



PUTTING OUR MONEY WHERE OUR MOUTH IS

VALUES-BASED ACQUISITIONS

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Acquisitions Institute, May 2026



Overview

- About Amherst College, the library, and my role in it
- Our Collection Development Group and Collection Development Policy
- How the policy and the library's values are informing our acquisitions work: books, OA support, subscriptions
- The joys, challenges and future possibilities of values-based acquisitions and collection development
- Time to talk



About Amherst College

Undergraduate Liberal Arts

1,900 FTE

Five Colleges Consortium of Western MA

About the Amherst College Library



human-centered, values-based organization

staff of around 45

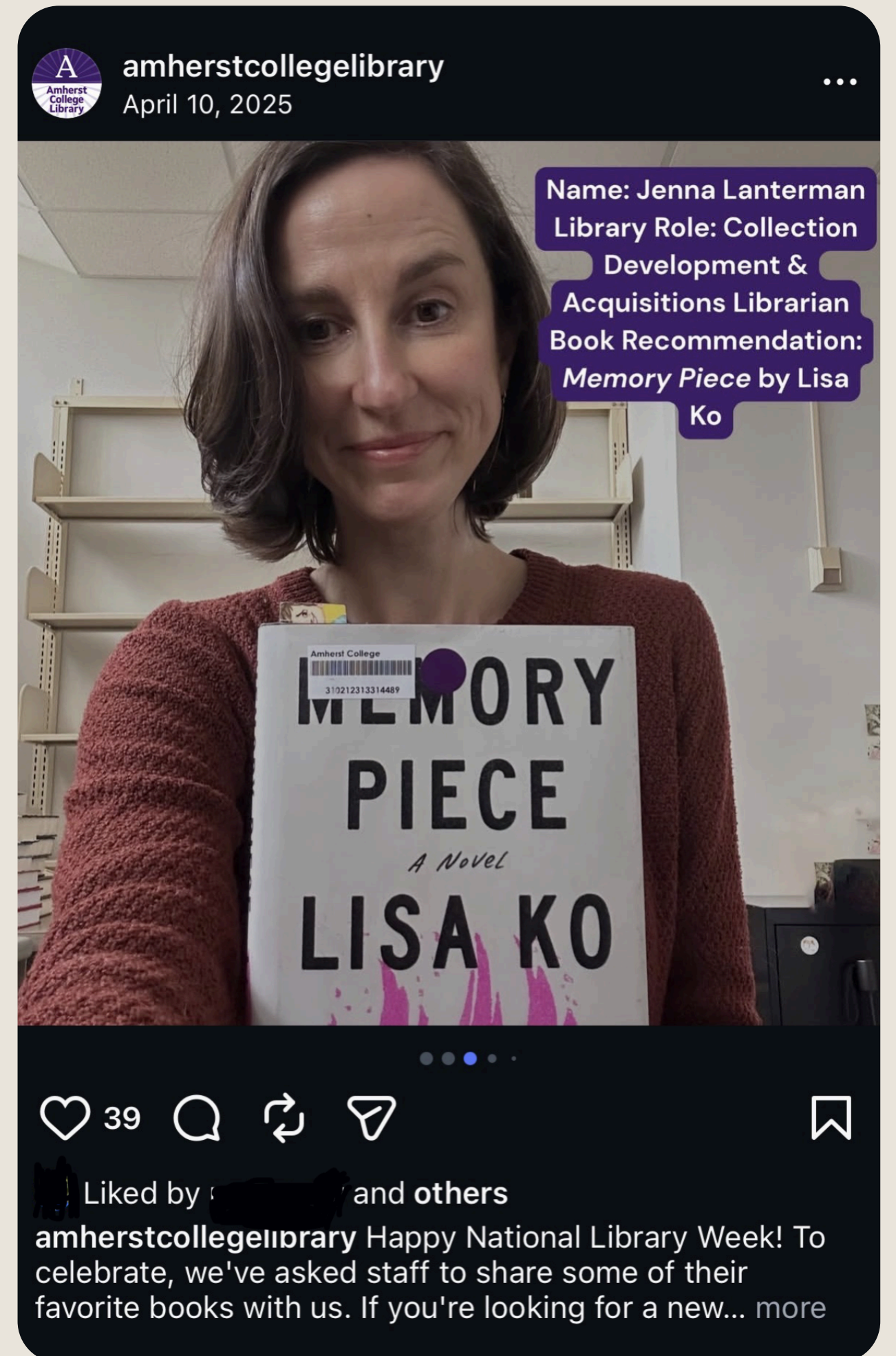
FOLIO ILS, shared catalog with other libraries in consortium

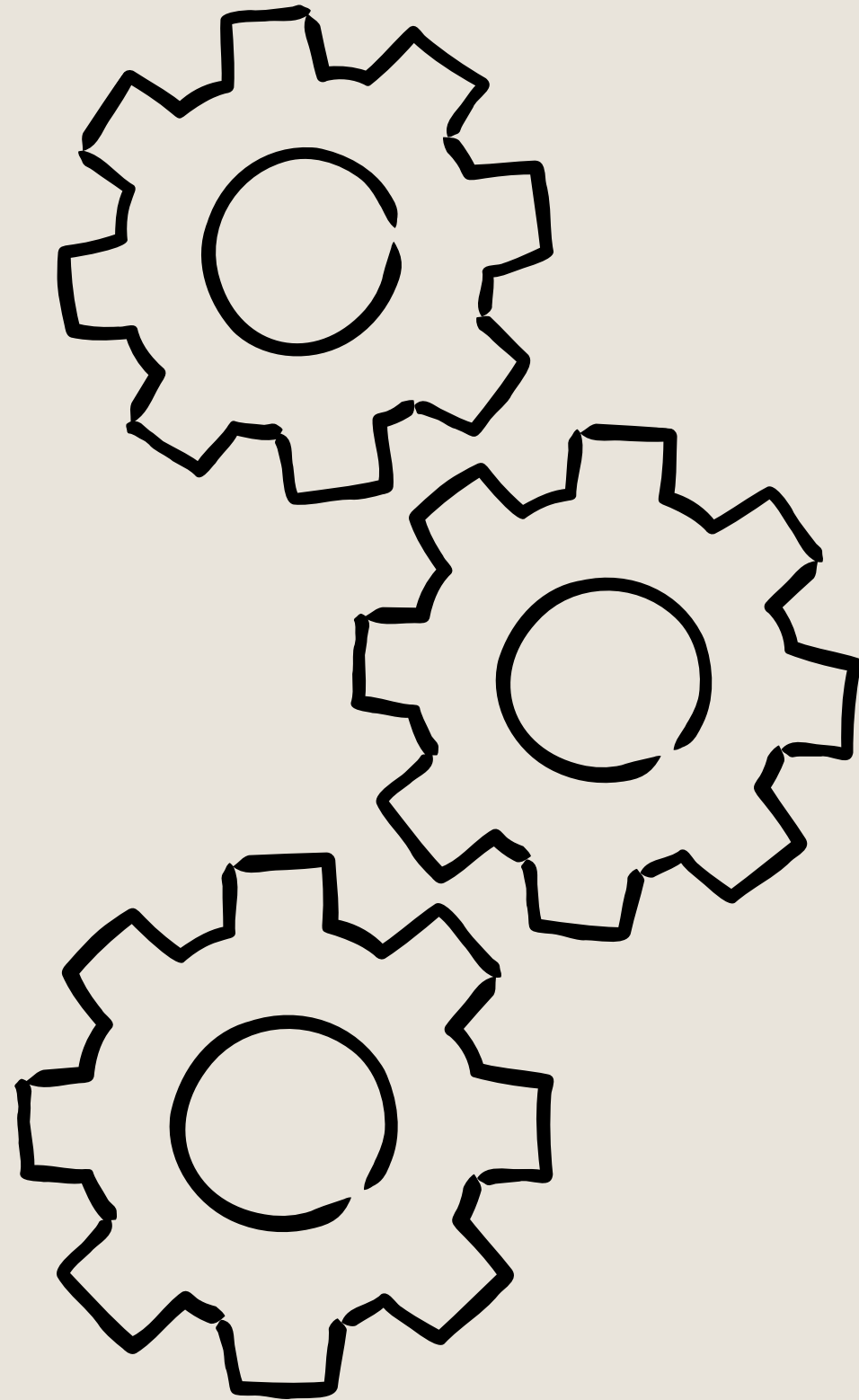
About me

My background

Started at Amherst College in
February 2023

Newly created position





Collection Development Group (CDG)

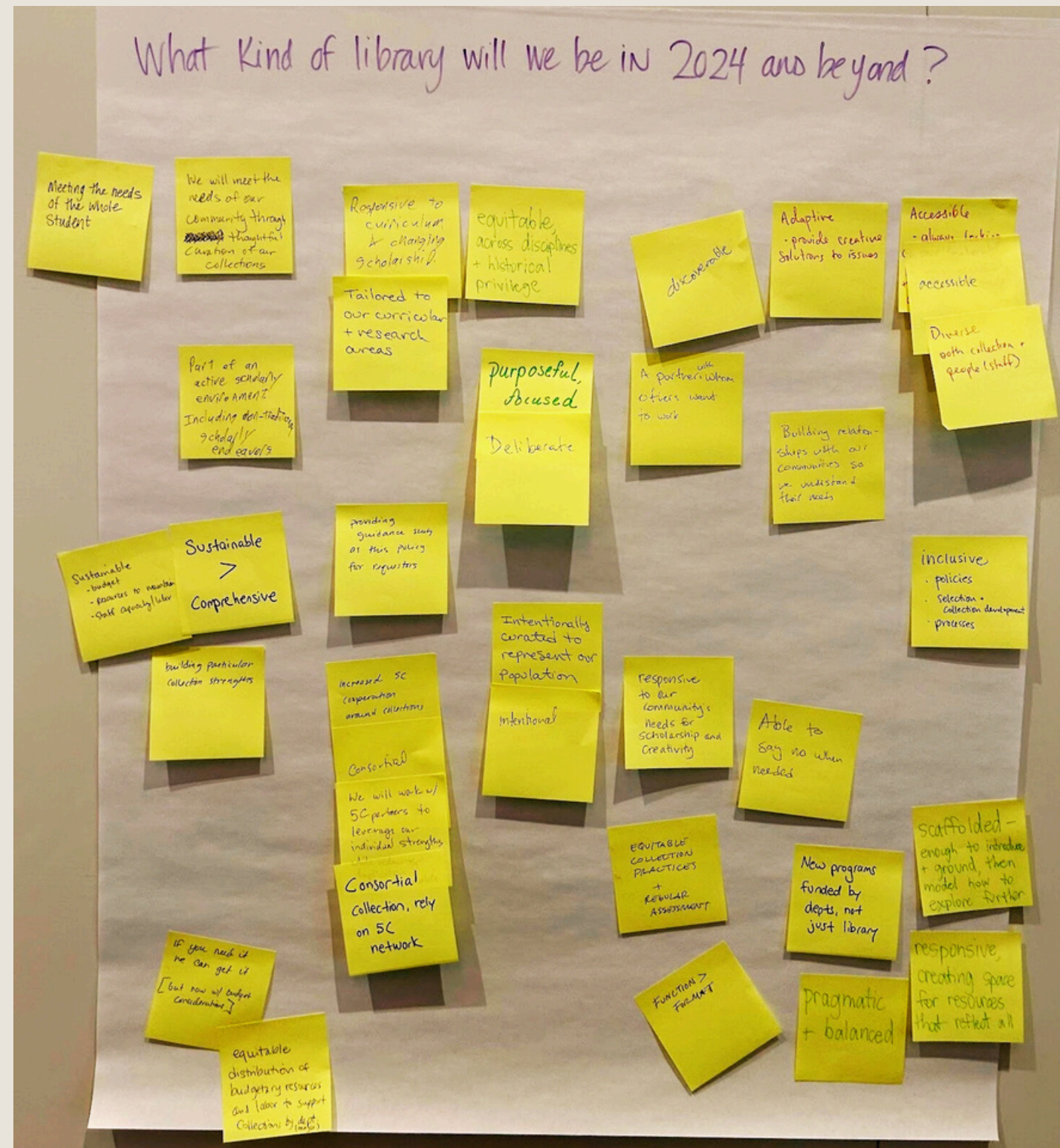
- 18 members
- meet monthly
- all decisions about collection development run through this group
- informs our acquisitions work

Writing Our Collection Development Policy

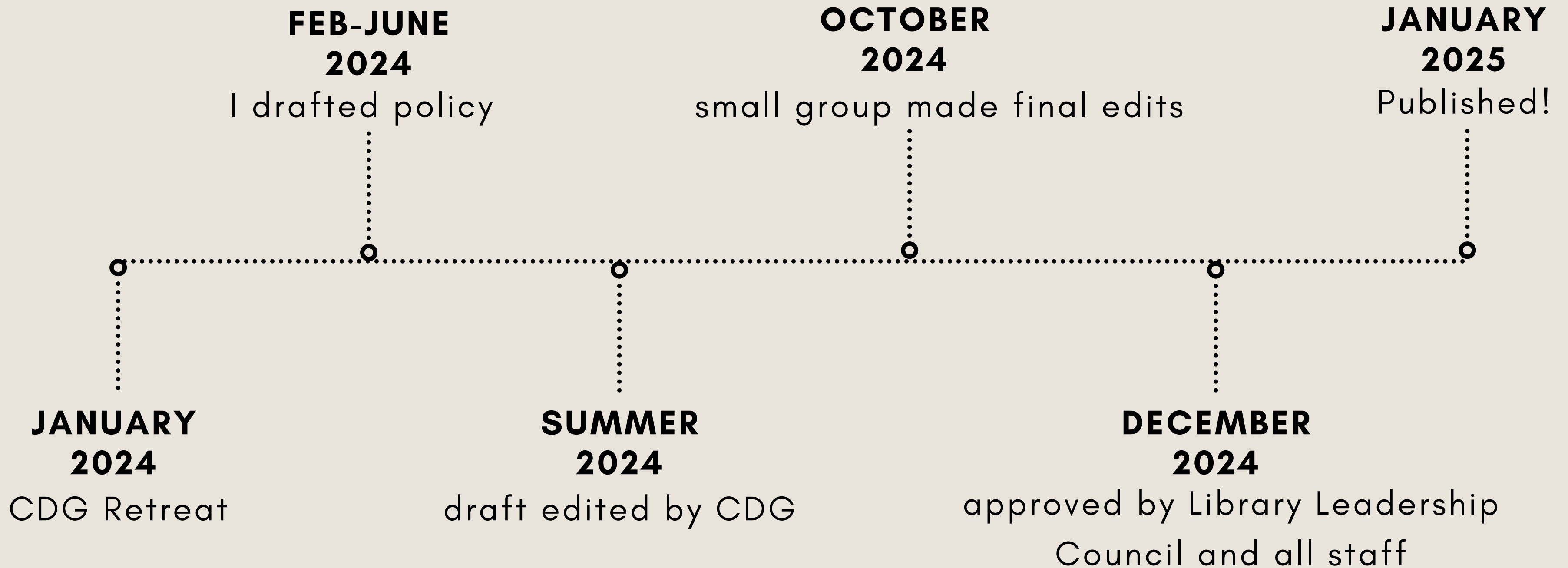
First step: gather materials (internal and external)

Next step: half-day retreat to lay groundwork

- What kind of library have we been?
- What kind of library will we be in 2024 and beyond?
- How will a collection development policy support your work?
- Small groups to begin brainstorming content for the proposed policy sections



Collection Development Policy



Highlights of the policy

We are committed to building a collection that is:

Rooted in relationships. Interdependent relationships with the library's campus, regional, consortial, and professional communities are central to our collections work.

Sustainable. In adding to and deselecting from our collection, we are mindful of the environmental impact of various material formats ... we also think about sustainable use of other finite resources.

Additional considerations for online journals and databases include:

- vendor business practices and responsiveness, particularly with regard to meeting national and international standards of accessibility and privacy

What is Sustainable to us?

- space
- budget
- equity
- Scale/Scope
- Staff
- Maintenance
- Selection
- Strategy?

↳ working w/in our means to make the most while paying attention to: _____ and making clear accessible documentation

Balance

BOOK BUYING: AMHERST BOOKS

- a couple blocks from campus
- purchasing from them aligns with college President's priority to contribute to the vibrancy of our town
- work directly with co-owners
- recreational reading collection started in 2024, and nearly all books for that collection purchased from Amherst Books
- student and library staff shopping trips



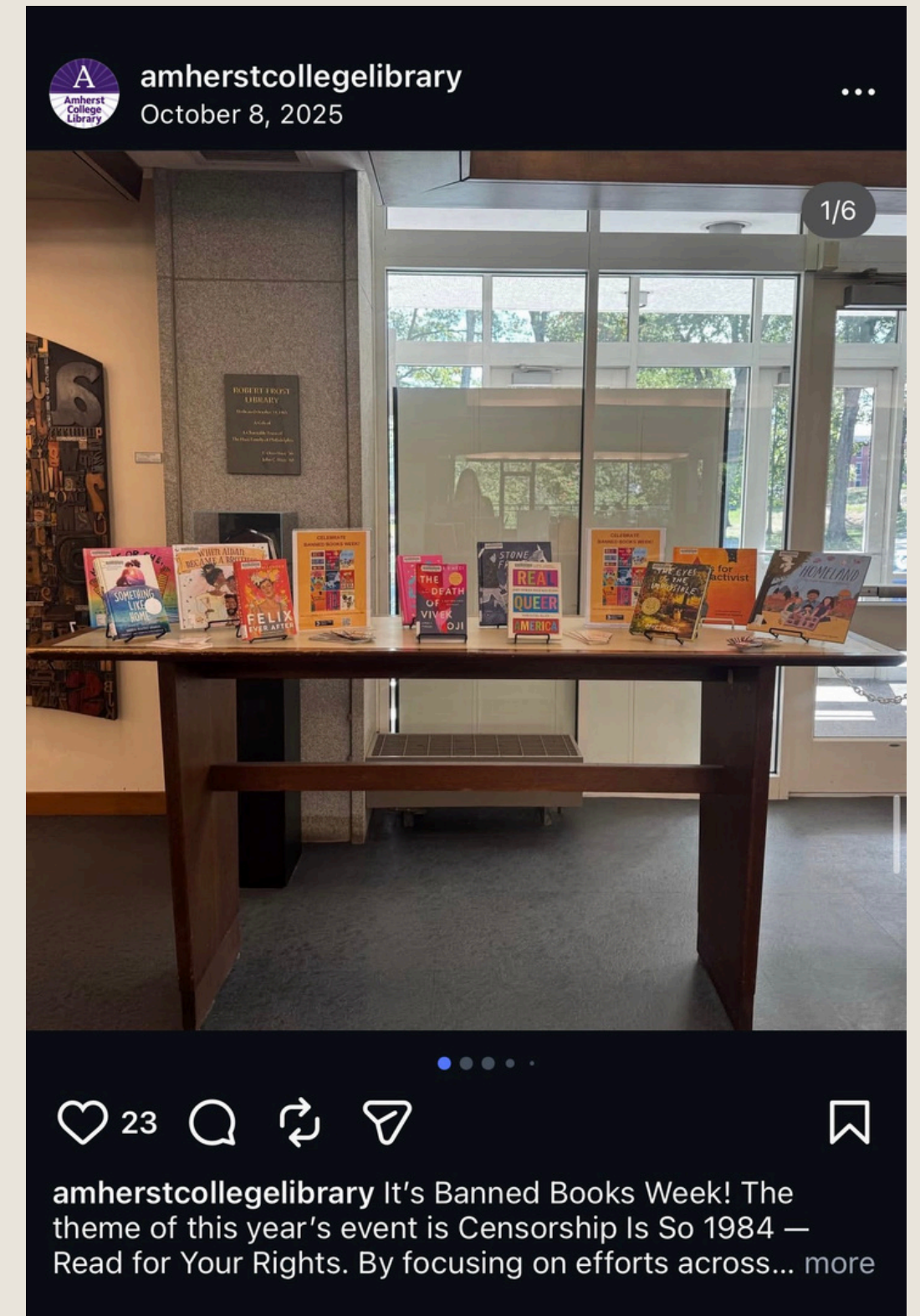
BOOK BUYING: BIRCHBARK BOOKS



- Native-owned independent bookstore in Minneapolis
- connection made by Brandon Castle, Archives & Special Collections project position, Mapping Native Intellectual Networks of the Northeast
- work directly with School Order Administrator
- started approval plan for newly published Native and Indigenous authored, illustrated, and published books
- building parallel collections in special collections and the circulating collection

BOOK BUYING: BOOKSHOP.ORG

- choosing a bookstore with a mission aligned with the materials being ordered (eg: The Lynx Books for banned books display)
- can be set up with Workday punchout
- gives over 80% of profit margin to independent bookstores
- a Climate Neutral company
- partners with Biblio.com for used, out-of-print, rare books



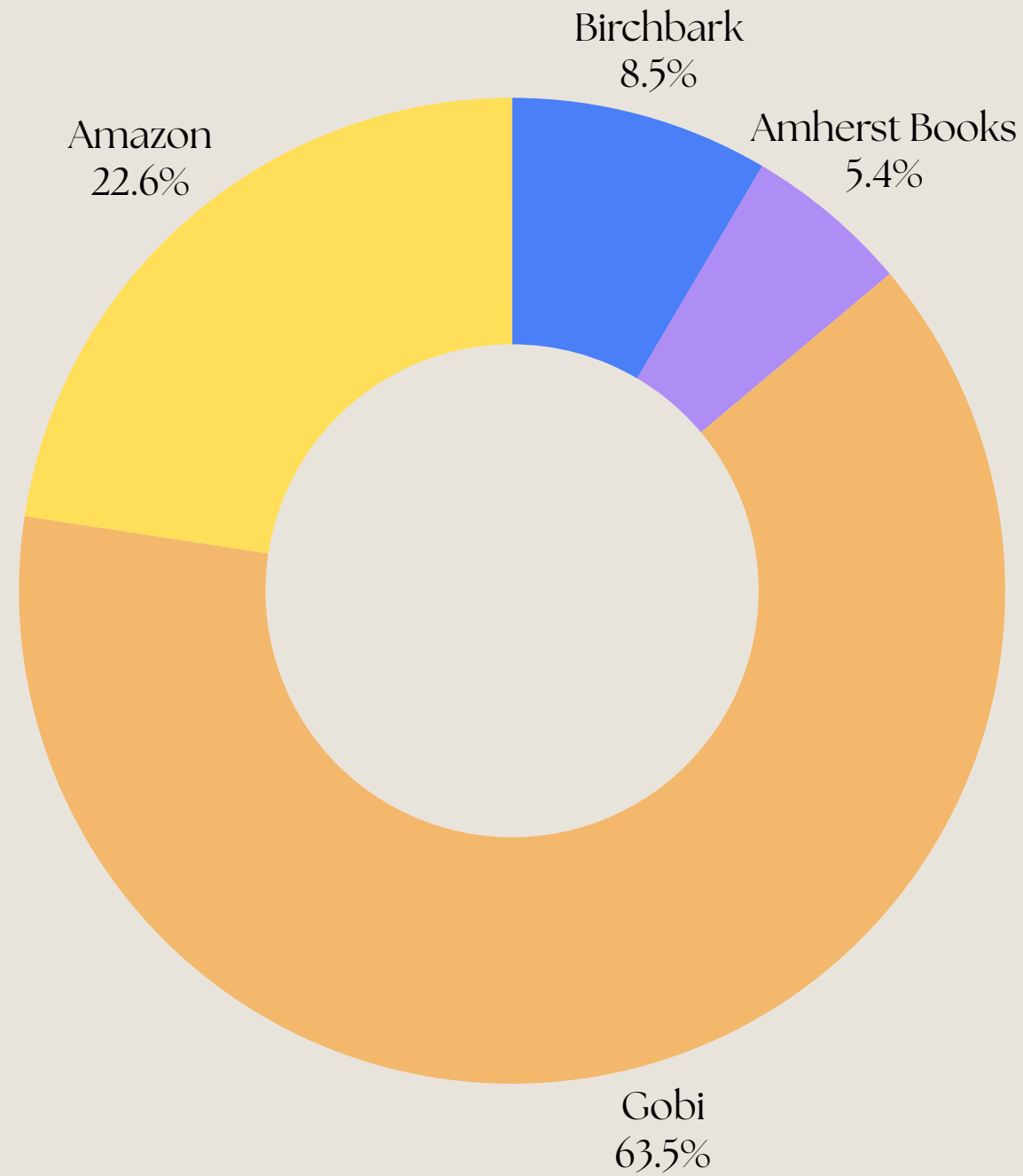
BOOK BUYING: GOBI RUSH

- significant expansion of books available for Rush ordering
- free shipping for some orders
- order integration and EDI invoices with FOLIO
- increasing small press offerings: Ingram Small Presses, Asterism Books

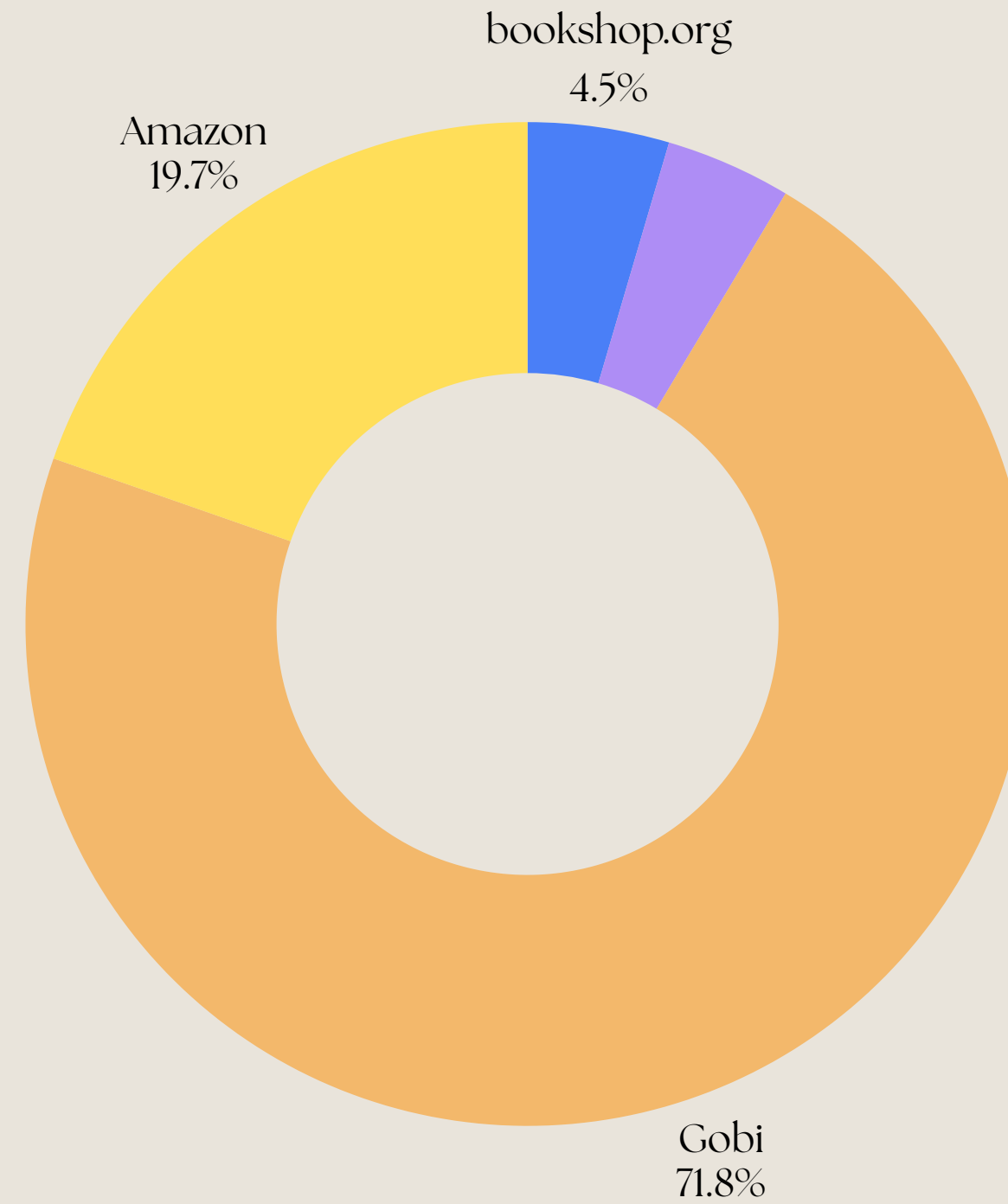
ZINES

- librarians attend zine fairs
- if sliding scale pricing, we pay at top of the scale
- work with makers to pay fairly for institutional use
- Kickstarter campaigns and similar

FY25 book spending



FY26 book spending



some context

- This is select vendors, not our full book budget
- FY26 is July-April
- some fluctuation due to external factors
- Amazon spending down \$7000 in FY26 vs. FY25 July-April
- Big steps? No. Meaningful baby steps? Yes!

VALUES-BASED OPEN ACCESS SUPPORT

- Amherst College Press
 - diamond/platinum OA press, no fees to authors, their institutions, or readers
 - not supported by library collections budget, but part of the library organization and identity
- Recent OA pledges decided on by CDG
 - Punctum Books Special Collections: republishing the back catalogs of historically significant independent presses founded by structurally marginalized persons
 - Open Book Collective: OA infrastructure and publishing, including independent presses
 - Lived Places Publishing: concise course readings that explore lived experience at the intersection of identity and place

VALUES-BASED REVIEW OF SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Big Data & Society

Impact Factor: **5.9** / 5-Year Impact Factor: **9.0**

[Journal Homepage](#)

 Open access |  | Research article | First published online August 6, 2025 | [Request permissions](#) 

The ICE–Lexis nexus: An argument against use of commercial databases in immigration enforcement

[Jessica P. Needle](#)   and [Alan Rubel](#)  [View all authors and affiliations](#)

[All Articles](#) | <https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517251351323>

- recently worked on a process for evaluating subscriptions based on vendor business practices, patron privacy concerns, similar factors
- Lexis Nexis cancellation was perhaps a unicorn: cancellation considerations initiated due to business practices, but also recommended due to interface issues, content duplication
- can't be purists, but can find small opportunities to reduce harm

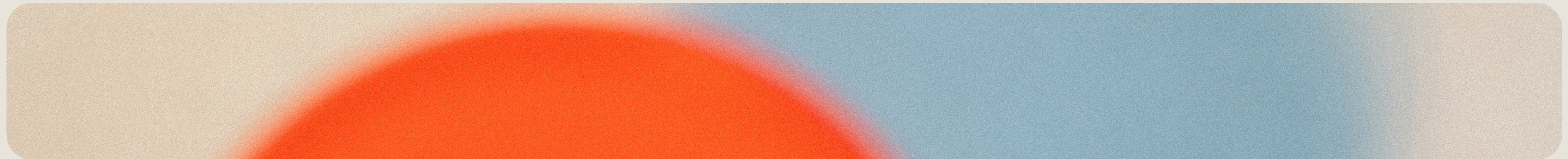
The Joys

- Finding meaning in the work for staff
- Alignment with professional, institutional and often personal values
- Human-centered
- Resonates with students
- Less AI slop than Amazon, selection is easier



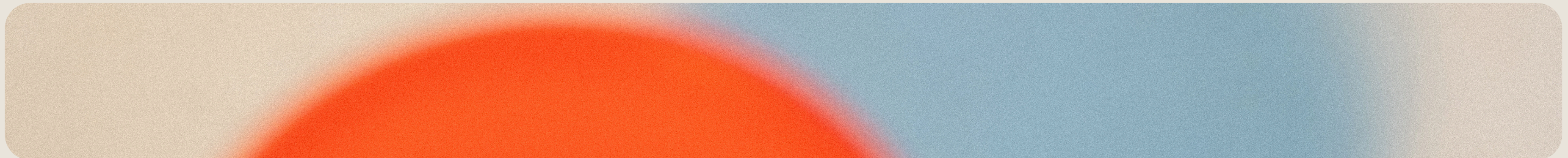
The Challenges

- More time-intensive
 - more staff time
 - longer shipping times
 - higher chance of various hiccups and delays
- Less system integration
- More expensive



Future Possibilities

- Engagement with Independent Publishers Caucus's IndieLib, connecting independent presses and librarians (<https://www.indiepubs.org/librarians>)
- Attend New England Independent Booksellers Association conference, or similar
- More student involvement
- ...



Let's Talk!

- What does values-based acquisitions look like at your institution?
- Suggestions?
- Concerns?



CREDITS AND REFERENCES

- @amherstcollegelibrary Instagram
- Amherst College Library Collection Development Policy:
<https://www.amherst.edu/library/about/policies/collection-development-policy>
- Birchback photo from <https://birchbarkbooks.com/pages/our-story>
- DiVittorio, Katy, and Lorelle Gianelli. "Ethical Financial Stewardship: One Library's Examination of Vendors' Business Practices". In *The Library With The Lead Pipe*, March 31, 2021.
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