Overview
PLA is the largest association supporting the unique and evolving needs of public library professionals. Founded in 1944, PLA serves 9,000 members in public libraries large and small in communities across the United States and Canada, with a growing presence around the world. PLA offers professional development and networking, transformative public library initiatives, and a conference that welcomes public library staff into meaningful partnership. In collaboration with its parent organization, the American Library Association, PLA strives to help its members shape the essential institution of public libraries by serving as an indispensable ally for public library leaders.

Organization
PLA is governed by a 10-member board of directors and is supported by the work of approximately 25 committees and advisory groups. PLA is headquartered in Chicago and has a staff of 15.

Organizational Goals (from the PLA strategic plan):

1. Advocacy and Awareness: PLA plays a major role in public library advocacy and in influencing public perception about the library.
2. Leadership and Transformation: PLA is a leading source for learning opportunities to advance transformation of public libraries and helps to position the library’s institutional and professional orientation from internal to outward toward the community.
3. Literate Nation: PLA is a leader and valued partner of public libraries’ initiatives to create a literate nation.
4. Organizational Excellence: PLA is positioned to sustain and grow its resources to advance the work of the association.

Our Work
Our groundbreaking initiatives do more than develop new skills—they move the profession to ever more innovative places.

- **PLA Conference**: PLA’s biennial conference attracts nearly 10,000 public library staff and stakeholders from across the country and around the world. This multi-day event offers over 100 top-quality education programs, social events that include author luncheons and networking receptions, and a bustling exhibits hall featuring the latest in products and services.

- **Digital Literacy**: Community members come into public libraries every day, hoping to complete life tasks many of us take for granted, but lacking the basic computer skills to accomplish them. Through its digital literacy efforts, including [DigitalLearn.org](http://DigitalLearn.org), PLA supports its members to make their libraries digital literacy learning centers.

- **Early Literacy**: In partnership with the Association for Library Services to Children, PLA created [Every Child Ready to Read](http://EveryChildReadytoRead), a parent education initiative that stresses early literacy begins with the primary adults in a child’s life and empowers public libraries to assume an essential role in supporting literacy within communities.

- **Family Engagement**: For schools and libraries, family engagement means respectful partnerships that offer the information, guidance, and opportunities for families to be active in their children’s learning and development. PLA is helping public libraries reach out to families of all types, raise up their voices, and reimagine library services through a family engagement framework.

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Leadership Development: PLA doesn’t just improve public library services—PLA builds public library leaders by empowering public library professionals with the skills necessary to be innovative and successful leaders of change. PLA accomplishes this through a range of professional development opportunities such as the Leadership Academy, which empowers public library staff with the knowledge necessary to be innovative and successful leaders of change and the Dynamic Planning Institute, which teaches best practices in strategic planning for libraries with a unique focus on simple, low-cost planning.

Performance Measurement: Typically, libraries rely on simple attendance counts and anecdotal success stories to measure the effectiveness of their services; however, these statistics are not enough to guide internal strategy or build persuasive arguments to secure library funding. PLA offers Project Outcome, a free program designed to help public libraries understand and share the true impact of essential library services and programs.

In addition, PLA offers webinars, publications, technical assistance, volunteer opportunities and other programming that help our members thrive in areas such as civic engagement, equity and diversity, health and financial literacy, advocacy, and more.

Partnerships
PLA deepens its support of libraries and library professionals by partnering with other groups serving libraries, government organizations, funders, and leaders in related sectors such as education, small business, and health. These partnerships connect PLA members to the critical resources they need to lead their communities. PLA also uses these partnership to bring the value and impact of public libraries to the table in wide-ranging discussions that impact our communities and our country.

Gates Foundation - Global Libraries Legacy Partnership
Following the announcement that the foundation would wind down its Global Libraries (GL) Initiative, PLA received a ten-year, $10+ million grant, from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. To exit the field in a catalytic way leaving the field strong, GL invited three organizations to apply for funding as legacy partners: PLA, the Technology and Social Change Group at the University of Washington's Information School (TASCHA), and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). PLA has begun working with IFLA and TASCHA to develop plans that support a globally connected field. Over the next 10 years, these funds will:

- create and scale new models of public library research, training, and practice,
- strengthen collaboration across organizations that support public libraries,
- support global connections between public libraries and library organizations, and
- sustain the success of existing GL programs.

Additional Resources

Main Website  Public Libraries Online  The Public Libraries Podcast
PLA News  Awards & Grants  Advocacy Resources
Public Libraries Magazine  Social Media Channels  Professional Tools

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