



# Leading Libraries to Even Greater Potential

**We know the power of libraries.** Public libraries are constantly evolving—from information providers to critical centers of learning, creativity, and community development. For libraries to keep up with the changing needs of the people they serve, the library field must work together to embrace and sustain the exciting growth and leadership opportunities it represents.

**As the demands on public libraries have changed, the need for an adaptive, innovative library field is greater than ever.** The Public Library Association (PLA) has always been an indispensable ally for public library leaders, providing a community of support that helps them shape this essential institution. We believe that our field thrives with better coordination among library champions. That is why we joined the movement started by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 20 years ago to strengthen the world's 320,000 public libraries by showing how investing in libraries transforms communities. Now, as the foundation leaves the field after a \$1 billion investment, PLA is poised to take on an expanded role in their legacy.

**PLA is partnering with two other global library organizations to strengthen the library field.** With initial funding and support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, PLA is joining with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the Technology & Social Change Group at the University of Washington Information School (TASCHA) to align our individual efforts toward a shared vision: a global library field where every public library can fulfill its potential as a vital, visible source of individual and community well-being. Supported by more than \$10 million in grants, over the next 10 years PLA will explore ways to work together toward common goals—like better understanding how libraries drive community development, helping library leaders respond to local needs, and strengthening networks for librarians to learn from each other.



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source of individual and community well-being.**

**Our role in this partnership will reflect the core purpose of PLA—to help library professionals shape the possibilities that public libraries bring to their communities.** As the role of the library expands, PLA is committed to helping library professionals make change work for them—especially as they are increasingly challenged to do more with less.

**PLA's work in this partnership transform public libraries through expanded opportunities across three interconnected partnership priorities:**



**Impact measurement:** A foundation of PLA's work is moving the library field toward measuring the impact of their services. We will continue to invest in programs that make understanding and articulating the success of public libraries a standard practice among U.S. library leaders.



**Leadership:** As libraries are better able to measure their performance and positive impacts on communities, advocacy will become even more critical as a leadership skill. PLA will help library staff develop the skills needed to position libraries as essential for meeting diverse community needs, and to leverage new resources for the future.



**Innovative programs and services:** As communities look to their libraries to help address new challenges, libraries must be able to accelerate the creation of new, innovative programs. When combined with the ability to measure the impact of those new programs, the field will become adept at replicating and scaling the most effective new practices.

**PLA will contribute our unique voice and experience to this partnership as:**

- A **source of practical support** for public library professionals
- A **driver of systemic change** for the U.S. library field on issues like library advocacy
- A **national network** that connects library leaders
- A **collaborator** with a range of organizations that support the library field, within and outside the United States

**This partnership will expand PLA's impact to support a global community of public library professionals.** Working closely with our members, IFLA, TASCHA, and other organizations that share our vision, PLA will go beyond our traditional constituencies and contribute to enhancing the global library field. We will start by deepening and expanding our engagement with public libraries at home, and use new insights to support similar programs around the world. In the next few years, we will:

- Expand the content and reach of our [Project Outcome](#) initiative and then document and share the Project Outcome model to accelerate other impact measurement initiatives.
- Develop new leadership training content to prepare diverse librarians for leadership through a new [Leadership Academy](#) and other programs.
- Identify emergent program and service advances, engage members in innovation, and then learn and share findings across international boundaries.
- Develop staff and member leader skills in collaborative impact, invite a wide range of collaborators to engage and contribute their unique skills, and convene a series of collaborator summits.
- Improve our own capacity to serve as an international resource to library leaders—through a strong communications strategy to engage the field, efforts to identify and measure PLA's impact, and planning for sustainability well beyond this initiative.

PLA helps library people shape possibility. Our work in this partnership will serve the global library field in new ways by expanding what PLA does best: bringing library leaders together in meaningful partnership to enhance what makes their library unique and invent what comes next.

**About PLA:** [ALA.org/pla/about](https://www.ala.org/pla/about) | **About this partnership:** [ALA.org/pla/initiatives/legacy](https://www.ala.org/pla/initiatives/legacy)

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