

Sno-Isle Libraries Board of Trustees

2025 TRUSTEE APPLICATION

Ryan May

Resident of Edmonds, Washington

Describe your education, occupation, and/or relevant volunteer experience.

I hold a Bachelor's degree in Print Journalism and Film Production from California State University, Long Beach, and am the founder of Forged Ink Communications, a Snohomish County-based small business. I help mission-driven organizations communicate clearly and effectively by distilling complex topics into accessible, public-facing content. My work has appeared in print and online for clients in 17 countries and is grounded in a deep commitment to civic engagement, public education, and community storytelling.

I also serve as a Temporary Deputy County Auditor with Snohomish County Elections, where I've worked since 2020. Over the past five years and multiple election cycles, I've trained and supported seasonal staff, developed instructional and training materials now used in both Snohomish and Island counties, and helped ensure accuracy and legal compliance in all voter-facing communications. I provide direct service to a broad cross-section of the county's 537,000+ registered voters and nearly 865,000 residents—responding to complex questions by phone and email, often during high-volume, high-pressure periods. I offer clear, nonpartisan support on ballot access, registration, and other voter concerns in accordance with Washington State law. During primary and presidential elections, I've frequently been solely responsible for managing the division's public-facing inbox. That role demands professionalism, precision, and trust, as I represent the Elections Division through timely, high-volume digital communication at pivotal moments in the cycle.

In the nonprofit space, I serve as the elected Communications Director and a board member for Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds, a 170-member volunteer-run organization focused on conservation, education, and intergenerational community. I lead all internal and external communications and oversee a range of public-facing efforts to grow membership, support environmental awareness, and encourage learning for anglers of all experience levels. I built and maintain the club's website, manage digital outreach, and produce a steady stream of educational materials, trip handouts, and blog content tailored to both beginners and seasoned fishers.

A major focus of my work has been making fly fishing—and our club—more accessible to people traditionally underrepresented in the sport. I've shaped messaging and outreach strategies that welcome women, younger members, and newcomers from all backgrounds. Through inclusive communication and consistent digital engagement, we've seen a near doubling of membership and a significant rise in event participation. I'm proud of those outcomes. They reflect not just interest in fly fishing, but a sense of belonging—something we strive to cultivate as a club.

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I also volunteer as a Forest Steward with the Snohomish County Healthy Forest Project, leading outreach and engagement for quarterly shoreline restoration events at Picnic Point. I serve as a liaison between Olympic Fly Fishers, DCNR staff, park rangers, and the public to increase visibility and participation. I create outreach campaigns using photos taken onsite and share them across Facebook, Instagram, and Nextdoor to reach a broad, hyperlocal audience. The response has been strong—each campaign has meaningfully boosted turnout. While I support hands-on restoration efforts as well, my greatest impact has come from connecting people to place and promoting shared environmental responsibility through strategic communication. Together, these roles reflect a long-standing commitment to public service, equitable access, lifelong learning, and meaningful civic engagement—values I’ve experienced firsthand and come to expect from Sno-Isle Libraries as an active patron for over 35 years.

Give a brief description of the skills and experience you can bring to the Sno-Isle Libraries Board of Trustees.

I bring a mix of communications, public service, and nonprofit board experience, along with a lifelong connection to Sno-Isle Libraries. In both my professional and volunteer work, I’ve helped organizations communicate clearly, serve the public with integrity, and grow stronger through community engagement. I lead with empathy—a value that’s especially important in my role with Snohomish County Elections, where patience, clarity, and fairness matter at every interaction. I’ve also developed public-facing training materials now used in both Snohomish and Island counties, and regularly help people navigate complex systems through accessible, responsive support.

As a business owner, I’ve seen the value of library services firsthand. The research tools and small business resources offered through Sno-Isle were a huge help when I launched my communications firm in 2009. I know many others in our region rely on those same supports, especially in moments of economic turmoil and hardship. Libraries are an essential part of our local economy, not just our educational landscape.

I also serve as an elected board member and Communications Director for a 170-member nonprofit, where I manage all internal and external outreach. I’ve built websites, developed digital content, and led DEI-focused engagement campaigns that helped double our membership and bring in more women, younger members, and first-time participants. I regularly collaborate with local government staff, environmental partners, and the public to create content that builds turnout and fosters a sense of belonging.

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I've spent my career helping people access information, navigate systems, and feel more connected to their communities. That's what libraries do best. If selected for the Board, I'd bring curiosity, follow-through, empathy, and a deep appreciation for the role Sno-Isle plays in our everyday lives.

Have you had any professional or lived experiences working with underrepresented groups, e.g. immigrant or indigenous populations?

Yes. As Communications Director for Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds, I've led outreach efforts aimed at making our club more welcoming to people traditionally underrepresented in the sport—including women, younger generations, LGBTQ individuals, and members of multilingual and multicultural communities. This work has included adjusting how we present ourselves publicly, sharing more inclusive stories through imagery, and designing outreach that better reflects the community we hope to serve. We've seen strong growth in participation as a result.

Through my communications business, I left a decade-long career in Hollywood to start something more values-driven—drawing on my background in print journalism to help organizations communicate with clarity and purpose. Over time, my focus shifted from competitive, Western-style branding toward work rooted in service, community, and social impact.

That shift was shaped in large part by several years of work with clients across the Middle East, including in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Kingdom of Bahrain. I was struck by how many of these projects emphasized what individuals and organizations gave back to their local communities. I later came to understand this as a core tenet of Islam—a cultural value that deeply influenced how I approached communication going forward.

That realization set the tone for everything I would pursue from that point forward. I began actively seeking clients whose work extended beyond profit—organizations focused on equity, lifelong learning, education, sustainability, or civic engagement. In doing so, I found meaningful work that aligned with my own values and allowed me to contribute to causes I believe in.

One of the most rewarding of these collaborations was with longtime client Feroshia Knight, with whom I co-wrote the book *Become the Successful Coach You Were Meant to Be*. The book is a step-by-step guide for aspiring life coaches, blending business acumen with deep inner work. It empowers readers to build meaningful, ethical practices rooted in emotional intelligence, personal growth, and lasting community impact. Helping bring this project to life was a powerful affirmation of my belief in lifelong learning, accessible tools for transformation, and communication that meets people where they are.

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In my role with Snohomish County Elections, I regularly assist voters from across the county's diverse communities—including new Americans, Indigenous residents, and people navigating language or accessibility barriers. With more than 25% of county residents identifying as Hispanic or Asian, it's essential that public-facing roles like mine approach every interaction with clarity, empathy, and cultural awareness. I also support the County by facilitating access to multilingual materials and working to improve voter understanding, confidence, and trust in the elections process through translation services and plain-language guidance. Whether troubleshooting a registration issue or answering complex ballot questions, I focus on making every voter feel respected, supported, and empowered to participate.

That same commitment to equity, access, and inclusive communication is what draws me to the mission of Sno-Isle Libraries.

What interests you about serving on the Sno-Isle Libraries Board of Trustees?

Sno-Isle Libraries have shaped every stage of my life. As a child, they were a place of wonder and exploration. As a young adult, they offered access to knowledge I couldn't afford. And as a small business owner, they've been both a catalyst and a lifeline. When I launched my business in 2009, I turned to Sno-Isle's research databases, Wi-Fi, and public spaces constantly. That support didn't just help me start—it continues to sustain me.

The library has also been where I've explored new career paths, hobbies, and complex issues—from self-education in history and media to understanding the ethical implications of emerging technologies. I've spent hours at branches like Mukilteo and Edmonds during remodels, power outages, or simply when I needed a warm, welcoming place to work or meet.

I've been fortunate to build a modest personal library over the years, but I never take that for granted. Many in our community don't have shelves of books to browse at home, or a reliable internet connection to access digital tools and learning platforms. That's why I'm drawn to this role: to help ensure Sno-Isle continues to offer reliable, equitable access to information and opportunity—including robust collections across diverse topics and formats, and digital services that bridge the access gap for those who need it most.

I've seen firsthand how vital those services are in my role with Snohomish County Elections. Over the years, I've supported hundreds of voters—some temporarily unhoused, some without internet or printers at home—who needed help accessing ballots or voter information. When they couldn't make it to the county campus, I'd often refer them to their nearest Sno-Isle library. These branches weren't just alternatives. They filled a critical service gap for voters who had nowhere else to turn. In an era of misinformation and disinformation, libraries remain one of the few trusted spaces where the public can access accurate, nonpartisan information. That role is critical to our democracy.

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I wear many hats. I'm a small business owner, communications strategist, nonprofit board member, and public servant. These roles have taught me the importance of listening, fiscal stewardship, and serving with integrity. But I also bring deep gratitude and lived experience as a lifelong patron.

I know the value of every dollar. I've learned to think creatively about how to do more with less. It's a mindset that carries over to my work in public service. At Snohomish County Elections, I regularly help make the most of limited public funds, ensuring every communication, system, and training resource delivers meaningful impact. That same stewardship is essential to sustaining a library system as large and vital as Sno-Isle.

I want to help Sno-Isle Libraries continue to evolve. Not only as stewards of knowledge, but as a champion for lifelong learning, digital equity, and responsive, inclusive collections across every part of our region.

If selected to serve, I want to represent everyday patrons. People facing housing instability. Those without digital access. Adults in career transition. Anyone rebuilding.

I also want to speak for young people who need safe spaces. And for community programs that create belonging, connection, and a place to feel seen.

At the same time, I want to advocate for older adults. Many rely on the library for technology access, learning opportunities, social connection, or simply a peaceful, inviting place to read, learn, or connect.

Libraries are one of the few public spaces where generations regularly cross paths. When that space is thoughtfully cultivated, it can foster shared learning, mutual respect, and a stronger sense of community for us all.

In short, I'm drawn to the chance to help shape a system that's not only relevant, but indispensable—to everyone.

Is there any other information that you would like to include

I'm not coming into this role with an agenda or a single issue to promote. I'm here to listen, learn, and serve—because I want to give back to a system that has given so much to me.

I've lived in Snohomish County since I was a teenager and have now been a Sno-Isle patron for over 35 years. That kind of connection shapes how I show up. I care deeply about this region and the people who call it home.

In every role I take on, I lead with empathy, clarity, and follow-through. I believe that showing up matters—and I take pride in doing the work, whether that's public outreach, thoughtful planning, or helping others navigate complex systems.

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My work with Snohomish County Elections has prepared me to serve with care, accuracy, and accountability. I'm comfortable in sensitive, high-stakes environments, and know the value of public trust. That mindset would guide my work as a trustee.

Above all, I believe public institutions should be welcoming, transparent, and truly responsive to the communities they serve. That belief—and a commitment to meaningful work—is the throughline in everything I do, and it's what I'd bring to the Sno-Isle Libraries Board of Trustees. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.