It has truly been a great pleasure and honor to serve as PLA President over the past year. Working with our talented Executive Director, PLA staff, Board, and over 200 member volunteers has been educational and inspiring.

I thank all of you for your hard work, shared knowledge, support, and camaraderie. I truly believe that we have built on PLA’s amazing legacy over the past year and are in a strong position for the future.
AWARDS

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 2015 Awards

PLA’s annual award program recognized 15 individuals and public libraries in 2015.

Public Libraries Feature Article Contest
Awards cash prizes to the authors of the best feature articles published in the previous year’s volume of Public Libraries magazine.

$500 First Place Award: Catherine Bloomquist, library literacy coordinator, Saint Paul (Minnesota) Public Library, “Mentoring Gen-X Librarians” (May/June 2014)

$300 Honorable Mention Award: Kenya Johnson, communications manager; Amber Mathewson, deputy director; and Karyn Prechtel, deputy director, Pima County (Arizona) Public Library System, “From Crisis to Collaboration: Pima County Public Library partners with Health Department for Library Nurse Program” (January/February 2014)

Allie Beth Martin Award sponsored by Baker & Taylor
Recognizes a public librarian for demonstrating a range and depth of knowledge about books and other library materials and the distinguished ability to share that knowledge. $3,000 Award: Olson, readers’ advisory librarian, Medina County (Ohio) District Library

Baker & Taylor Entertainment Audio Music/Video Product Award
Provides a public library the opportunity to build or expand an audio/video collection. $2,500 Grant: Edna Zybell Memorial Library in Clarence, Iowa

Charlie Robinson Award sponsored by Baker & Taylor
Honors a public library director who has been a risk taker, innovator and change agent. $1,000 Award: Maxine Bleiweis, executive director of Westport (Connecticut) Library

Demco New Leaders Travel Grant
Provides funds for new public librarians to attend major professional development activities. $1,500 Award: Jennifer Hannibal, tween librarian, Allen Park (Michigan) Public Library; Trinity Lescallett, adult services manager, Tiffin-Seneca (Ohio) Public Library; Eric Soriano, e-services librarian III, Jacksonville (Florida) Public Library; and Sara White, youth services librarian, Seminole County (Florida) Public Library.

EBSCO Excellence in Small and/or Rural Public Library Service Award
Honors a public library serving a population of 10,000 or fewer that demonstrates excellence in service to its community. $1,000 Award: Juan Island Library in Friday Harbor, Washington

John Iliff Award sponsored by Innovative
This award recognizes a library worker, librarian, or library that has used technology and innovative thinking as a tool to improve services to public library users. $1,000 Award: Oli Sanidas, director of digital and library material services, Arapahoe (Colorado) Library District

Romance Writers of America Library Grant
Provides a public library the opportunity to build or expand its romance fiction collection and/or host romance fiction programming. $4,500 Award: Auburn (Georgia) Public Library

Upstart Library Innovation Award sponsored by Upstart, a Demco Co.
Honors a public library’s innovative or creative service program. $2,000 Honorarium: Grand Rapids (Michigan) Public Library
CONFERENCES

PLA @ ALA 2015 Midwinter Meeting

PLA offered the institute “Who We Are, What We Do, Why It Matters: Our Distinctive Purpose” at the 2015 ALA Midwinter Meeting. This interactive day, presented by Valerie J. Gross, president and CEO, Howard County (Maryland) Public Library, highlighted how a growing number of libraries are repositioning themselves as a key component of the education enterprise, alongside schools, colleges, and universities.

New to the 2015 ALA Midwinter Meeting, PLA and its Membership Advisory Group, chaired by Richard Kong, Skokie (Illinois) Public Library, hosted a PLA Happy Hour. All were invited to mingle with other public librarians as well as learn more about how to get involved with PLA.

PLA @ ALA 2015 Annual Conference

PLA offered 20 educational programs dedicated to public library professionals at the 2015 ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco. In addition to programs, PLA presented two pre-conferences and a BIG IDEAS event. An extension of the popular BIG IDEAS series at PLA Conference, this engaging event took place at the San Francisco Public Library and featured dynamic speakers from outside the library world sharing their ideas and knowledge about strategy, leadership, and creativity.

For the first time, PLA also hosted an exclusive PLA members-only breakfast during the conference. The complimentary event included recognition of the 15 individuals and libraries that received PLA awards this year. Additionally, PLA presented a special recognition to the Ferguson (Missouri) Public Library and its director Scott Bonner for their response to recent events of civil unrest and school closures in their community. The event also featured a special appearance by Al Roker, host and weatherman of NBC’s Today Show.

Additionally, the Emerging Leaders team assigned to PLA presented their project findings at the PLA Board meeting. Their project, “PLA Membership Engagement” focused on the needs and interests of early career public librarians as they relate to professional associations. The team conducted an online survey completed by 411 librarians from all over the country to assess needs, interests, and considerations when deciding whether to join a professional organization. They also conducted follow-up phone interviews with 15 librarians. Recommendations for ways PLA can more effectively engage and attract early career public librarians were made.
GLOBAL LIBRARIES LEGACY PARTNERSHIP

In May 2014 the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation announced it would wind-down its Global Libraries (GL) initiative. Since then, GL has been working to identify how to achieve the foundation’s goal of leaving the library field stronger and more resilient. As part of its wind-down planning, GL revisited feedback shared by the field as to what aspects of its work have been most valuable. With this guidance in mind, GL considered how its impact could continue through other organizations, particularly those best positioned to provide leadership as the library field continues to adjust to the digital age.

GL identified PLA as one of three lead, legacy partners to receive limited-life, project support grants as part of the wind-down. PLA is currently working alongside GL and the other legacy partners to develop a framework for the legacy strategy and an operating model which outlines the process for ongoing interaction and engagement.

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. PLA received two Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program Grants for the project, “Navigating Change, Building Community: Outward-focused Public Library Leadership Training.” These grants have supplemented PLA funds and allowed PLA to further refine and implement the PLA Leadership Academy and measure the impact on participants and their libraries.

With additional support from an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant and in partnership the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), PLA held a successful PLA Leadership Academy in March 2015 and plans to offer it again in spring 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.

DIGITALLEARN.ORG

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. In its first year, DigitalLearn.org had 36,667 unique visitors and 5,914 class completions, far exceeding its goal of 10,000 unique visitors and 1,000 class completions.

DigitalLearn.org’s content continues to grow in conjunction with the need. Spanish classes have recently been added and a Spanish version of the site will be live in late 2015. Beyond digital skills, DigitalLearn.org is a champion for lifelong learning, and a place to add higher-level content as audience skill levels rise. 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.
PROJECT OUTCOME

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.

In the summer of 2013, then PLA president, Carolyn Anthony, director of the Skokie (Illinois) Public Library, established a Presidential Task Force on Performance Measurement (PMTF). The task force, chaired by Denise Davis, deputy director of the Sacramento (California) Public Library, was charged with developing standardized measures of effectiveness for widely-offered public library programs and promoting the training for implementation and use of the measures across public libraries. Task force participants were invited from a broad base of public libraries, representing the geographically and operationally diverse library community.

In the fall of 2014, task force members and a few additional pilot libraries tested the surveys in each of the seven areas. Participating libraries were able to use the resulting data in board presentations, branch activity reports, and to underscore advocacy stories. Following the successful task force-led pilot testing of the measures, PLA has expanded the reach of the project with funding received from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation through the development and deployment of Project Outcome. In June 2015, PLA officially launched Project Outcome during a preconference at the 2015 ALA Annual Conference.

PLA LEADERSHIP

2016-2017 PLA President

Felton Thomas, Jr., director of the Cleveland (Ohio) Public Library (CPL), was elected the 2016-2017 President of PLA. Thomas was appointed director of CPL in January 2009. Prior to accepting the position of director of CPL, Thomas served as director of Regional Branch Services for the Las Vegas-Clark County (Nevada) Library District and President of the Nevada Library Association. He has served on PLA’s Board of Directors since 2012 and standing committees since 2006, including PLA’s 2007 National Conference Program Committee and the 2010 Annual Conference Program Coordinating Committee. Most recently, he served as Chair of the 2013 Demco New Leaders Travel Grant Jury, and continues to serve on the ALA Chapter Relations Committee.

In 2013, Thomas was named to the Aspen Institute’s Task Force on Learning and the Internet. Additional awards and accomplishments include being named a “Mover and Shaker” by Library Journal, and acting as a fellow in the Urban Library Council’s Executive Leadership Institute. Felton lives in Shaker Heights with his wife and two daughters, is an accomplished musician, and has become a devoted Cleveland sports fan since his arrival on the shores of Lake Erie. Thomas will become PLA president-elect at the conclusion of the American Library Association (ALA) 2015 Annual Conference and will assume the PLA presidency in June 2016 for one year.

PLA Board Elections

Also on the ballot were two director-at-large board vacancies; both three-year terms. PLA members elected Dr. Rhea Brown Lawson, executive director, Houston (Texas) Public Library, and Gina Millsap, chief executive officer, Topeka and Shawnee (Kansas) County Public Library. PLA thanks all the candidates who stood for election, as well as the PLA Nominating Committee for providing a strong and worthy slate of candidates.
PLA LEADERSHIP CONTINUED

Gates Foundation Global Libraries Networking Summit
PLA President Larry Neal and PLA President Elect Vailey Oehlke have been key participants working with the Global Libraries initiative at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In May 2015, the two attended a networking summit in Seattle with nearly 90 library leaders from around the world. The attendees were tasked with figuring out how to collectively leverage their power and talent on a global scale. PLA will work with leaders and ultimately its members, to think more globally to enrich and benefit the entire public library community's

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

PLA Webinars
PLA offers a monthly, live webinar on topics including Administration/Leadership, Adult Services, Advocacy/Marketing, Collection Development/Readers' Advisory, Customer Service/Staff Development, Literacy, Technology, and Youth Services. All webinars are recorded and available on-demand.

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 2014. 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 MAGAZINE AND PLONLINE
It’s been a great year for both the print and online versions of Public Libraries. Subscriptions are up for the paper version and we’ve run a number of excellent articles and columns this year, including a special Customer Service issue (Jan/Feb 2015) which received rave reviews from readers; and feature articles that looked at library topics like Summer Meal Programs, E-government, Library Statistics, Library Services to Jails, and much more.

The online companion site to Public Libraries also continues to thrive. Like the print iteration, PLOnline focuses on issues and topics that matter to public libraries and public librarianship. Updated daily, the site features selections from the print magazine as well as unique content. PLOnline offers hundreds of articles on library-related topics in addition to author interviews and Indie e-book reviews. Posts are comment-enabled so readers can share ideas on the often thought-provoking topics, as well as share their own stories or experiences. A variety of social networking options accompany the site, these include Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. In upcoming months, we will continue to pursue a multiplatform environment, with PLOnline content distributed across many platforms. To that end, in May, we commenced publishing a weekly PLOnline Newsletter. The opt-in newsletter pushes out PLOnline articles and information. We currently have over 600 subscribers, with new subscribers signing up every day.
We are happy to report that the site and the site’s social media have been very busy – here is a look at recent statistics:

- From September 1, 2014 – September 1, 2015 – 228,786 users (formerly unique visitors).
- 287,030 sessions (formerly visits), with 78.9% by new visitors and 21.1% by returning visitors and an average session duration of 1 minute, 5 seconds.
- 409,318 page views, for an average of 1.43 pages per session.
- Our PLOnline Facebook page has 3,747 followers and our Twitter account has 1,839 followers.

Other PLA Publications
We are busyly working away on our new series “Quick Reads for Busy Librarians.” At no more than 100 pages, these books will cover both emerging and essential topics in public librarianship with style, clarity, (maybe a touch of humor), and above all brevity. These short books are the perfect size in terms of depth and coverage for many public library world topics. Each book in the series will have a similar look and design and will be available as a pdf download or a print publication. The first two books in the pipeline are *A Guide to Bed-Bug Abatement* and *Weeding Manual* (titles have not been finalized).

**TURNING THE PAGE**
PLA is pleased to announce that the advocacy training curriculum Turning the Page: Building Libraries, Strengthening Communities is now available at www.publiclibraryadvocacy.org, along with other materials to support library advocacy and impact measurement. This training curriculum is an updated version of Turning the Page that was developed by PLA and later adopted by libraries around the world through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Global Libraries initiative.

Turning the Page: Supporting Libraries, Strengthening Communities is a complete training package that includes an Advocacy Training Implementation Guide—a recommended read before diving into the curriculum—and a set of 15 training sessions that each includes a trainer script, PowerPoint presentation, and handouts. An Advocacy Action Plan Workbook accompanies the training so participants can develop an advocacy plan for their library in real-time. PLA partnered with OCLC/WebJunction to launch Turning the Page and new Advocacy in Action resources during a reception at ALA’s Annual Conference.

### PLA THANKS ITS PARTNERS

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