

Thoreau Society – ALA 2020

The Thoreau Society is pleased to sponsor two panels for the upcoming ALA Conference on May 21-24, 2020 in San Diego (<https://americanliteratureassociation.org/>).

Thoreau in the Anthropocene: While Thoreau is America's touchstone prophet of Nature and the wild, he is also one of our earliest and best witnesses to the many ways the human world entangles and threatens the environment. What does it mean to read Thoreau from the midst of the Anthropocene? How does his work differ when we shift from reading him as the spokesman for the wild to an early activist on behalf of a threatened planet? How does Thoreau's writing hold up in the age of Standing Rock, Global Climate Strike and Extinction Rebellion? What does Thoreau's model of civil disobedience connect to activists like Bill McKibben, LaDonna Brave Bull Allard and Greta Thunberg? Where does Thoreau's work fit into the growing movement for environmental and climate justice? How has Thoreau's growing understanding of phenology and river hydrology aided our current understanding of climate change and ecosystem resilience? How might Thoreau's reconception of the human and its imbrication in what Laura Dassow Walls calls the parahuman serve us in the era of mass extinction? Please submit 300-word proposals for 20-minute presentations by January 15, 2020 to John J. Kucich at jkucich@bridgew.edu.

Thoreau and the Author Society in the 21st Century: As the oldest organization devoted to the study of a single author, the Thoreau Society (founded in 1941) has long wrestled with the role of the author in literary studies and the broader society. On the 30th anniversary of the founding of the ALA, this is an apt moment to focus on role of individual authors in the academy and beyond. How have author societies shaped the research and careers of scholars? How do author societies respond to, and shape, an author's reputation and status in society at large? How does the focus on a single author shape or obscure our understanding of the social networks and cultural forces that drive textual production and reception – particularly the labor of others? How do author societies balance the sometimes divergent interests of their members – scholars, writers, activists and enthusiasts? How do scholars balance the interests of an author society with their own evolving research agendas and the changing priorities in American literature? This panel welcomes participants working in Thoreau studies as well as those working in related fields. Please submit 100-200 word proposals for 10-minute presentations by January 15, 2020 to John J. Kucich at jkucich@bridgew.edu.