



225 N. Michigan Ave, Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601

## **PLA President’s Report Ramiro Salazar, 2019-2020**

The Public Library Association (PLA) envisions a future where public libraries serve at the intersection of vibrant communities and a strong democracy. Our association works to strengthen public libraries and their contribution to communities. Our groundbreaking initiatives do more than develop new skills – they move our profession to ever more innovative places. And our continuing education opportunities don’t just improve public library services, they build public library leaders. Even as the COVID-19 crisis created uncertainty for PLA and public libraries, we responded powerfully, helping libraries navigate through great risks and reinforce their essential roles in communities. We know that wherever public libraries are working, possibility lives.

PLA makes ALA a stronger organization by aligning our strategic priorities with ALA’s; by contributing to ALA’s bottom line through membership, overhead, and increased capacity; and by strengthening library networks. We’re stronger together.

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## COVID-19 Response

### COVID-19 and PLA

A few weeks after PLA's hugely successful 2020 Conference in Nashville, PLA and public libraries nationwide found themselves in uncharted waters, with great risk and huge needs, due to COVID-19. PLA reacted quickly, canceling and postponing events that would no longer be possible, activating our leadership and membership to help libraries respond, and strategizing about how to support libraries as they eventually reopen and support their communities through challenging times with diverse services.

In addition to the webinar series and survey (described below), PLA adapted its current activities and created new initiatives to support libraries. PLA amplified and expanded free and low-cost online professional development and networking opportunities, including many [archived webinars](#) with no-fee access. Working with ALA, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and state organizations, PLA joined the steering committee for the IMLS-led [COVID-19 Research Partnership to Inform Safe Handling of Collections, Reopening Practices for Libraries, Museums](#), promoted ALA's [Planning for Reopening Resources](#) web page, and coordinated with ALA communication efforts to amplify the [voice of public libraries](#). PLA also added COVID-19 content to [Public Libraries Online](#) and launched an [initiative with Microsoft](#) to help expand internet access in rural communities during the COVID-19 crisis.

Going forward, PLA is planning to further deepen our strategic plan commitments to [Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice](#) (EDISJ), advocacy, and transformation by exploring how to redeploy EDISJ training content for virtual engagement, refreshing and adding new [advocacy resources](#) to best address the [current context](#), planning new [leadership training and networking](#) to strengthen our professional pipelines, and positioning libraries as key players in community recovery efforts, including [workforce development](#), [health insurance sign-up support](#), and navigating government relief resources.

### PLA COVID-19 Webinars

PLA took quick action in March 2020 to plan a free webinar series, [Public Libraries Respond to COVID-19](#), which included six webinars that took place between March 26 and April 23, 2020. The webinars covered topics of immediate need to the field, such as addressing the digital divide, managing anxiety, and responding to community needs through innovative solutions and services. More than 9,000 public library professionals registered for the series. As indicated by post-webinar evaluations, the webinars helped library professionals connect with their peers and feel less alone, while also giving them ideas for new services, such as mobile printing, lending hotspots, and increasing job search assistance for recently unemployed patrons, and suggested strategies for reopening safely. The recordings from PLA's webinar series, [Public Libraries Respond to COVID-19](#), are freely available to the public.

### PLA COVID-19 Survey



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PLA fielded an online survey in March 2020, sharing it widely through library organizations like the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, the Urban Libraries Council and the Association for Rural and Small Libraries. Research staff from the Colorado State Library’s Library Research Service and IMLS assisted PLA. Survey responses represented 28% of U.S. public libraries. At least one public library in every state responded to the survey, and 43 states had 10% or more of their libraries represented.

Survey findings showed that as public libraries closed their buildings to the public, staff continued to serve their communities in innovative ways. Most respondents (98%) reported their buildings were closed to the public but, in many cases, staff continued to expand access to digital resources, launch virtual programs and coordinate services with local government agencies. The survey found that libraries are rapidly adapting services. A substantial majority of respondents report they extended online renewal policies (76%), expanded online services like e-books and streaming media (74%) and added virtual programming (61%). In open-ended responses, library staff described a range of new activities ranging from reallocating print collection budgets to digital materials, reaching out by phone to those digitally disconnected, and more. Additionally, libraries are preparing for even greater need to support unemployed workers and small businesses.

In May 2020, PLA fielded a second survey to collect more information about public libraries’ responses to COVID-19 and plans to reopen, and PLA will use the information to support and advance libraries as the crisis continues.

## **Organizational Excellence**

### **PLA’s 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

PLA celebrated 75 years of success on Oct. 13, 2019. Leading up to the anniversary, PLA created a [75th Anniversary website](#) featuring data on PLA’s impact and stories from members about how PLA has affected their lives and careers. Other activity to celebrate PLA’s anniversary included contests where members shared stories, submitted photos, and answered trivia questions; a fundraising campaign that raised over \$7,500 for PLA Conference scholarships; a [3-minute video](#) featuring public library leaders and detailing PLA accomplishments; and recognition during events such as the PLA Member Welcome Breakfast at the 2019 ALA Annual Conference and a cake cutting at the PLA Reception during the PLA Conference in Nashville, Tenn.

### **Strategic Plan Implementation**

[PLA’s 2018-2022 PLA Strategic Plan](#) was finalized and approved by the board of directors in June 2018. PLA continues to make great strides toward achieving our goals. The goals of the Strategic Plan form the structure of this report and include:

- **Goal 1 - Transformation:** PLA advances public libraries' transformation from a library focus to a community focus, to meet the specific needs of people and communities.
- **Goal 2 - Leadership:** PLA builds and supports leadership for public libraries that is reflective of the needs of each community and the profession.
- **Goal 3 - Advocacy & Awareness:** PLA leads in public library advocacy and influencing perceptions of public libraries.
- **Goal 4 - Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Social Justice (EDISJ):** PLA advocates for equity, diversity, inclusion and social justice in order to enable every member, library, and community group to fully and equally participate in a society mutually shaped to meet their needs.
- **Goal 5 - Organizational Excellence:** PLA is entrepreneurial, resilient, and successful in the sustaining and growing of resources to advance its mission and work.

## Council Outreach

PLA strives to engage with ALA Council members, particularly those who work in public libraries and/or are PLA members. As part of PLA's "Stronger Together" outreach effort, ALA Councilors have been provided opportunities to meet with PLA leaders, learn about public library issues and priorities, and discuss how PLA and ALA can best address areas of shared interest. During 2019-2020, PLA continued to host "Stronger Together" breakfasts for ALA Councilors was held at the 2019 ALA Annual Conference and the 2020 ALA Midwinter Meeting.

## 2020 Election

In April, PLA announced the results of its 2020 election. PLA members elected [Melanie Huggins](#), Executive Director of the Richland Library (Columbia, SC) to the office of 2021-2022 PLA president. Huggins will serve a three-year term beginning this June and including one year each as president-elect (2020-2021), president (2021-2022), and immediate past president (2022-2023). Also elected to the PLA Board, as directors-at-large, were [Brandy A. McNeil](#), Associate Director, Tech Education at The New York (NY) Public Library and [Dara Hanke Schmidt](#), Library Director at Cedar Rapids (IA) Public Library. Each will serve a three-year term beginning in June 2020. [Stephanie Chase](#), Director of the Hillsboro (OR) Public Library was re-elected as the ALA Division Councilor on the PLA Board and will serve a three-year term beginning in June 2020. PLA thanks all the candidates who stood for election as well as all the members who voted.

## Theory of Change for Professional Development

PLA's [Theory of Change for Professional Development](#) is an example of how PLA is leading not only the public library field but also stands out among professional membership associations. PLA's Theory of Change offers a new way to think about professional development pathways and how they link to larger library and community impact and outcomes. Based on research with PLA members, PLA identified four critical focus areas for professional development that anchor PLA's Theory of Change: Data-driven Leaders,



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Community Advocates, Public Library Stewards and Networked Innovators. PLA encourages members to use this framework for professional development goals, and PLA is integrating it into its continuing education work, for instance by aligning PLA 2020 Conference programming to the Theory of Change.

## Supporters

PLA is grateful for the financial support it has received during the past year for general operating and special initiatives from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Capital One, Community Catalyst, Engberg Anderson Architects, Google, Institute of Museum and Library Services, the John L. and James S. Knight Foundation, Microsoft, the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. PLA also thanks Baker & Taylor, EBSCO Information Services, Romance Writers of America and the Singer Group for support of the PLA service awards and grants. Finally, PLA thanks the following companies which provided support for the PLA 2020 Conference:

Abrams Children's Books	LibraryReads	Penguin Random House/Books on Tape
Audio Publishers Association	HarperAudio	Rakuten OverDrive
AWE Learning	HarperCollins	Random House Children's Books
Baker & Taylor	HarperCollins Children's Books	Scholastic Press & Scholastic Audio
Brodart	Macmillan Publishers	T-Mobile for Government
Connectrac	Midwest Tape-Hoopla-	Tutor.com
Demco	Dreamscape	
Disney Book Group	National Library of Medicine	
EnvisionWare	Niche Academy	
Ingram Content Group	OCLC	

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## Transformation

### Opioid Crisis Response

In November 2019, PLA and OCLC released two new publications that demonstrate how public libraries are responding to the opioid crisis in their communities. These publications are the culmination of the organizations' collaborative project, [Public Libraries Respond to the Opioid Crisis with Their Communities](#), funded by IMLS. PLA and OCLC conducted a research study of eight public libraries across the U.S. that are employing a variety of strategies to address the opioid problem. The reports highlight the findings from the case study sites, highlight emerging practices of how libraries are responding to the crisis in collaboration with their partners, and identify both the opportunities and barriers that libraries should consider. They also include insights and experiences from a range of local community partners and those affected by the crisis, adding the perspectives and knowledge of relevant agencies and organizations. This project builds on past work, including the [Opioid Crisis Townhall](#), [Libraries and the Opioid Crisis Facebook discussion group](#), and

related conference library programming and published articles. As part of the project, PLA and OCLC presented webinars and an educational session at the PLA 2020 Conference.

## Digital Literacy and Workforce Development

An exciting new digital literacy project was launched in 2019, aimed at supporting workforce development in communities across the U.S. through public libraries. [Libraries Lead with Digital Skills](#) is an initiative of ALA and PLA, sponsored by Google, to ensure that public libraries across the nation receive ongoing access to free tools and resources to help everyone across America grow their skills, careers, and businesses. Throughout 2019, ALA and Google held free, one-day events at libraries across the country, where Grow with Google experts will deliver in-person workshops for job seekers, small businesses, and library staff. PLA issued more than \$245,000 to 134 public libraries to fund workforce provide programming, outreach, and education in their own libraries, to address the digital skills gaps of job seekers and small businesses. In the spring of 2020, due to COVID-19, the initiative was refocused to provide additional funding to libraries to do virtual workforce development programming.

In late 2019, PLA's [DigitalLead: Rural Libraries Creating New Possibilities](#) partnership with [Microsoft Philanthropies](#) provided 41 libraries serving rural communities with 158 hotspot devices, to initiate lending programs, and 156 computers, to conduct digital literacy training sessions. Many hit the ground running with their new equipment, using their new laptops to take digital literacy training to food pantries, or using them to help community members in remote areas complete the U.S. Census. However, their new initiatives were put on hold when libraries closed due to COVID-19. In response to the crisis, PLA and Microsoft quickly created a new opportunity, to provide WiFi access points to rural libraries to extend their library's signals into public spaces outside the library. By June 1, 2020, over 200 libraries had completed the application, and PLA was in the process of sending out the first 75 devices along with funding for installation and promotion.

PLA continued to expand its digital literacy training website, [DigitalLearn.org](#), which offers a collection of narrated, video-based learning modules developed to help learners practice basic digital literacy skills. Two new courses, [Using Healthcare.gov to Enroll in Health Insurance](#) and Using [MyHealthFinder](#) (to be complete in June 2020), aligned with PLA's efforts to promote health literacy and health insurance. About 6,000 learners visit DigitalLearn.org every month. PLA also brought the number of library-sponsored DigitalLearn.org subsites to 8, completing work on sites for the [Kansas City Public Library](#), [Cleveland Public Library](#), and [York County Public Library](#).

## Early Childhood Literacy

PLA updated its [Early Childhood Literacy Activity Calendar](#) for 2020, providing libraries and families with twelve months of learning activities, book lists and nursery rhymes. Based on the core practices of [Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library](#), PLA's parent-education initiative, the publication emphasizes activities involving reading, writing, singing, talking, playing and counting. PLA continued to support Every Child Ready to Read through product sales and education, and a new paper exploring the importance of

computational thinking for young children was published by the PLA Family Engagement Task Force in the summer of 2020.

## Family Engagement

The term “family engagement” describes a shared responsibility among families, educators and communities to support children’s learning and development. PLA’s [family engagement](#) experts created and initiated the first [Advancing Family Engagement in Public Libraries](#) professional development series, consisting of eight highly interactive, virtual classroom sessions that explore the PLA family engagement framework. Thirty libraries of all sizes enrolled in the pioneer cohort, and a waiting list was created for a second cohort which will launch in the fall of 2020. PLA also continued to promote the Family Engagement Toolkit, developed as part of ALA’s [Libraries Transform](#) public awareness campaign, and program examples from the [IDEABOOK: Libraries for Families](#), a family engagement publication released in 2017. PLA also developed an [Invest in Your Child’s Success](#) poster and bookmark, for sale through the ALA store, to highlight the role of public libraries in family engagement. To advocate for the public library role in education, Task Force Co-chair Jo Giudice of Dallas Public Library presented to Congressional staff at a summer learning event convened by ALA in June of 2019, and presentations about the public library role in supporting family literacy and parent engagement in education were held for the National Center for Families Learning, Zero to Three, and the National Association of Family, School, and Community Engagement.

## Health Literacy, Reference and Programming

PLA completed its second year of the initiative [Promoting Healthy Communities: Libraries Connecting You to Coverage](#), sponsored by the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) and [Community Catalyst](#). To date, the project has provided over 160 grants to libraries to promote enrollment in the [Affordable Care Act](#) (ACA). For the 2020 enrollment period, public libraries hosted more than 240 informational events, and there were more than 1,400 downloads of communications assets and materials that PLA posted online for public libraries to use. In the spring of 2020, PLA confirmed a third year of funding to promote ACA enrollment for 2021 along with expanded funding to help libraries promote enrollment in Medicaid. As part of PLA’s health literacy work, PLA also promoted the Libraries Transform [Health Literacy Toolkit](#), created a new health literacy poster for display in libraries, and maintains the [Healthy Community Tools for Public Libraries](#) web site.

## Other Transformation Initiatives

PLA helped libraries with financial literacy and wellbeing in collaboration with [Capital One Financial Corporation](#). Through conference programming, a webinar, and an article in Public Libraries magazine, PLA shared innovative financial literacy resources with public libraries across the U.S., including [Capital One’s Ready, Set, Bank<sup>SM</sup> program](#), PLA also completed its partnership with the community publisher Short Édition to promote reading and literary joy through public libraries in four U.S. communities. With funding

from the [John S. and James L. Knight Foundation](#), the two organizations launched [Fostering Creative Community Connections](#), an ongoing effort to promote literary expression, community engagement, library programs and services, and creative expression. The project placed Short Story Dispensers at four library systems and completed a [National Short Fiction Contest](#), through which more than 600 writers submitted short stories on the theme of *courage*.

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## Leadership

### Leadership Academy and Leadership Development

PLA's Leadership Academy content, revised in 2018, empowers public library professionals to become innovative and successful leaders of change, shifting their libraries from an internal approach—focused on organizational operations—to an external approach—focused on community needs. Since the program's inception in 2013, a total of five academies have been held and 142 leaders have been trained. The 2020 Leadership Academy, originally scheduled for August 2020, was postponed due to COVID-19, and PLA expects to hold two Leadership Academies in 2021.

With funding and support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Global Libraries program, PLA completed its work to develop a leadership program with the African Library and Information Associations and Institutions (AFLIA). In the spring of 2020, members of the second cohort of the AFLIA Leadership Academy attended the PLA 2020 Conference in Nashville. AFLIA is continuing the work developed through this collaboration with a third cohort in 2020.

### Strategic Planning

In 2019, PLA began developing a new strategic planning publication, focusing on the following content areas: preparing for strategic planning, assessing your library's current state, developing the strategic plan, implementing and measuring a strategic plan, and communications and change management as it relates to strategic planning. This workbook will integrate ALA and PLA resources including the Theory of Change, Libraries Transforming Communities' Community Conversation Workbook, and Project Outcome materials. Publication is expected in late 2020.

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## Advocacy & Awareness

### #EBooksForAll Campaign



PLA worked closely with ALA and other allied library organizations to respond to Macmillan Publishers' embargo on library eBook lending, which took effect November 1, 2019. PLA released a [statement condemning Macmillan Publishers' library lending model](#) and a [letter was sent from PLA's Board of Directors to Macmillan CEO John Sargent](#). PLA members, including 2019-20 President Ramiro S. Salazar of San Antonio (Texas) Public Library, Kent Oliver of Nashville (Tenn.) Public Library, Patrick Losinski of Columbus (Ohio) Metropolitan Library, spoke at a Sept. 18 press conference in Nashville announcing the launch of the national campaign, and constant communications from PLA motivated members to sign the online petition, submit op-eds to their local newspapers, and inform library patrons about the embargo's impact on eBook availability. On October 30, 2019, a delegation of library advocates delivered nearly 160,000 signed #eBooksForAll petitions to the offices of Macmillan Publishers in New York City, urging the company to reverse its harmful embargo on library eBook lending. While PLA was pleased that Macmillan Publishers suspended the embargo due to COVID-19, PLA continues to work with ALA to create equity and access for libraries in the eBook environment.

## 2020 Award Winners

PLA offers a variety of awards designed to highlight the best in public library service and to honor those bringing innovation, creativity, and dedication to public libraries. The 2020 PLA Awards recognized the following individuals and public libraries.

- [Allie Beth Martin Award](#): **Beth Atwater**, Collection Development Librarian, Johnson County Library (Overland Park, Kan.). Sponsored by Baker & Taylor, this award recognizes a public librarian for demonstrating a range and depth of knowledge about books and other library materials
- [Baker & Taylor Entertainment Audio Music/Video Product Award](#): **McCracken County Public Library** of Paducah, Ky. This award provides \$2,500 in funding for audio music and video products.
- [Charlie Robinson Award](#): **Rivkah Sass**, Library Director/CEO of the Sacramento (Calif.) Public Library. Sponsored by Baker & Taylor, this award honors a public library director who has been a risk-taker, innovator, and change agent.
- [EBSCO Excellence in Rural Library Service Award](#): **Astor County Library** of Astor, Fla. This award honors a public library for exemplary service to a community of 10,000 or fewer people.
- [Gordon M. Conable Award](#): **Jonathan Newton** of Greenville, S.C. This award honors a public library staff member, a library trustee, or a public library that has demonstrated a commitment to intellectual freedom and the Library Bill of Rights.
- [John Iliff Award](#): **Oscar Grady Public Library** of Saukville, Wisc. This award honors the life and accomplishments of John Iliff, early adopter and champion of technology in public libraries.
- [New Leaders Travel Grant](#): **Tiffany Harkleroad**, Youth Services Librarian, Butler Area (Pa.) Public Library; **Katie Horner**, Head of Circulation & Reference, Lake Bluff (Ill.) Public Library; and **Crystal Snyder**, Assistant Director/Community Engagement Librarian, Columbia (Ill.) Public Library. Each recipient receives a \$1,500 grant to attend a PLA continuing education event.
- [PLA Library Innovation Award](#): **Mill Valley Public Library** in Mill Valley, Calif. for its Poetry Illuminated project

- [Romance Writers of America Library Grant](#): **Ferguson (Mo.) Municipal Public Library**. This award provides a public library the opportunity to build or expand its romance fiction collection and/or host romance fiction programming.
- [The Singer Group Helping Communities Come Together Award](#): **Flint (Mich.) Public Library**. This award recognizes a public library's ability to identify community needs specifically in times of crisis and division and respond in creative and exemplary ways.
- [Public Libraries Feature Article Contest](#): Amy An, Instructional Services II Librarian at the Boca Raton (Fla.) Public Library, for her article [The Mission-Informed Library Internal Marketing to Improve the Organizational Climate in the Public Library](#). The honorable mention award went to Rhiannon B. Eades, Public Information Officer at Athens (Ga.) Regional Library System, for [Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach](#).

## I Love My Librarian Award Winners

In December, ALA announced the recipients of the its 'I Love My Librarian' Award for 2019. This prestigious award is presented annually to ten librarians from academic, public and school libraries who were nominated by patrons nationwide for their profound impact on the lives of families, students, teachers and information-seekers in their communities. ALA has received more than 19,000 nominations the award's inception, but only 120 librarians have received this distinguished honor. For 2019, the following three public librarians were selected: **Homa Naficy**, Executive Director, Hartford (Conn.) Public Library; **Maria Papanastassiou**, Papanastassiou, Kids' World Assistant Manager, Arlington Heights (Ill.) Memorial Library; and **Janet Tom**, Reference Librarian, San Francisco (Calif.) Public Library. to honor those

## 2020 Census Project

To best position libraries to support their communities in the [2020 Census](#), PLA and ALA are engaging with the U.S. Census Bureau and other stakeholders to ensure that libraries are informed and represented in the policy discussions and planning process. The 2020 Census Library Outreach & Education Task Force, a joint effort of PLA and the ALA Washington Office, released a policy brief titled [Libraries and the 2020 Census](#), about how decision makers can partner with libraries, and the [Libraries' Guide to the 2020 Census](#). After much success engaging public libraries, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted 2020 Census operations. Th shared [ALA-PLA home page](#) continues to be updated, and PLA and ALA are engaging new funders to provide additional mini-grants to libraries. Despite the library closures, more than 60% of respondents to PLA's COVID-19 survey reported that they were using social media to promote participation in the 2020 Census. PLA also conducted education for libraries, including a standing-room-only program at the PLA 2020 conference and a sold-out American Libraries Live! webinar in March 2020.

## Performance Measurement

While many public libraries collect data about their programs and services, they often lack the data to indicate the benefits libraries provide their communities. To address this need, PLA created [Project Outcome](#), a free toolkit designed to help libraries understand and share the impact of essential services and programs

through simple surveys and a user-friendly process for measuring and analyzing outcomes. In April of 2019, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and PLA announced the launch of [Project Outcome for Academic Libraries](#). Based on the model developed by PLA, this free toolkit is designed to help academic libraries understand and share the impact of essential library programs and services by providing simple surveys and an easy-to-use process for measuring and analyzing outcomes. PLA and ACRL also released a user experience survey to registered Project Outcome users, and both organizations continue to do education about measuring outcomes via conference programs, webinars and consultations.

## **Public Library Data Service**

PLA's Measurement, Evaluation and Assessment Committee (MEAC) continued to plan the future of the Public Library Data Service (PLDS) survey. Data collection for fiscal year 2019 was canceled to focus on gathering input from library staff in town hall meetings and email discussions, as well as soliciting current PLDS subscribers. The results indicate that there is significant potential for more users of a PLA data collection effort about libraries if the reporting interface and resulting data visualizations are more user friendly and if the effort incorporates more data regarding libraries' roles in their communities. The MEAC is continuing to plan the next iteration of PLDS using this and other input.

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## **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Social Justice**

### **Inclusive Internship Initiative**

During the summer of 2019, 48 public libraries across the U.S. hosted a high-school-aged intern for ten weeks of learning, networking, and career development as part of PLA's third annual Inclusive Internship Initiative (III). Through III, high school juniors and seniors are offered paid, summer-long internships at their local public library, and each intern works with a library mentor to complete a community-based learning project. III introduces students from diverse backgrounds to librarianship as a viable and rewarding career. Interns and mentors in the 2019 III cohort gathered in Washington, D.C. in September for a wrap-up event to discuss their work and the impact of that work on their careers, libraries, and communities. Each intern gave a presentation on their summer experience and community project. They also heard from library leaders and participated in college and career-readiness training. The program, funded by IMLS and PLA, was approved for a fourth cohort in 2020, however it was postponed until 2021 due to COVID-19.

### **Regional EDISJ Symposia**

PLA's [Task Force on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice](#) completed four presentations of the symposium, [Social Justice and Public Libraries: Equity Starts with Us](#), in 2019. The events, led by Task Force members and Mia Henry of Freedom Lifted and the Arcus Center for Social Justice at Kalamazoo

(Mich.) College, explore how power and privilege operate interpersonally and institutionally; identify how oppression shows up in our communities and libraries; and cover historical and contemporary social justice movements. Over 330 library professionals attended the events in Denver, Colo., Charleston, S.C., Chicago, Ill., and Toledo, OH. The Task Force scheduled seven Equity Starts with Us events for 2020, however they have been canceled due to COVID-19. The Task Force is working on new strategies to deliver the content.

### Other EDISJ Activity

PLA continues to convene its [Social Worker Task Force](#), a volunteer group formed to develop and recommend a strategic and coordinated approach for how public libraries address the social service needs of customers. The Task Force educates the field through webinars and other virtual events and contributed to PLA's COVID-19 response by collating materials about stress for the PLA website and presenting on a webinar. Also in 2019, PLA partnered with ACRL, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), and ALA's Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services (ODLOS), to form the Building Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity Framework Task Force. The Task Force create a foundational resource to help academic and public libraries build inclusive cultures, both within the library and in their communities. The work will result in guidelines on development and implementation of organizational policies, as well as best practices to support diverse workforces.

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## Conferences and Professional Development

### PLA 2020 Conference

The [PLA 2020 Conference](#) took place February 25-29, 2020, in Nashville, Tenn. Nearly 9,000 librarians, exhibitors, speakers, guests and others attended PLA 2020. This compares to 7,873 at the 2018 conference in Philadelphia. There was an increase in overall attendee registration (6,598 in 2020 versus 5,942 in 2018) and an increase in overall exhibitor representatives (2,096 in 2020 versus 1,931 in 2018). PLA continues to draw the highest attendance of any of the ALA divisional conferences.

General session and "Big Ideas" speakers included Stacey Abrams, Dr. Bettina Love, Haben Girma, Soledad O'Brien, and Samantha Bee. Over 110 sessions challenged, engaged, and inspired attendees, along with special events such as the Book Buzz, Career Center, Spark Talks, How-To Festival, and the interactive Anybubbler Town Square. For the first time, PLA integrated its [Professional Development Theory of Change](#) into conference programming, helping attendees chart their paths to becoming data-driven leaders, community advocates, stewards of the public library and its values, and networked innovators.

Leading up to the Nashville event, PLA made a strong [statement on core values and conference sites](#), recognizing that no conference site is immune to political actions or legislation contrary to library values.

PLA is proud to say we turned this challenge into an opportunity. The commitment of PLA and public libraries to EDISJ was integrated throughout the event. Not only did dozens of sessions promote strategies for libraries to increase access and challenge oppression, but PLA helped attendees advance EDISJ principles by promoting [more than a dozen local organizations](#) who are fighting oppression and leading community inclusion; inviting attendees to experience social justice work firsthand through a new “Day in the Community” program; and uniting attendees to pack nearly 2,000 snack packs for teens served by the [Oasis Center](#), which provides crisis intervention, leadership, college and career access, and other programs for youth in middle Tennessee. Over 2,500 conference evaluations were received, with overwhelmingly positive feedback. The next [PLA Conferences](#) will be held March 22-26, 2022 in Portland, Ore and April 3-6, 2024 in Columbus, OH.

### **PLA Conference Programs, Webinars and Regional Events**

PLA’s preconference institutes, programs, and volunteer events at the ALA national conferences offer opportunities for public library staff to learn and grow professionally. In 2019-2020, PLA’s activity at the ALA 2019 Midwinter Meeting was limited due to its proximity to the PLA 2020 Conference. PLA accepted and planned 14 programs for the ALA 2020 Annual Conference in Chicago, however due to COVID-19, the conference was canceled and replaced with the ALA Virtual Event. PLA staff helped lead development of the ALA Virtual Event, with Executive Director Barb Macikas co-convening the planning group, and PLA managers Angela Maycock and Emily Plagman assisting with planning for programming and assessment.

PLA’s webinars, offered 1-2 times each month, continue to grow in attendance. PLA solicits topics and speakers from the membership through two annual “calls for proposals,” and mines the expertise of PLA committees and task forces for topics. Webinars are offered both for free and with modest registration costs, and they are available on demand via the PLA web site after presentation.

Along with the Equity Starts with Us symposia mentioned above, PLA conducted three Space Planning: Reinventing Your Library Space workshops for over 150 attendees. Ninety-seven percent of registrants who completed an evaluation indicated that they learned something that will help them in their work. PLA decided to conduct 6 more space planning workshops throughout 2020, however most are being postponed and rescheduled due to COVID-19.

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### **Publications and Media**

PLA works hard to cover concepts in its publications that align with the organization’s strategic goals of Organizational Excellence; Leadership; Advocacy & Awareness; Transformation; and Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice.

## ***Public Libraries Magazine, Website and Podcasts***

*Public Libraries Magazine* is published bimonthly and sent to nearly 9,500 PLA members plus almost 500 subscribers. In 2019, the Public Libraries Advisory Committee implemented an editorial calendar, creating themes for each issue. During the past twelve months, *Public Libraries* has addressed trending and challenging topics for public librarians through articles such as [Issues That Matter: Forums Build Civic Engagement](#) and [Hire EDISJ](#). Like the print iteration, [PLOnline](#) focuses on issues and topics that matter to public libraries and public librarianship. Updated several times per week, the site features selections from the print magazine and unique content and averages approximately 8,000 views per week. PLOnline posted a series of short, COVID-19 related articles in the spring of 2020, including [Digital Access During COVID-19](#), [Libraries Contemplate Re-Opening](#), and [Mindfulness in Times of Extreme Stress](#). In 2016, PLA started *FYI: The Public Libraries Podcast* as another way to explore a variety of topics in-depth. To date, PLA has recorded 45 podcasts, and 15,605 persons are currently subscribed via RSS and other apps, compared to 10,576 in spring of 2019.

## **PLA Publications**

PLA released [Library Space Planning: A PLA Guide](#) in October 2019. Authored by branding expert David Vinjamuri, the president of ThirdWay Brand Trainers and facilitator of PLA's space planning workshops, the book helps library professionals analyze, plan and evaluate library spaces. Following the PLA Conference in Nashville, PLA released [PLA 2020: Ten Essential Programs](#), the latest digital download in the "Quick Reads" series, to recapture the conference's excitement and learning. The ten essays were selected based on criteria including reviews, subject matter, and the availability of the presenters to write an account of the program. Finally, PLA updated its [Early Childhood Literacy Activity Calendar](#) for 2020, providing libraries and families with twelve months of learning activities, book lists and nursery rhymes.

## **Media**

PLA coordinated dozens of media inquiries about PLA and public library issues with ALA's Communications and Marketing Office as well as with public policy staff. All media interviews were graciously accepted by the PLA president or a designated board member. Media interviews and article placements included prominent national media (New York Times, Associated Press, Wall Street Journal, USA Today), local media (Denton Record-Chronicle, Texas; LaSalle News Tribune, Illinois; the National Public Radio affiliate in Kansas City, MO), and other outlets such as the AARP magazine and the Food Network magazine. Substantial media coverage occurred for the release of the opioid project reports, mentioned above, and for PLA's work to understand and support public library responses to COVID-19.

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