUW IT staff and Betty Preble, the former NYS-AAUW Website Administrator. Contact Lin at ltollefsen11@gmail.com for more information.

Books for September 2025 to June 2026

September 15, 2025 • *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens,

October 20, 2025 • *We Solve Murders* by Richard Osman

November 10, 2025 • *The Thanksgiving Play* by Larissa FastHorse

December 8, 2025 • *Miss Austen* by Gill Hornby

January 12, 2026 • *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

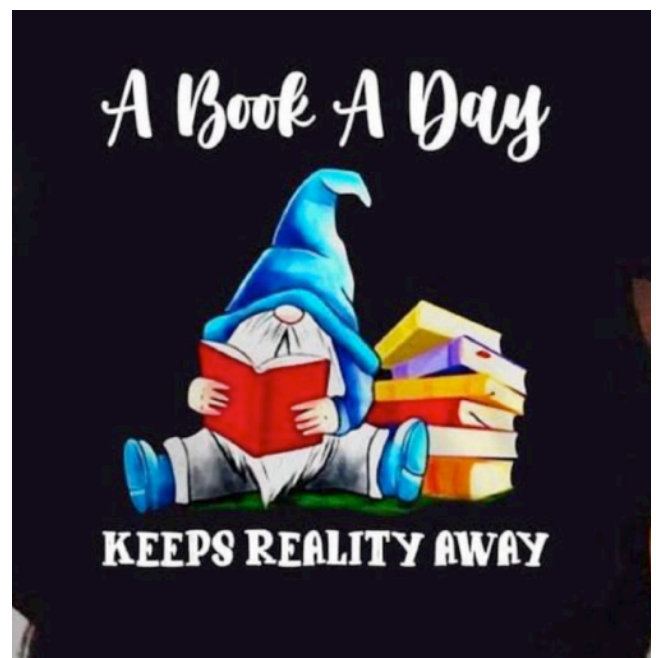
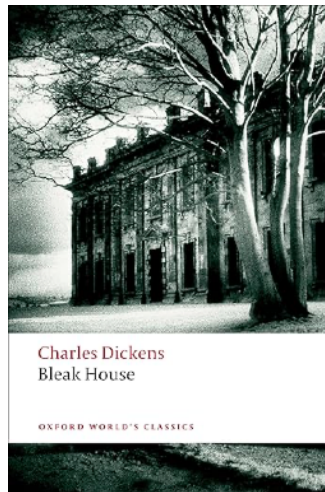
February 16, 2026 • *James* by Percival Everett

March 9, 2026 • *The Three Mothers* by Anna Malaika Tubb

April 13, 2026 • *Down and Out in Paris and London* by George Orwell

May 11, 2026 • *The Backyard Bird Chronicles* by Amy Tan

June 8, 2026 • *Maisie Dobbs* by Jacqueline Winspear



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Book Challenges and Libraries: A DEI Issue

The vast majority of book challenges are written by or about People of Color or the LGBTQIA+ community. Libraries play an important role in advancing democracy by equitable access to information and books in the community. Ideally, they include curated, diverse materials that not only reflect their communities, but provide a window into diverse experiences, perspectives, and ways of being human. Curated, diverse and inclusive library collections help build understanding and empathy across cultures and bridge differences.

Here are some state and federal advocacy measures that can be taken to support libraries and their ability to develop diverse, inclusive collections;

At the State Level: The Freedom to Read Act remains unsigned, and the [Open Shelves Act](#) still needs to be passed by the Assembly. Freedom to Read provides protection against challenges to schools and school library collections. It has not yet reached the Governor's desk; once it does, she will have 10 days to sign it. The Open Shelves Act provides protection to public and other types of libraries. It passed the Senate but still needs approval in the Assembly. *Why hasn't it passed yet?* The Assembly simply ran out of time due to delays in finalizing the state budget.

Actions: Contact the Governor's office to encourage her to sign the Freedom to Read Act.

Contact your Assembly member's office to urge passage of the Open Shelve Act.

At the Federal Level: There is positive momentum, but continued advocacy is essential. Last month, the Senate Appropriations Committee included funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), even providing a slight increase for state libraries across the country. A House Subcommittee has also voted in favor of funding IMLS for the upcoming year.

Action: Visit [this link for actions to take to support library funding](#). It is a good opportunity to thank our Representatives and Senators for supporting libraries. [Tell Congress to #FundLibraries](#) and to encourage their continued support.

Why IMLS Funding Matters Locally.

Among many other programs and services, IMLS funding directly supports Summer Reading and the Talking Book and Braille Library, plus provides monies to support NOVELny, a vital collection of electronic resources and databases used by schools and colleges statewide.

In addition, IMLS offers competitive grants that have benefited many of our local libraries and museums, helping them expand their programs and services. These grants have a direct, positive impact on the quality of life and learning opportunities in our region.

—Mary-Carol Lindbloom

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2026 AAUW Atlantic States Regional Conference

September 25-27, 2026

Lancaster County Convention Center
Lancaster, PA