

PLA President's Report, ALA 2014 Annual Conference
Carolyn Anthony, 2013-2014

My time as PLA President has been one of the most challenging and inspiring of my career. I feel more connected to public libraries than ever before and ever more proud to be a part of this profession. There is no doubt we have weathered quite a storm of technology changes, budget cuts, and challenges to our relevancy. However our profession has responded well, becoming more innovative and nimble than ever.

I've been lucky to have a front seat to all the work PLA is doing to support us in these times and that has made me so proud to be not just President, but a member as well.

I'd like to thank the PLA officers and members of our committees, task forces, and advisory groups that have worked so hard to ensure PLA offers the ideas, education, and support our members need. Thanks also to Barb Macikas, executive director of PLA, and the PLA staff for their hard work on our behalf. I look forward to representing and serving PLA next year as past-president.



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Awards and Scholarships

Through the generosity of sponsors, PLA was able to offer a variety of awards and grants designed to highlight the best in public library service and to honor those bringing innovation, creativity and dedication to public libraries.

PLA 2014 Awards

PLA's annual award program offered 13 unique awards in 2014.

Public Libraries Feature Article Contest

First Place Award: Jasmina Jusic, adult services librarian, Park City (Utah) Library, [Entrepreneurial Leadership](#) (July/August 2013 issue)

Honorable Mention Award: Nicholas Higgins, director, Outreach Services, Brooklyn Public Library, ["Family Literacy on the Inside"](#) (January/February 2013 issue)

Allie Beth Martin Award sponsored by Baker & Taylor: Rollie James Welch, collection manager, Cleveland (Ohio) Public Library

Baker & Taylor Entertainment Audio Music/Video Product Award Grant: Broadview (Ill.) Public Library District

DEMCO New Leaders Travel Grant: Andrea Hirsh, electronic services/community outreach librarian, Juneau (Alaska) Public Libraries; Zac Paul Matthews, digital services librarian, Everett (Wash.) Public Library; Emery M. Ortiz, assistant director, Onslow County (N.C.) Public Library; and Michelle A. Moore, librarian and director, Missaukee District (Mich.) Library.

EBSCO Excellence in Small and/or Rural Public Library Service Award: Bertha Voyer Memorial Library in Honey Grove, Texas

Gordan M. Conable Award sponsored by LSSI: Smithville (Texas) Public Library

Polaris Innovation in Technology John Iliff Award: Edmonton Public Library in Alberta, Canada

Romance Writers of America Library Grant: Red Wing (Minn.) Public Library

Upstart Innovation Award: Terrebonne Parish (La.) Library

Spectrum Scholar/PLA Conference Travel Grants

PLA awarded ten (10) 2014 Spectrum Scholar/PLA Conference Travel Grants to Spectrum Scholars LaToya Devezin, Claudia Flores, Gloria Jertberg, William Langston, Sarah Hashemi Scott, Eimmy Solis, Victoria Thomas, Jade Valenzuela, Marco Veyna-Reyes and Sophie Young.

The grants provided \$1,000 for travel and housing arrangements as well as complimentary registration to the PLA 2014 Conference, March 11–15 in Indianapolis. The purpose of these grants is to introduce Spectrum Scholars to public librarianship and to provide networking opportunities for scholars within the profession.

Conferences

PLA 2014 Conference

Nearly 8,000 librarians, library workers, exhibitors and supporters came together in Indianapolis for the PLA 2014 Conference, March 11-15. Sessions and events exploring and celebrating the explored the changing role of public libraries featured the nation's leading innovators and professionals both within and outside of the library community.

Opening Session speaker civil rights lawyer Bryan Stevenson echoed the value of libraries and the vital role librarians and library staff play in offering equal opportunities for disadvantaged communities and youth. Stevenson's inspirational remarks brought tears, cheers, and pride that library professionals are at the forefront of educating their communities and helping individuals reach their potentials.

According to national data released during the conference by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, public libraries served nearly 300 million people throughout the United States in FY2011, a number that is equivalent to more than 95 percent of the total U.S. population. The data also shows that public libraries circulated more than 2.4 billion items, the highest circulation in 10 years, representing a continued increasing trend.

The uptick in demand for library services is not surprising as libraries coast-to-coast expand beyond their traditional roles, providing more opportunities for customer engagement and participation and delivering new services that connect closely with their communities. The engaging Library Space Pavilion at PLA Conference highlighted unique ways to offer interaction in the library, such as a hands-on Camp Happiness space and a Makerspace lab. Additionally conference sessions such as the Turning Outward to Lead Change in Your Community series, provided a national forum for library professionals to participate in discussions regarding community engagement and how library staff can better fuel dialogue to inspire change and growth in the community.

PLA 2014 provided a learning experience that motivated and empowered its attendees to consider and execute new ideas. Such programs as the BIG IDEAS series which featured three programs with innovators and bestselling authors Simon Sinek, author of *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't*; Megan McArdle *Newsweek/The Daily Beast* correspondent and the author of *The Up Side of Down: Why Failing Well Is the Key to Success*; David McRaney, the author of the bestselling *You Are Now Less Dumb: How to Conquer Mob Mentality*; Clive Thompson author of *Smarter Than You Think: How Technology is Changing Our Minds for the Better*; and Amy Cuddy, Harvard Business School professor and presenter of the TED talk, "Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are."

PLA Conference also featured an expanded Career Center that was a helpful and resourceful spot for job seekers, recruiting libraries, and advisors to connect at PLA 2014. The Career Center had coordinated events at select times, but remained open during conference hours to enable job posting or impromptu interviews. Special events included: a free Career Fair, featuring nearly 20 libraries/recruiters publicizing job opportunities and engaging with job seekers; a full-day of Resume Review and Interview Coaching; and a fast-paced Speed Mentoring Event.

Conference Author Events drew large crowds as attendees enjoyed some of their favorite authors, such as Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction winner Richard Ford, *Canada*; Brad Meltzer, *I Am Amelia Earhart* and *I Am Abraham Lincoln*; TODAY Show contributor Jane Pauley, *Your Life Calling: Reimagining the Rest of Your Life*; Mary Kay Andrews, *Ladies Night*; Andre Dubus III, *Dirty Love*; Rainbow Rowell, *Eleanor & Park*; John Green, *The Fault in Our Stars*; Craig Johnson, "Walt Longmire Mystery" series; and Lisa Unger, *In the Blood*. And bestselling author and independent bookstore owner Ann Patchett, author of *This is the Story of a Happy*

Marriage, shared book recommendations during the Ann Patchett Book Hour. The conference wrapped on a high note with humorist and author David Sedaris.

Many who could not travel to Indianapolis for the conference participated virtually. More than 265 individuals (79 single registrations, 62 group registrations of three or more people) participated in the PLA 2014 Virtual Conference on March 13 and 14. Live programming consisted of five hour-long programs each day, plus author interviews, poster sessions and opportunities for networking with peers.

Overall PLA 2014 was an extremely successful conference that offered more than 150 educational programs; special events showcasing bestselling authors and innovators; and nearly 400 exhibitors that featured the latest technology and services vital to today's public libraries, librarians and their users.

PLA 2016 will continue efforts to educate and motivate public library professionals and will take place in Denver, April 5-9, 2016.

PLA @ ALA 2014 Annual Conference

This year, PLA is offering 22 educational programs dedicated to public library professionals at the 2014 ALA Annual Conference in Las Vegas, including three half-day preconferences. Concurrent program topics include community relationships, early literacy, leadership, library data use, and more.

The PLA President's Program and Award's Presentation will recognize the PLA 2014 award winners and host keynote speaker, author Barry Lopez, a National Book Award winner and author of essays and fiction characterized by humanitarian and environmental concerns.

Digital Learn

Since launching in March 2013, DigitalLearn.org, a PLA digital literacy initiative funded by IMLS, has exceeded expectations. The site is an online hub for digital literacy support and training. It includes self-directed tutorials for users as well as a community of practice for staff at libraries and community organizations who are working to bridge the digital divide.

The Community of Practice launched in June 2013 and so far has over 8,000 members and over 230 unique posts, including events, questions, next practices, resources, etc., and since spring 2014, more than 7,000 people have completed the self-directed end user classes. Surveys have indicated that the classes are used both by independent individuals as well as libraries and non-profits using the classes in conjunction with in person classes.

The grant IMLS awarded PLA in September 2012 will conclude in August 2014; however PLA has plans to submit a proposal to IMLS for another grant to offset some of the costs of sustaining and expanding the project, with an emphasis on mobile devices and courses in new languages.

Edge Initiative - Public Access Technology Benchmarks

As an Edge Roundtable member, PLA is excited to announce that the initiative officially launched this past January. The Edge Roundtable, made up of 12 organizations, including ALA's Office for Information Technology Policy, led a groundbreaking effort funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop, pilot, and promote the adoption of public access technology benchmarks for public libraries. Since its inception, Edge has become a nationally recognized management and leadership tool that is helping libraries and local governments work together to achieve community goals.

PLA's primary role in the Edge Initiative was the development and rollout of training content related to the Edge benchmarks. The training helps libraries use their Edge assessment results in advocacy and planning activities. The webinar-based training is a crucial component of Edge participation and offers four unique lessons: Community Assessment, Advocacy, Technology Management, and Library Leadership.

Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library, 2nd Edition

Spanish Toolkit

The [Every Child Ready to Read® your Library® Toolkit for Spanish-Speaking Communities](#) was released in the spring of 2014. The toolkit contains everything library staff need to offer ECRR programming to their Spanish-speaking patrons. This digital download is a turnkey product that includes the five ECRR Power Points in Spanish, as well as seven activity handouts, several booklist handouts, and lots of further information and resources.

IMLS Early Learning Grant

PLA and ALSC received a three-year National Leadership Project Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to support “Bringing Home Early Literacy: Determining the Impact of Library Programming on Parent Behavior,” a research project that will examine how early literacy programming offered by public libraries affects parent behavior and engagement during their children’s most formative years.

Objectives of this project are to further establish and advance the valuable role of public libraries as partners in early literacy and community learning and to provide critically needed research on the impact of parent/caregiver intervention in young children’s reading success. The project will use the [Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library® Second Edition \(ECRR2\)](#) as the parent education model to study. Because ECRR2 promotes a common set of goals and program content for libraries, use of this model will insure consistency in the study.

2014 Opening Minds Innovation Award

In January 2014 Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library®, 2nd Edition, was awarded the 2014 Opening Minds Innovation Award, which honors individuals and organizations whose innovations advance the field of early childhood care and education.

Leadership Development

A key strategic goal of PLA is to build a future of transformative leadership education and resources for members. Since establishing a leadership task force in 2008, PLA has consistently offered programs and sought out opportunities that foster public library leadership.

This year PLA received a 2014 Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program Grant for the project, “Navigating Change, Building Community: Outward-focused Public Library Leadership Training.” This three-year grant will allow PLA to further refine and implement the PLA Leadership Academy and measure the impact on participants and their libraries. PLA plans to offer the Academy in the springs of 2015 and 2017. In addition, PLA will convene a meeting of leadership training providers in the fall of 2015 to share evaluation results and best practices and raise awareness and understanding of the PLA leadership model.

The first “PLA Leadership Academy: Navigating Change and Building Community” was offered in March 2013. Developed in collaboration with the International City and County Management Association (ICMA), the PLA Leadership Academy offered a groundbreaking focus on developing the skills needed to work with municipal officials and other community stakeholders to enhance the position of the library within the community and improve the overall effectiveness of library services and programs.

Performance Measurements

With advocacy critical to the future of public library funding, it’s no longer enough to simply report circulation, reference, door-count, and program attendance. These numbers don’t begin to capture everything our libraries are providing to our communities. And as more people use the library virtually, some of these measures are beginning to decline, which, in the competition for limited funding may be used as justification for a cut in the library budget.

Library professionals have learned to capture wonderful library stories and illustrate success with anecdotes, but how do they capture and showcase the extent and impact of services like literacy education, employment counseling, small business support, civic engagement, and participatory content creation? These library services and more are critical offerings that contribute to the vitality and quality of our communities.

To that end, PLA is working to develop new measures of effectiveness for public libraries. PLA has brought together a Performance Measurement Task Force comprised of research experts from universities and IMLS, city and county representatives, technology specialists, state library representatives, and public librarians to identify and develop standardized measures and to promote the training for implementation and use of the measures across public libraries. Their work is being accelerated through support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Some libraries have already found ways to measure the reach and influence of select library services, so the taskforce is scanning the landscape to identify performance measures and collection tools currently in use. Following the environmental scan, the taskforce will work to define or create other outcome measurements to fill in gaps. Existing measures may be modified to fit the taskforce's framework, with an eye towards creating a final set of measures that are low-burden for libraries to adopt.

PLA Leadership

2014 Elections

Vailey Oehlke, director of the Multnomah County (Ore.) Library, was elected the 2015-2016 President of PLA. Oehlke began her career at Multnomah in 1997 as a youth librarian and quickly rose from there. Since becoming director in 2009, she has been proud to lead the organization through three successful funding efforts, culminating in 2012 with the formation of a library district to provide stable funding for the cherished and well-used institution celebrating its 150th year of service.

In addition to her excellent work on behalf of her own library, Oehlke has consistently been dedicated to furthering the larger field of public libraries—serving on the PLA Board (July 2011 to June 2013) and the Urban Libraries Council Executive Board (current). Additionally, she serves on an advisory committee for an IMLS-grant project with the University of Albany's Center for Technology in Government, and has served on ALA's Digital Content Working Group. Locally, she serves on the Leadership Advisory Council for the Cradle to Career's Ready for Kindergarten Collaborative. Life beyond work includes family, a feisty terrier named Tucker, lots of running, hiking and general "outdoorsiness," and time with friends.

Oehlke will become PLA president-elect at the conclusion of the American Library Association (ALA) 2014 Annual Conference this June and will assume the PLA presidency in June 2015 for one year.

Also on the ballot were the ALA Division Councilor and two Director-At-Large board vacancies; all three-year terms. PLA members elected [Rivkah Sass](#), director, Sacramento (Calif.) Public as ALA Division Councilor. Sass will represent PLA on the ALA Council and keep PLA apprised of Council activity and decisions. [Melanie Huggins](#), executive director, Richland Library, Columbia, S.C., and [Manya Shorr](#), assistant director, Community Programs and Services, Omaha (Neb.) Public Library, were elected as directors-at-large to the PLA Board.

PLA thanks all the candidates who stood for election, as well as the PLA Nominating Committee (Chair Marcia Warner, director, Grand Rapids Public Library (Mich.) for providing a strong and worthy slate of candidates.

Efforts to Expand E-Rate Funding

PLA President Carolyn Anthony and PLA Board Member Felton Thomas have been key participants working with the ALA Washington Office to expand E-rate funding. The two attended a meeting on National Library Legislative Day with FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler to support OITP's efforts to build the case for library broadband as it relates to The E's of Libraries™, which include Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Empowerment, and Engagement. At issue are not just on-going E-rate funds, but "found money" of approximately \$2B that is also to be used for related expenditures. The group presented points regarding the use of the Internet in public libraries, the great need that is still there for upgrading access speeds and improving network infrastructure, and the need to simplify and improve current application procedures.

After hearing Chairman Tom Wheeler state that the library community should speak with one voice, Anthony has been actively working to find common ground with other library organizations. The issue will be taken up by the FCC in July 2014.

Professional Development

Throughout the year, PLA offered premier online and in-person educational events.

Online Course – “The Accidental Public Library Technology Trainer”

This four-week blended learning course offered Oct/Nov 2013 is designed for library professionals who have unexpectedly found themselves responsible for technology training at their library. Librarian, author, and trainer Stephanie Gerding guided participants through a highly interactive combination of live webinars, independent assignments, and online discussions.

Online Course – “Winning Grants for Your Library”

This four-week blended learning course offered Sept/Oct 2013, also taught by Stephanie Gerding, helps attendees learn how to apply the basic process of grant work, including developing grant projects based on community needs and library planning; find library grant funding sources best suited for their public library; and write a proposal funders will love.

PLA Results Boot Camp

The annual PLA Boot Camp “Results Are What Matters: Management Tools and Techniques to Improve Library Services and Programs” was offered in August 2013. This four-and-half-day intensive management training taught by June Garcia and Sandra Nelson continually proves to be a very popular professional development event. The program emphasizes the roles of innovation, risk, and change in public library management; the impact of trends on local service priorities; the value of data-based decision-making; and the skills to effectively allocate resources.

“Public Libraries at Work” Webinar Series

PLA presents a “Public Libraries at Work” webinar once a month. The series is designed to offer practical education and innovative ideas that help participants make a difference in their library. 2013-2014 webinars included a diverse array of programs tackling self-publishing, website design, friends and foundations, supervisor skills, violence prevention, and more.



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