



FUTURE LIBRARIANS FOR INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

Who We Are

Future Librarians for Intellectual Freedom, or FLIF, is a student organization at the University of Alberta. As graduate students pursuing Master's degrees in Library and Information Studies, the group's mission is to encourage freedom of expression and social responsibility, while rejecting censorship, within the library and information studies field and beyond.

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What is the Imagination Library?

For this newsletter, we have chosen to spotlight Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, a program that gifts children with free books from birth to age 5 in the U.S., Canada, U.K., Australia, and Ireland. This initiative was created to foster a love of reading and increase early literacy development. Since 1995, the Imagination Library has provided more than 3 million children with over 332 million free books. We would like to honour Dolly Parton's recent passing by highlighting the incredible impact of her initiative on a local, national, and international level.

[Learn more about the Imagination Library](#)

Local News

Kids love ‘Dolly’s books’: Edmonton Public Library touts partnership with Parton’s Imagination Library initiative

By: Chad Huculak

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This article discusses Ready. Set. Read!, a program that works in partnership with Parton’s Imagination Library to deliver free books to children in Edmonton. It discusses how the Ready. Set. Read! program works, how it is funded, and who it serves. The program is expected to continue and the article provides information on how to register.

Chestermere proclaims Dolly Parton and Imagination Library Day

By: Brandon Zdebiak

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This article discusses how Chestermere has acted in the wake of Dolly Parton’s death to ensure that her Imagination Library program is not forgotten. It talks about the positive impact that the Imagination Library has had on its community, and outlines the city’s recent adoption of a *Dolly Parton and Imagination Library Day* to honour Parton and her contributions to literacy.

Calgary branch of Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library to remain operational

By: Michael Franklin

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In addition to discussing the death of Dolly Parton, this article outlines the aims of the Imagination Library program. The article shares how many books have been given out in Calgary, thanks to the My First Bookshelf Campaign and the number of children the initiative has helped. The Calgary Public Library Foundation further expresses its commitment to ensuring the program continues.

National News

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in St. Marys steps up fundraising campaign

Reported by: Bryan Bicknell

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This short video discusses how St. Mary's has created an endowment fund, ensuring this local branch of the program will be able to continue. It includes brief interviews with community members, who discuss the importance of the program and how it can help children in the community. A local partner of the Imagination Library also provides a brief look at the process of sending books to kids.

P.E.I government reversing cut to Dolly Parton Imagination Library, extending bike rebates

By: Lucas McInnis

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This article touches on the impact that community members can have on government funding decisions. Beginning with a discussion on the province cutting funding to the Imagination Library a week earlier, McInnis reports how community pushback resulted in a reinstatement of funding to the initiative. It also talks about how although libraries can provide books to the public, the Imagination Library remains an important program for literacy.

Dolly Parton's literacy initiative still has an influence in the NWT

By: Nancy Vail

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Focusing on the Northwest Territories, this article articulates the impact that the Imagination Library has had in Northern Canada, where there is less access to resources. With funding from both larger organizations and individuals keeping the program running, the article also touches on the book selection process and how books are chosen to be culturally and age appropriate.

International News

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library changes lives. Some states gut it anyway.

By: Ash Wu

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This article, which is part of the New York Times' tribute to Parton, describes the history of the Imagination Library and the partnerships that have helped it succeed over the last 30 years. Despite evidence that this program is positively impacting literacy levels in the U.S., some states have slashed matching funding for it in recent years, effectively freezing new child enrollments.

Dolly Parton's philanthropic Imagination Library had a proven effect in Australia, and around the world

By: Claire Galea

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Written by a researcher affiliated with United Way Australia, the organization that facilitates the Imagination Library program in Australia, this article quantifies the program's impact since it launched in 2013. It also links to international data that suggests children enrolled in the program are more likely to display foundational early literacy skills than those who are not.

'An incredible initiative': Dolly Parton project gives books to thousands of Irish children

By: Sarah Burns

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The Irish branch of the Imagination Library began in 2019, and since then, more than 6,500 children throughout the country have received over half a million books. This article provides more details about how the program runs in Ireland, including its partnerships, cost, and impact.

Dolly Parton free book scheme to expand in London

By: Luxmy Gopal

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Gopal highlights a new partnership that has allowed the London branch of the Imagination Library to expand its coverage and provide space for 157,000 more children. The article contextualizes this impact by discussing growing concerns about literacy and book use among children in the U.K.

Scholarly Spotlight

Galea, C., Duursma, E., Petocz, P., McArthur, G., Robidoux, S., Beyersmann, E., & Noble, C. (2026). The impact of shared book reading on children's emergent literacy skills: A worldwide study of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. *Early Child Development and Care*, 196(7–8), 504–522.

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“This study investigated the impact of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library worldwide on children's emergent literacy skills aged three to five years. The Imagination Library delivers age-appropriate books to children from birth to age five in the United States, Australia, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, and the United Kingdom. Caregivers responded to questions relating to the child's emergent literacy skills prior to receiving any books (baseline; N = 18,488), six months later (Survey 2; N = 8,441), and around six months after completion of survey 2 (Survey 3; N = 4,842). Data from caregivers with children who participated in the Imagination Library (N = 4,842) were compared to data from caregivers that had just enrolled in the programme but had not yet received any books (N = 16,477). Caregivers reported that children in the Imagination Library were more likely to demonstrate key emergent literacy skills including alphabet knowledge and receptive and expressive vocabulary compared to children in the comparison group.”

Abstract from publisher



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