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2010 ALA Annual Conference

PLA President's Report, 2010 ALA Annual Conference

Sari Feldman, 2009-2010

It has been an honor to serve as the President of the Public Library Association during the past year—surely one of the most challenging years for our members. Through the year we continued to offer all the valuable benefits that PLA is known for and identified a plan not only to sustain PLA in the coming years, but also to ensure that members receive the most relevant and beneficial resources for their success.

The PLA Board and the entire volunteer leadership has continued its commitment to PLA's future and its mission statement and is dedicated to providing the most comprehensive programming, publications, and events in the public library world. I'd like to thank the PLA officers and our committee chairs, task force chairs, community of practice members, and all members who have worked so effectively during this past year to make a contribution to the profession 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 and working with PLA staff and members in the future.

Highlights of the past year include:

Barb Macikas hired as the new Executive Director

On November 23, 2009, PLA and its members welcomed Barbara A. Macikas as executive director of PLA. Macikas, a former PLA deputy executive director (2000-2007) and conference manager (1997-2000), was chosen from a nation-wide pool of candidates.

In addition to her inside knowledge of PLA, Barb brings extensive association management experience to the position. She served as executive director of the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA) and the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), divisions of the ALA, from May 2007 to May 2009. Prior to her work with ASCLA and RUSA, Barb served as a consultant to the American College of Sports Medicine, the Illinois Library Association, the ALA International Relations Office and other non-profit organizations.

She was elected trustee of the Homewood (Ill.) Public Library District, serving as president in 2008-2009, and has served as a volunteer for her local school district's Learning Resource Center. She is a graduate of UIUC, in political science.

PLA National Conference

From March 23-27, 7,725 attendees gathered at the Oregon Convention Center for nearly 200 programs at PLA's 13th National Conference in Portland, Oregon. Programming focused on such key issues as advocacy, technology, literacy, and serving adults and youth.

This year's conference provided a national platform to share ideas on how to prepare to weather the "perfect storm" that is brewing in many of our communities with library visits and circulation numbers at an all time high and library budgets at new lows. Conference attendees had access to such economy driven programs as "Tough Decisions in Tough Times," "Don't Play Dead When Facing Life-Threatening Budget Cuts," and "Cents and Sensibility: Will your Technology Pay Off?" among others.

In addition, the conference provided the occasion for the release of "Opportunity for All: How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at U.S. Libraries," a study funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, which shows that nearly one-third of Americans age 14 or older—roughly 77 million people—used a public library computer or wireless network to access the Internet in the past year. The report is the first large-scale study of who uses public computers and Internet access in public libraries.

Preconference programming included a luncheon featuring acclaimed author Patrick Somerville (*The Cradle*) and Nancy Pearl's "Book Buzz," a perennial favorite of attendees. Preconference educational filled two days with programs like "Tag You're It! Implementing a 'Person in Charge' Training Program" and "Opening Doors, Opening Books: Providing Effective Readers' Advisory Service"

The conference opened with a heartfelt performance by Natalie Merchant. Before a crowd of more than 2,000, Merchant performed several songs from her new album *Leave Your Sleep*, a compilation of poems and nursery rhymes set to music. Merchant had to stop to compose herself and fought back tears as she shook audience members' hands. "Thank you for being librarians," she said as she made her way through the crowd.

Taking the stage after Merchant was Opening Session speaker and Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Nick Kristof. Kristof moved audience members as he spoke of the importance of women's rights in the developing world and his admiration for libraries and librarians.

Author events hosted best-selling author Scott Turow (*Presumed Innocent*), Virginia Euwer Wolff (*Bat 6*), Kadir Nelson, author/illustrator (*Change Has Come: An Artist Celebrates Our American Spirit*), Luis

Alberto Urrea (*The Devil's Highway*), Chelsea Cain, (*Confessions of a Teen Sleuth*), Sue Grafton and Judy Kaye (*U Is for Undertow*), and Marcia Muller (*Locked In*).

Sarah Vowell, author and contributor to NPR's *This American Life* keynoted the Closing Session, concluding the conference with her wry and entertaining perspective on American history.

Those who were not able to attend the conference in Portland, Ore., had an opportunity to join their colleagues via the Web. Online subscribers participated in such activities as ten live, interactive education programs and discussion boards.

The conference also offered access to 400 exhibiting companies, including top book publishers, who showcased the latest in products and services for public libraries and their users.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive for the entire conference—from the public transportation in Portland to the educational offerings each day. I would like to recognize the hard work and dedication of the PLA 2010 National Conference Committee, under the leadership of Elizabeth Bingham and Kay Runge, the Program Subcommittee, led by Kathleen Imhoff, and the Local Arrangements Subcommittee, chaired by Vailey Oehlke.

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.

Turning the Page Comes to a Close

In 2007, PLA and public libraries received a generous grant for advocacy training from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. As a result, the groundbreaking program, *Turning the Page: Building your Library Community*, was developed. This advocacy education component was designed for public libraries participating in the Gates Foundation Opportunity Online hardware grants program.

The program drew to a close on May 31, 2010 after benefiting more than 3,500 librarians and library supporters across 32 states. Following training, the vast majority of participants were better advocates for their libraries—feeling more confident in their abilities and more excited about advocacy. As a result, over 98% of participating libraries achieved their funding goals.

PLA and the entire public library community would like to express gratitude to the Gates Foundation for their steadfast belief in—and support of—public libraries.

Public librarians will soon have the opportunity to complete Turning the Page online for free. Through the generosity of the Foundation, PLA is currently updating Turning the Page for release this summer. This interactive, web-based training guides participants through the creation of an advocacy work plan. Library staff and supporters learn how to create and tell the library's story, deliver effective presentations, develop a compelling case for support, and build and sustain partnerships along the way.

Scholarships and Awards

Leadership Fellows Program

The Leadership Fellows scholarships offer PLA members who are public library managers a chance to attend executive leadership training at some of the best universities in the United States. These university programs draw participants from various disciplines in government, non-profit, and the private sector, allowing PLA Fellows to learn leadership and change management concepts among professionals with different perspectives and experiences.

Fellows will be asked to share their experience with PLA and contribute to the development of future leadership programming for public libraries. New skills gained through the programs will benefit their current roles and strengthen their future leadership capabilities.

This year's PLA Leadership Fellows scholarship recipients are:

Stephanie Chase, Director of the Stowe (Vt.) Free Library: Positive Leadership: Building Extraordinary Personal Leadership Capabilities program at the Ross School of Business, University of Michigan.

Chang Liu, Associate Director of Neighborhood Library Services for the District of Columbia Public Library: Senior Executives in State and Local Government program at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

Denise Lyons, a Library Development Consultant with the South Carolina State Library: Executive Management Program at the Evans School of Public Affairs, University of Washington

Jennifer Wright, Assistant Chief in the Materials Management Division at the Free Library of Philadelphia (Penn.): Leading Organizational Change program at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

PLA's 2010 Service Awards and Grants

PLA also recognized a total of nine individuals and libraries for providing the best in public library service and innovation.

Rebecca Vnuk: Allie Beth Martin Award sponsored by Baker & Taylor

Bailey Cove Branch Library in Huntsville, Ala.: Baker & Taylor Entertainment Audio Music/Video Product Award Grant

Patrick Losinski, executive director of the Columbus Metropolitan (Ohio) Library: Charlie Robinson Award, sponsored by Baker & Taylor

Emma Mejia, Librarian I, Fresno County (Calif.) Public Library-Mendota Branch and Kathy Smith, Youth Services Librarian, West Palm Beach (Fla.) Public Library: DEMCO New Leaders Travel Grant

The Gilpin County Public Library in Blackhawk, Colo.: EBSCO Excellence in Small and/or Rural Public Library Service Award

Oak Park (Ill.) Public Library: Gordon M. Conable Award, sponsored by Library Systems & Services LLC

Calcasieu Parish (La.) Public Library: Highsmith Library Innovation Award

Ellen Schmid of the Geneva (Ill.) Public Library District: Polaris Innovation in Technology John Iliff Award

Huntsville-Madison County (Ala.) Public Library: Romance Writers of America Library Grant

Restructured Communities of Practice

In 2008, PLA members voted to support development of Communities of Practice as a way to broaden participation by members and to address both current and emerging issues and areas of focus for the public library profession. This year the PLA board reviewed participation in these groups, surveyed members, and enacted recommendations to strengthen these groups.

New features will include:

- Access through ALA Connect, the active, on-line member community of ALA
- Training opportunities for CoP leaders
- Liaisons with the PLA Board, CoP Task Force, and PLA staff
- Formal recognition for CoP participation
- A documented charge with defined objectives that support public libraries and PLA

PLA will introduce the restructured CoPs this summer to offer a more engaging and rewarding way for members to become involved in the association. The upcoming CoP enhancements will only strengthen member opportunities for networking, sharing best practices, engaging in discussion, and developing new ideas.

Publishing

Publiclibrariesonline.org

In the Spring of 2010, *Public Libraries*, PLA's well-regarded bimonthly journal expanded to the Internet. A complement to the printed journal, publiclibrariesonline.org offers three full articles from each issue of the printed edition as well as expanded content exclusive to the web, including Advocacy and "Going Green @ Your Library" sections.

Training @ Your Library

In fall of 2009, PLA introduced innovative training kits for libraries. The Train the Trainer kits are available as digital downloads and include everything (i.e. agenda, PowerPoint, script, handouts) needed to host a training session at library. These turnkey kits are an affordable and convenient option for library staff training.

Available kits:

- *Libraries Prosper: A Guide to Using the PLA Advocacy Toolkit*
 - This electronic publication supports the PLA advocacy publication *Libraries Prosper with Passion, Purpose, and Persuasion: A PLA Toolkit for Success*.
- *Customer Service: Balancing Rights and Responsibilities*
 - This digital kit helps trainers teach library staff how to create effective customer service policies and norms in their library by defining the rights and responsibilities of both customers and staff members.

- *Stress Less: Taming the Tensions in Your Life*
 - This training program has been designed to provide all levels of library staff with the information and skills they need to identify the major stresses in their lives and to manage those stresses more effectively.

Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library

In 2009, PLA's ECRR initiative, a joint project with the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC), was evaluated for its impact on public library practice. The ECRR program is a series of parent-caregiver workshops and resources that provide public libraries with vital tools to help prepare parents for their critical role as their child's first teacher. The program was evaluated for the extent to which it has been institutionalized and leveraged in public libraries; additionally, a research/literature review was conducted to identify key research, information and practice in the area of early literacy relevant to the ECRR initiative; and to recommend next steps.

As a result of the research, conducted by Dr. Susan Neuman (University of Michigan) and Dr. Donna Celano (LaSalle University), the ECRR recommended and the PLA and ALSC Boards unanimously approved funding to revise the ECRR curriculum. As before, the tools will: focus on educating parent/caregiver; be based on community partnerships and outreach efforts; continue to be research-based and will be "Turnkey." Improvements and revisions will include: more workshops (7); move from scripts to talking points; provide Power Point with talking points in the notes section on CD that can be customized by the library. The revised product will be on sale in Fall 2010.

PLA Continuing Education

PLA-sponsored Library Management Workshops

This year, PLA continued to offer Public Library Management courses that can be used as credit toward the Certified Public Library Administrator (CPLA) program. The courses, developed and led by nationally known trainers, support both the learning outcomes defined in the CPLA standards and the principles and practices of the Results series. The two-day workshops are offered in every region of the country and tackle valuable topics like *Budget and Finance*, *Fundraising*, *Marketing*, *Serving Diverse Populations*, and *Planning and Management of Buildings*.

Results Boot Camp 5

The PLA Results Boot Camp 5: Intensive Library Management Training was held in Seattle, Wash. from October 12-16, 2009. During this five-day immersion program, attendees learned about strategic planning, data-based decision-making, effective resource allocation, and other topics related to management training. By the end of the workshop, participants should have developed the skills needed to develop and implement a strategic plan in their library.

PLA Legislative Advisory Group

The PLA Legislative Advisory Group, chaired by Kathleen Reif of St. Mary's County (Md.) Memorial Library, is charged with advising the PLA Board on relevant issues or areas of practice under current review. The Advisory Group has worked tirelessly with the ALA Washington Office to connect public librarians with elected officials and government agencies to make the case for library funding. Additionally, the Advisory Group alerts PLA members to the funding opportunities that are available nationally and promotes and supports ALA Washington Office efforts such as Library Advocacy Day, June 29 in Washington, D.C.

Marcia Warner elected 2011-2012 President of PLA

This past April, Marcia Warner, director of the Grand Rapids (Mich.) Public Library was elected the 2011-2012 President of PLA. Warner will become PLA president-elect at the conclusion of the 2010 ALA Annual Conference this June and will assume the PLA presidency in June 2011 for a one-year term.

Warner has been a member of PLA and the American Library Association (ALA) for 25 years, serving on numerous PLA and ALA committees and the PLA Board of Directors. Her association efforts have benefited conference programming, publications, scholarship programs, and member networking.

Warner earned her master's degree in library science from the University of Michigan and has 30 years experience as a library director, having held the position in several libraries, including the Public Libraries of Saginaw, Mich., and the City of Vassar Public Library, Mich. Her professional career is highlighted by innovative ideas that drive initiatives for application of Lean manufacturing in the library, creation of an easy information wiki, and green thinking from the ground up.

We look forward to Marcia's leadership in the coming years.

PLA @ ALA Annual Conference

This year, PLA is offering 20 educational programs at the 2010 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. In addition, for the first time ever, PLA is sponsoring more than 25 library consultants on-site, offering attendees the free opportunity to meet with a library expert one-on-one for 30 minutes. This year's PLA President's Program and Awards Presentation features keynote speaker (and puzzle master), Will Shortz.

Strategic Planning

This spring, members of the PLA board and chairs of task forces, as well as staff came together to develop a new strategic vision for the organization. Led by Paul Meyer of Tecker Consultants, the team revisited the 2005 strategic plan in order to not only gauge its effectiveness, but more importantly, advance the plan, creating goals and strategies relevant to the library climate today.

The two-day strategic workshop generated several top-line goals that will be reviewed and approved by the Board during the 2010 ALA Annual Conference.

National Conference Planning

The National Conference Committee continues to plan for the 14th PLA National Conference, March 13-17, 2012 in Philadelphia, Penn. The PLA National Conference has a reputation for excellence and offers attendees nearly two hundred high-quality educational programs, world-class speakers, a bustling exhibits hall, and countless networking opportunities and social events. The 2012 conference promises more of the same in Philadelphia.