Cultural Daily

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Library Foundation Appoints Jessica Strand as Director, Public Programs

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The Library Foundation of Los Angeles announced the appointment of a Director of Public Programs today. We covered the events leading up to this announcement here. A statement from the Ad Hoc Committee follows the Library Foundation's announcement.

Library Foundation announcement

The Library Foundation of Los Angeles announced today that it has appointed Jessica Strand as its first Director of Public Programs. Strand comes to the Library Foundation with extensive experience as a cultural event producer, curator, author, and journalist.

Leading the Foundation in its new public programming direction, Strand will oversee the cohesion of the Library Foundation's various public programs including Lost & Found at the Movies, ALOUD, special exhibitions, Teens Leading Change, and new programs yet to be announced.

"I am thrilled by this opportunity and want to build and expand on the Library Foundation's current programs while tapping into areas they haven't explored before," says Strand. "The written word touches on so many diverse ideas, and libraries are at the heart of this exchange. I look forward to hearing from and sharing ideas with the community of Los Angeles."

Strand will also manage the Foundation's initiative to create new program formats, introduce programming into new locations and to new populations, increase focus on broader audiences, and increase collaboration with local, regional, and national partnering organizations. Strand begins with the Foundation November 1st and her first programming season is scheduled to be announced early 2019.

"I could not be more excited to welcome Jessica back to Los Angeles. She will focus on the strengths of the Library Foundation's existing programs, while bringing her own creativity and unique curatorial perspective to arts and culture in our city," said Ken Brecher, President of the Library Foundation of Los Angeles.

Strand has extensive experience organizing public programs and events encouraging essential conversations that promote tolerance and understanding across the country. She is the founder of Dear America, a cultural initiative that provides a platform for artists of all genres to express their vision of America. She was Associate Director of Public Programming for The New York Public Library, where she created a marquee show, Books at Noon. At NYPL she also collaborated with

the library's curators and forged partnerships with numerous foundations and organizations to produce innovative and educational public programs. Prior to that, Strand reinvented the iconic New York Strand Book Store event series. A collection of her conversations with the many artists she brought to the stage has been published in an anthology, *Upstairs at the Strand* (Norton, 2016). She has been a contributing writer to magazines such as *Bon Appetit*, *Food and Wine*, *In Style Magazine*, *L.A. Magazine*, *L.A. Times Magazine*, *Travel and Leisure*, *Australian Vogue* and a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*. She is also a noted author of 10 lifestyle books, and has edited a number of anthologies, most recently *Love Found* (Chronicle Books, 2017).

Statement from the Ad Hoc Committee

Ken Brecher and his Library Foundation board had the right to re-envision ALOUD and put it under new direction. But they did it with a stunning lack of respect for the program's founders and the community ALOUD built, something they have refused to acknowledge or address. In coming at ALOUD with a wrecking ball, they left their new public programs director to build on rubble. Over many years, ALOUD drew together a web of communities that reflected this city. It was not a brand. It was an ongoing conversation built on openness and trust. Those have been destroyed.

We asked the Library Foundation for transparency, accountability and voice in the future of ALOUD. We have received none of those. The hiring of a new programs director from New York raises yet more questions about the Library Foundation's commitment to this community, to diversity and to honest dialog about its vision. We will not support the Foundation going forward until it addresses these concerns.

– Héctor Tobar and David Ulin, spokespeople; Donna Frazier, Lynell George, Reed Johnson, and Terry Wolverton, members, Ad Hoc Committee to Petition in Support of ALOUD

Photo of Jessica Strand by Sarah Shatz.

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