



**PLA President’s Report, 2012 ALA Annual Conference
Marcia Warner, 2011-2012**

What an honor it has been to serve as president of the Public Library Association (PLA) and help lead an organization that supports the profession I am so proud to be a part of. In the past year, I have had the opportunity to meet many new colleagues and see firsthand the incredible commitment and creativity of members successfully delivering public library services. It’s no easy feat these days with budget concerns, e-book issues, and ever-shifting priorities. PLA has remained dedicated to doing what it can to help its members meet these challenges head on—developing new quality programming, publications, and events.

I’d like to thank the PLA officers, our committee chairs, task force chairs, and all the members who have worked so effectively during this past year to make a contribution to the field as well as the association. 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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PLA Conference

One of the absolute highlights of the year was the PLA 2012 Conference held March 13-17 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. More than 8,700 library staff, supporters, exhibitors, and authors filled the convention center and took part in nearly 200 educational programs, special events, tours, and exhibits.

Programming focused on key public library issues of advocacy, technology, literacy, and serving adults and youth. At the forefront were emerging technologies, e-books and digital rights management. Some of the more well attended/popular programs included “Getting eContent to Your Customers: Challenges, Best Practices and Solutions”; “The State of E-books in Public Libraries and Publishing”; “Emerging Technologies in Public Libraries”; and “Libraries, Multimedia and Technology” among others.

The conference opened with a welcome from Deborah Jacobs, director of the Global Libraries Initiative, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, an update on association-wide efforts to resolve e-book challenges from Sari Feldman, director of the Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library and co-chair of the Digital Content and Libraries Working Group, and finally, the keynote speaker, environmental business leader, advocate and author Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. No stranger to advocacy and fighting for the future of something he values, Kennedy’s discussion outlined current environmental problems and their possible solutions. His entertaining speech also challenged attendees to examine ways in which they could make a difference. His efforts offer an inspiring parallel for library professionals trying to evolve and sustain their own resources.

PLA conference was filled with special moments. A longtime conference favorite, Nancy Pearl presented “Book Buzz,” highlighting some of the best upcoming books for adults along with a panel of premier publishers. Due to the popularity of this program, a new event was created featuring publishers of books for children and young adults called “Book Buzz Junior.” This debut program was moderated by author Liz Burns (“A Chair, A Fireplace, and a Tea Cozy”).



The conference also included a sold out luncheon with Pearl, in which she introduced her new project with Amazon Publishing, "Book Lust Rediscoveries," a series devoted to reprinting some of the best (and now out of print) novels originally published between 1960 and 2000.

The conference also hosted a series of entertaining author events featuring best-selling adult, young adult and children's authors David Baldacci (*Absolute Power*), Ally Carter, (Gallagher Girls series), Joyce Carol Oates (*We Were the Mulvaney's*) and Jerry Pinkney (*Gulliver's Travels*). PLA also played host to the Audio Publishers Association Dinner which featured authors Carl Hiaasen (*Hoot*), Lisa Scottoline (Rosato & Associates series), Karen Slaughter (*Beyond Reach*) and narrator Wanda McCaddon.

New to the conference this year was the first ever PLA Unconference. This participant-driven event featured conference attendees sharing ideas, presenting brief discussions and networking with other attendees with similar interests.

Bringing the PLA conference to a star-struck close was actor and comedian Betty White. The Emmy winner is also an outspoken animal advocate and author of seven books including her most recent *Betty & Friends: My Life at the Zoo*. White had the standing room only audience laughing throughout her interview with PLA staff member Brendan Dowling. She shared charming and heartwarming stories of her passion for animals as well as her history as both a writer and performer. She drew applause from the audience when she emphasized the importance of libraries as foundations for learning.

Those who were not able to attend the conference in Philadelphia had an opportunity to attend online through the PLA Virtual Conference, held March 15 – 16. The Virtual Conference included five live, hour-long programs each day and special events such as daily author interviews, audio poster sessions featuring PowerPoint presentations, Web tours with audio narration and opportunities for networking. The 136 Virtual Conference registrants (87 single and 49 group registrations) will also have access to archived programming for one year after the event.

I would like to recognize the hard work and dedication of the PLA 2012 Conference Committee, under the leadership of Karen Danczak Lyons, director, Evanston (Ill.) Public Library, the Program Subcommittee, led by Sara Dallas, director, Southern Adirondack (N.Y.) Library System,



and the Local Arrangements Subcommittee, chaired by Siobhan Reardon, director, Free Library of Philadelphia.

Additionally, many thanks to the generous partners of PLA. Their support enables PLA to not only offer the best conference for the public library world, but also premier programming and benefits to members year round.

Feedback and survey results showed the conference was a huge hit with attendees, many of whom were attending for the first time. Quotes such as "hands down the BEST library conference I've attended" go to show that all the hard work of the committee, staff, presenters, and exhibitors really paid off.

PLA Professional Development

Professional development does not begin and end with PLA Conference. Throughout the year, PLA offers premier online and in-person events.

“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.

2011-2012 webinars included:

- “Dive into a Good Book” – Readers’ Advisory with Nancy Pearl
- “Check out E-Readers! Sacramento Public Library Did It, and You Can Too!” – representatives from the Sacramento (Calif.) Public Library
- “Fully Engaged Customer Service at Your Library” – Cheryl Gould, library training consultant



- “Creating a Digital Media Lab at Your Library” – Toby Greenwalt, virtual services coordinator, and Mick Jacobsen, supervisor of adult computer labs, Skokie (Ill.) Public Library
- “Creating Dynamic Library Atmospheres” – Sally Decker Smith, library consultant, and Ted Swigon, museum design consultant
- “Implementing Choose Civility, a Community-Wide Campaign – Valerie Gross, CEO, Howard County (Md.) Library System
- Two Unique Four-Part E-Book Webinar Series
- “Managing Traditional and Social Media for Libraries” – Steve Yacovelli, EdD, Owner and principal, TopDog Learning LLC
- Copyright: What You REALLY Need to Know” - Nancy Sims, copyright program librarian, University of Minnesota Libraries

PLA Boot Camp

After a brief hiatus, the popular and respected, PLA Boot Camp returned in October of 2011. “Results Are What Matters: Management Tools and Techniques to Improve Library Services and Programs” is a four and half day intensive education program designed around PLA’s Results series, and is intended to offer public library management training not provided in library school. Taught by Sandra Nelson and June Garcia at the Nashville Public Library, the four and a half day program tackled topics like strategic planning, data-based decision-making, effective resource allocation, implementation strategies, and change management.

PLA will offer a 2012 Boot Camp in August.

Online Course – “Accidental Public Library Technology Trainer”

The “Accidental Public Library Technology Trainer” four-week blended learning course 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.



PLA will offer the course a third time in September of 2012.

Turning the Page 2.0

Turning the Page 2.0 is the next generation of the popular and successful *Turning the Page: Building Your Library Community* program previously offered by PLA. Free to all participants, the 2.0 training addresses the same core issues of advocacy, communications, and relationship building—this time in a convenient blended-learning format.

In this six-week, facilitated online course, library staff and supporters learn how to create and tell their library's story, deliver effective presentations, develop a compelling case for support, and build and sustain partnerships along the way. Participants choose an advocacy goal for their library and are guided through the creation of an advocacy work plan.

Turning the Page 2.0 has been offered several times throughout 2011-2012 and has made a notable difference for many participants. Feedback includes:

"It was one of the best library-related online experiences I have had."

"I cannot recommend it highly enough. It has changed not just how I advocate for our library, but how I think about things here in general. It is a good investment of time and energy."

"This advocacy program really is making an impression on me. [In a meeting with potential donors the other day] they asked me to answer some questions and I could, thanks to this program. The next day I got a personal visit from a potential donor who wanted to compliment me on my presentation."

PLA Facebook Forums

PLA also began reaching out to library professionals through social media to create interactive, Q&A sessions on a variety of topics, such as e-readers, library safety, customer service, makerspaces in the library, and early childhood literacy. PLA's Facebook Forums offer opportunities for Facebook users to discuss the topic with a guest "expert" and other users. They are free, one-hour, interactive events hosted on the PLA Facebook page.

PLA @ ALA

This year, PLA is offering nearly 17 educational programs dedicated to public library professionals at the 2012 ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim, California. Topics include digital literacy, volunteers, unique programming, and library leadership.

The PLA President's Program and Award's Presentation will recognize the PLA 2012 award winners and host keynote speaker author Sherman Alexie, and be followed by the PLA President's Reception.

PLA will also co-sponsor, "Consultants Giving Back," an opportunity for attendees to meet one-on-one with nationally-recognized library consultants for complimentary half hour sessions. More than 15 consultants plan to participate.

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.

Events in the past year included:

"New Lessons in Library Leadership" This webinar featured presentations by a panel of four PLA Leadership Fellows who shared highlights from their programs and described how they had used the lessons from their executive leadership programs to make a difference in their work and libraries.

"The Lone Change Agent" At this PLA @ ALA Annual (New Orleans) program a PLA fellows discussed leading change both at the library and the state level.



“Changing Course: Leadership for Navigating the New Library” This PLA 2012 half-day preconference tackled demographic shifts, institutional relevance and new economic, business and service models

Leadership Track – For the first time ever, PLA Conference designated a full track of programs as “Leadership”

The Task Force intends to expand PLA leadership training beyond these select events by developing a replicable leadership training model for public library staff across the U.S. From research and experience, they have identified some key elements of successful leadership for public libraries. A key observation is that to be an effective library leader, a person must be a community leader, engaged with the community and relating the library’s offerings to the needs and priorities of the community. Effective library leadership also involves partnerships with other agencies in the community. Leadership candidates must be motivated to implement change and believe that personal leadership can make a difference in library effectiveness. The replicable training program would foster skills for public library administrators, senior managers, and staff to lead not only within the library, but also beyond and into the community, maximizing the potential of public libraries and ensuring they are viewed as critical to communities.

[PLDS Statistical Report/PLAmetrics](#)

An exciting transition occurred for the longstanding annual data report produced by PLA. After more than 20 years of publishing an annual *PLDS Survey Report* book, and following much consideration of member input, production costs, environmental factors, and more, PLA decided to make the transition to an all-digital PLDS tool. While a digital subscription has been available for some time, the latest version, *PLAmetrics*, is more robust and far-reaching than ever before.

With *PLAmetrics*, subscribers can access PLDS data (2002-2011) and public-use IMLS data (1998-2009) and then take advantage of customized sorting and reporting features. Data can be



employed for peer comparisons, benchmarking and/or trend analyses, as well as to meet local, custom needs. For more information, visit www.plametrics.org.

Public Access Technology Benchmarks – The Edge Initiative

Last year PLA began activities as part of the Public Access Technology Benchmarks initiative, a groundbreaking effort funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. PLA joined the Edge Roundtable made up of 12 organizations, including ALA's Office for Information Technology Policy, in an effort to develop, pilot, and promote the adoption of public access technology benchmarks for public libraries.

The Edge Roundtable drafted a beta benchmarks framework, consisting of 14 benchmarks and 30 indicators. The benchmarks are divided into three subject areas: Community Value, Engaging the Community & Decision Makers, and Organizational Management. A full version of the benchmarks can be found at the initiative's website, www.libraryedge.org. The benchmarks have been shared and tested with several select libraries with very positive results. Members of the roundtable continue to work on refining terminology, instructions, and support materials. More extensive pilot tests will occur Fall 2012.

PLA's granted-mandated responsibility in the Edge Initiative is to develop a training curriculum. In consultation with Organizational Resource Services, PLA has mapped out a series of training outcomes related to using the benchmarks for advocacy activities, technology management, and library leadership. Libraries will have the option of taking training after they complete the assessment and receive their benchmarks score. PLA's next immediate step is to hire a curriculum developer.

IMLS Grant for National Digital Summer Reading program

In May 2012, PLA was awarded a planning grant of \$50,000 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to support the research and design of a national digital summer reading (NDSR) program website application (app). PLA will work in partnership with Influx Library User



Experience (Influx) to manage the grant project and plan development of the app. Expected to be built on the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) platform, the NDSR app will be available to all libraries in the U.S.

This groundbreaking effort will not only enhance the resources of public libraries to connect with children and teens in an interactive and modern way, but also take advantage and showcase the possibilities of open access through the DPLA. The anticipated NDSR website app will enable children and teens to interact with public libraries and summer reading content in numerous ways, including: reading, listening, watching, playing, writing, reviewing, drawing and recording. The ubiquity and flexibility of the digital environment also offers entirely new ways to expand the success of the traditional summer reading program.

Influx principals Nate Hill (assistant director for technology, Chattanooga Public Library, Tenn.) and Aaron Schmidt will lead the company's efforts. The initial phase of the grant project (Summer 2012) will result in an interactive online locator of summer reading programs, while the second phase (Spring 2013) will result in a white paper reflecting user research and outlining a plan for the creation of the NDSR website app. The white paper will reside online to allow for public contributions to the NDSR plan.

Head Start and IMLS Partnership

PLA continues to work to position public libraries as essential community partners in early literacy efforts. Over a year ago, PLA's Legislation and Advocacy Committee, chaired by Kathleen Reif, director, St. Mary's County (Md.) Library, initiated conversations with staff of the U.S Department of Health and Human Services that ultimately resulted in an agreement (official Spring 2012) between the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Head Start to encourage more collaboration between Head Start programs and libraries.

The partnership recognizes the role that libraries play in early childhood literacy and is especially important because it means that children who benefit most from Head Start will have access to high-quality programming from their local libraries. As a result of this agreement,



Head Start programs and day care facilities nationwide will be encouraged to partner with their local libraries.

Member Engagement

PLA continually looks for new ways to involve and recognize members.

PLA 2012 Awards

PLA is pleased to offer annual awards honoring the best in public library service and innovation. In 2012, nine unique awards were given.

Public Libraries Feature Article Contest

First Place Award: Valerie Gross, CEO, Howard County (Md.) Library. "Choose Civility – Public Libraries Take Center Stage," July/August 2011

Honorable Mention Award: Co-writers Tracy Jones-Grant, literacy, ESL, and diversity services manager, Halifax (N.S.) Public Libraries; Denise Somers, manager, Musquodoboit Harbour (N.S.) Public Library and Sheet Harbor (N.S.) Public Library; Kenneth Williment, community development manager, Nova Scotia Public Libraries. "It Takes a Community to Create a Library" and "From Project to Branch Integration and Sustainability." March/April 2011

Allie Beth Martin Award sponsored by Baker & Taylor: Kaite Mediatore Stover, Kansas City (Mo.) Public Library

Baker & Taylor Entertainment Audio Music/Video Product Award Grant: Tuscaloosa (Ala.) Public Library

DEMCO New Leaders Travel Grant: Lisa Brock, Riverside County (Calif.) Library System; Richard Lyda, Arapahoe Library District, Centennial, Colo.; Kirby McCurtis, San Diego (Calif.) Public Library; and April Wallace, Pinson (Ala.) Public Library



EBSCO Excellence in Small and/or Rural Public Library Service Award: Kinsley (Kans.) Public Library

Highsmith Library Innovation Award: San Diego County (Calif.) Public Library

Polaris Innovation in Technology John Iliff Award: Joan Weaver, Kinsley (Kans.) Public Library

Romance Writers of America Library Grant: Tuscaloosa (Ala.) Public Library

Connect @ PLA

In early 2012, PLA established Connect @ PLA (<http://connect.ala.org/pla>), a virtual community for PLA personal members to share knowledge and seek assistance from colleagues on any topic related to public library service. Post ideas, questions, links to interesting information—anything members wish to share or engage over.

2012 Election

Congratulations to Carolyn Anthony, director of the Skokie (Ill.) Public Library and the 2013-2014 president of PLA. Anthony will become PLA president-elect at the conclusion of the 2012 ALA Annual Conference this June and will assume the PLA presidency in June 2013 for one year.

Anthony has been actively involved in PLA throughout her career, serving on the PLA Board from 1987–1989 and again from 2005–2009, chairing the *Public Libraries Advisory Board*, representing PLA at ALA’s Congress on Professional Education and now chairing PLA’s Leadership Task Force. Anthony is a past-president of the Illinois Library Association and was Librarian of the Year in Illinois in 2003. Under her leadership, the Skokie Public Library was recognized by the Institute of Museum and Library Services with a National Medal in 2008. She and her husband have two daughters and enjoy vacationing in Maine.



Additional congratulations to the two new Directors-At-Large (Three-Year Terms) – Pamela Sandlian Smith, director of the Rangeview (Colo.) Library District/Anythink Libraries and Felton Thomas Jr., director of the Cleveland (Ohio) Public Library.

Thanks all the candidates who stood for election as well as all the members who voted. Your efforts to impact and enhance PLA are extremely valuable to the future of the organization.

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