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Smithsonian Libraries Announces Two Advisory Board Appointments

The Smithsonian Institution's Board of Regents voted Oct. 21 to appoint Carmen Agra Deedy and Brandon Neal to the Smithsonian Libraries Advisory Board in 2020. They will join 17 community and business leaders dedicated to building the Libraries' collections, increasing digital initiatives, advancing education, creating high-quality exhibitions and programs and securing a financial legacy.

"I am pleased to welcome Carmen Agra Deedy and Brandon Neal to our Board," said Scott Miller, Deputy Under Secretary for Collections and Interdisciplinary Support and Interim Director, Smithsonian Libraries. "They bring with them decades of extraordinary leadership and expertise in key areas. Their outstanding work has enhanced communities around the country—Deedy through storytelling and literacy and Neal through advocacy and fundraising."

"It is an honor to serve the Smithsonian Libraries, an organization with a venerable and storied past. As an immigrant, this appointment is especially poignant; during my formative years America's libraries were both university and sanctuary," said Carmen Agra Deedy. "I am elated to work with this exceptional Board, whose collective vision and quiet diligence is ensuring that the Libraries' second century will be as celebrated as its first."

"I am excited to serve on such a historic board, representing the 21 libraries of the Smithsonian's prestigious museums, research centers, and National Zoo," said Brandon Neal. "I look forward to exploring ways to enhance the work of the Smithsonian Libraries and broadening its audience."

The Smithsonian Libraries Advisory Board consists of members from across the United States. The mission of the board is to help the Libraries to provide authoritative information and create innovative services and programs for Smithsonian researchers, scholars, scientists, curators, historians and other staff, as well as the public at large.

Carmen Agra Deedy

Deedy is the author of eleven books for children, including *The Library Dragon*, *The Cheshire Cheese Cat*, *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach* and *14 Cows for America*, a *New York Times* Best-seller. *The Rooster Who Would Not Be Quiet!* (Scholastic Press) was released in 2017. Her personal

stories first appeared on NPR's *All Things Considered*. Funny, insightful, and frequently irreverent, Deedy's narratives are culled from her childhood as a Cuban refugee in Decatur, Georgia. She is host of the four-time Emmy-winning children's program, *Love That Book!*

An award-winning author and storyteller, Deedy is also an accomplished lecturer, having been a guest speaker for both the TED and TEDx Conferences, the Library of Congress, Columbia University, the National Book Festival, and the Kennedy Center, among other distinguished venues. Deedy's dedication to libraries and librarians has been life-long. She served on the Dekalb Public Libraries Board of Trustees, in her home state of Georgia, as an Author Library Advocate for the American Library Association. A life-long supporter of the Smithsonian, she opened the 2016 Art of the Book Lecture Series for the Libraries.

Deedy's newest picture book, *Rita and Ralph's Rotten Day* (Scholastic Press), illustrated by Pete Oswald, will be released on March 3, 2020.

Brandon Neal

Neal is one of the country's leading political strategists, with expertise in executive management, political campaigns, corporate social responsibility, fundraising and organizational and business development problems. He is a strategic thinker, with a strong passion for advocacy in both the public and private sectors. He is the founder and CEO of Pylorus Strategies, LLC, located in Washington, D.C. His clientele includes both private and public sector clients.

A past senior executive service member in the federal government, Neal served as an advisor to Presidential Cabinet members; to presidents, CEOs and other C-level executives of national political and non-profit organizations; and to candidates and campaigns on all levels.

Previously, Neal served as the senior advisor and political director for the current Congressional Black Caucus Chairwoman, Rep. Karen Bass (CA-37); National Political Director for the Democratic National Committee; an Obama White House appointee as senior advisor to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation and Director of the Office of Small Business; Finance Director for Obama for America HQ and the Presidential Inaugural Committee; Deputy Political Director for the Democratic Governors Association; and NAACP National Youth Director.

Neal holds a Bachelor of Arts from Howard University and a Master of Public Administration from American University. He has spent his adulthood in Washington, D.C. and resides on Capitol Hill.

About the Smithsonian Libraries

The Smithsonian Libraries maintains a collection of more than 2 million volumes and serves as an educational resource for the Smithsonian Institution, the global research community and the public. The Libraries are located in Washington, D.C.; Edgewater, Md.; Chantilly, Va.; New York City; and the Republic of Panama. Connect with the Libraries at library.si.edu, [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [Tumblr](#), [YouTube](#) and the [Smithsonian Libraries Unbound blog](#).

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