



MLA to Z

The Newsletter of the Maine Library Association

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The Future of Libraries Depends on Strategic Planning

*by Lesley Dolinger, Director, Patten Free Library
Ann Marie Bartoo, Owner, Corner Market Consulting*

Libraries are an integral part of every community and have a strong history of serving as vital resources for information.

In order to meet the needs of 21st century patrons, libraries have evolved to adjust and improve everything from programs to technology to their physical plants, all while keeping in mind the increasing diversity of patrons and stakeholders. At the same time, libraries must also determine how they will maintain financial stability so they can proceed with their work.

All of these efforts involve planning and decision-making. But how do library boards and staff make effective decisions that will keep them on track and positively impact their library? How are they guided, and who supports them in this process?

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Strategic Planning

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The strategic planning process serves as a framework for successfully navigating the short-term future of a library so they may make and carry out mission-driven decisions and related activities.

To give you an idea of the impact strategic plans can have on a library, we would like to share a few tips and insights that the Patten Free Library (PFL) has experienced as a result of the two strategic plans they have designed and implemented over the past decade:

- Tight budgets can turn into a reason not to hire a guide to assist with the process. We were glad we utilized a consultant for both of our efforts, as we learned planning saves money, vs. wastes money. As a result of PFL's last strategic plan, we were able to carry out a goal to renovate a space for our young adult community. In the process, we engaged teens to be part of the space design planning and received strong financial support from the community for the project.
- Identifying priorities is more than just a staff-driven activity—it requires many voices. Both of PFL's strategic planning committees were comprised not only of staff, but also board members, small business owners, city officials, parents of school children, retirees and other diverse members of the larger community. By having a broad range of voices at the table, we were able to identify priorities that might not have come to the attention of staff. For example: In our most recent strategic planning effort, one task force identified the need to build relationships with the five communities we serve (Arrowsic, Bath, Georgetown, West Bath, and Woolwich) by planning listening sessions and focus groups to determine the needs of each individual and vibrant community.
- Priorities led to goal setting and then creating a framework for action. With limited resources (staffing, finances, etc.) in our first strategic plan, PFL was able to rebrand, create a new 21st century website, and construct a new group study space. As staff and board members transition out, without a strategic plan in place, these initiatives and projects might never have been accomplished.

Strategic plans also help to establish a culture of organizational improvement and confidence. This most recent strategic plan is the second during my tenure as Director. Having this road map in place has engaged the larger community in setting and meeting goals as well as measuring our progress along the way, and having an exciting, yet realistic vision of the future.

Even small libraries can benefit from strategic plans. If your library has not yet undertaken strategic planning, we encourage you to explore this option so you too can become and remain mission-driven, and be prepared to make good decisions, effectively engage stakeholders, and help your library remain the cornerstone of its community.

***Lesley Dolinger** is the director at the Patten Free Library in Bath, Maine, and has overseen the design and implementation of two dynamic strategic plans during 12 years of her leadership.*

***Ann Marie Bartoo** is the owner of Corner Market Consulting and specializes in strategic planning for nonprofits. She and her team have guided the Patten Free Library through their two most recent strategic plans.*





Time flies (when you're having fun)

I believe this will be my last “Letter from the President” and wow, does time fly! I’ll begin with some updates:

The wage study is underway and you will likely see the survey from our consultant, Municipal Resources, Inc., by the time this newsletter is published. Thanks again to our hardworking committee led by Kate Wing (Bowdoin College): Lee Koenigs (OOB), Steve Normal (Belfast), Michelle Conners (Kennebunk), and Sonya Durney (UNE).

The strategic planning committee is working away to get our plan ready to present at the MLA Annual Business Meeting, which will happen on Tuesday afternoon 5/23, during the conference. Thanks again to Deb Clark for facilitating our SOAR analysis!

The Annual Conference is shaping up really nicely. The registration pricing has not changed from last year. If you have never attended and are able to, I highly recommend it. Personally, attending the MLA conference has helped me to build a really supportive professional network of people from all types of libraries, and that is so much more valuable than I ever would have imagined. In times where we face obstacles of all kinds (book challenges, polarization in our communities budgetary challenges, etc.), it is so important to have a strong network of support to call on when you need advocacy or advice -- and it is equally important to be able to be part of that support network for others. We are all in this together.

Oh, and did I mention that **Stephen and Tabitha King are speaking at our fundraising dinner** on Sunday, May 21st? This is so incredibly exciting and we are so grateful to them to supporting us in this way. Our committee has tried our very best to make tickets affordable for MLA members and conference attendees, while still raising funds

after covering our costs (plated dinner, drink ticket, AV, etc.). We are selling tickets to the general public at a higher ticket price, so [please share this event](#) through email or social media to any library supporters, intellectual freedom supporters, or King fans who you think might enjoy this special event.

And I will wrap it up with a bit about the future. Our strategic plan is shaping up to focus on the areas of advocacy and professional development, but also on expanding our capacity as an organization to meet the needs and opportunities that exist in those areas. As past president, my goal will be to start an annual fund cycle and to build a development committee, to ensure MLA’s financial sustainability and growth. I will do a callout in the summer or fall for people interested in forming this new committee, but if anyone out there knows they are interested, please feel free to reach out to me.



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Congressional Fly-In

In early March, Lori Fisher, the Maine State Librarian, Marijke Visser Director, Library Development at Maine State Library, and I joined library advocates in Washington DC for the American Library Association Congressional Fly-in.

We visited the offices of Senator Susan Collins, Senator Angus King, and Congresswoman Chellie Pingree. Our goal was to remind Maine legislators of the important role of Maine libraries and to request their support for federal funding for libraries.

Since the visit, King, Pingree, and Golden have all signed both the the **Library Services and Technology Act** (LSTA) and **Innovative Approaches to Literacy** (IAL) letters. Senator Collins has not – given her current role on the appropriations committee it would be like signing a letter to herself. However, Collins has long been a strong champion of Maine libraries. If you have a moment, thank your legislator!

We have a library-friendly delegation in Maine: Senator Collins is leading the **Bipartisan Senate Caucus Launched to Address Adult Literacy**. Senator King's office had questions about K-12 info literacy and combating misinformation. Congresswoman Pingree's office always signs the appropriators' letters, so that was also a friendly meeting. We did not get to meet with Congressman Golden -- but we were in touch with his office.

We also had the opportunity to network with colleagues from other states, sharing ideas and best practices for library advocacy. The first day was a full day of training. Lots of role-playing and explaining of how federal funds impact libraries locally. The highlight, in my opinion, was "What to do Before, During & After Congressional Meetings" with **Brad Fitch**, President & CEO, Congressional Management Foundation. Highlighting best practices for **communicating with Congress**. 📖



Maine State Librarian Lori Fisher (front left) and Sonya Durney (front right), MLA vice president


Unite Against Book Bans

At the end of March, Lori Fisher and I once again trekked down to the ALA DC office, this time to work with fellow **Policy Corps** members to strengthen ALA's **Unite Against Book Bans Campaign**.

The American Library Association (ALA) Public Policy & Advocacy (PPA) Office, in partnership with ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom announced a new initiative for proactive advocacy to combat book banning and censorship in America's libraries. A cadre of the ALA Policy Corps will boost efforts across library types and states to showcase how libraries and library workers provide essential information resources to their communities while increasing awareness about the importance of intellectual freedom and its centrality to American democracy and society.

The ALA Policy Corps aims to expand the Association's ability to advocate on key policy issues on behalf of the library community. Participants in the Corps focus on issues for which deep and sustained knowledge is necessary to advance ALA policy goals and library values among policymakers.

In 2022, a record 1271 attempts to remove books from schools and libraries were reported to the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom. These challenges targeted 2571 unique book titles, the vast majority of which were written by or about members of the LGBTQIA+ community or Black persons, Indigenous persons, and persons of color. Of the overall number, 90% were part of attempts to challenge multiple titles at a time – evidencing coordinated efforts to restrict or remove books about marginalized groups and deny each reader's freedom to choose. More than half of states also have seen the introduction or passage of legislation that would severely restrict access to library materials, including withholding funding for libraries or criminalizing library workers who fail to comply with the likely unconstitutional demands.

Learn more at the MLA Annual Conference where Lori and I will present this work with Kenton Oliver - Senior Policy Fellow at ALA. 

From the ALA: On Book Bans in 2022

- The record spike in book bans during 2022 did not originate from individual conversations with concerned parents. Overwhelmingly, these challenges were presented by groups and individuals at library board meetings that demanded the removal of long lists of books obtained from organized censorship groups who share these lists on social media. These well-organized attempts at censorship must be stopped.
- Individual efforts to oppose these can be successful. **Unite Against Book Bans** (UABB) is an initiative from the American Library Association, and we encourage you to join the campaign against censorship: <https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/take-action/>. The site also offers excellent talking points about book bans and a toolkit to organize your action.


A proven way of thwarting these successful censorship efforts is gaining momentum from people who oppose it. Please consider sharing this information in your own library communications, and with your patrons. If you would like help drafting additional language for your own newsletters and press materials, please reach out to the MLA Intellectual Freedom Committee at ifc@mainelibraries.org.

Legislative Update

Our legislators here in Maine have been very busy, with many pieces of legislation coming up for consideration.

The Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs has been particularly busy. A very recent addition to the list is **LD 1333: An Act to Protect Children by Modernizing Internet and Digital Media Filtering Requirements for Education**, which would substantially re-write MRS Title 20-A (Education) in several sections. It adds duties to the state school board and adds strict and specific state-level requirements for filtering internet access, at the network, software, and hardware level, for all school-issued devices.

To learn more about legislation and rules already in place, here are some links: **CIPA (Children Internet Protection Act)** and **COPPA (Children's Online Privacy and Protection Act)**. For those who don't have to fill out the Erate paperwork for the Maine School Library Network, we all already have policies and procedures in place. School districts have policies and procedures in place. Statewide curriculum content is in place for students learning 21st-century computer skills. But we'll keep an eye on this legislation to see if there are any new additions to the regulation arena.

On a positive note, the statewide **Digital Inclusion Plan** is going well. This is about expanding access for rural digital equity and reaching under-served populations wherever they are in Maine. I am looking forward to updating you on this as we look at funding coming to the state through the **Broadband Equity and Access Deployment (BEAD) Program**, which came from federal legislation. Some of this money could be directed to fund the work public libraries are already doing to help people get connected, stay connected, and use the Internet safely, so please keep up the great work and please consider **sharing your story**. 

Tell Your Story

Maine Library Association would like to gather stories from members, as well as other libraries and community partners, on the impact that we have on our communities. We are doing some amazing work, and we have successes to share and challenges to ask for help in tackling. We have power in our localities, but we also have power as a sector that touches the lives of all of our residents whether they use their local libraries or not.

So we are asking you to share your stories through MLA. We want to make this easy for you.

Start on the MLA website, www.mainelibraries.org. Click Log In at the very upper left of your browser window (if you are already logged in, you will see your name there; click on it). Click Edit Profile. Scroll and fill answers to fields next to the questions that ask what you like about your library, what you are proud of, etc.

Each person who submits a story or image decides with whom we share them. We also ask for anyone whose likenesses are included in the images to sign a release. We take privacy very seriously.

What can we do with our stories? We can share our experiences serving Maine residents. We all choose to live and work here, and we have great reasons to do so. We want to show our elected officials the places we live and what we do to make these places better. It is not always easy, and sometimes we need help, like additional funding, to meet the needs of our communities. Gathering our stories and presenting them all together has power beyond numbers.

Join us at the Annual Conference!

Advocacy in Action: The 2023 Maine Library Association Annual Meeting and Conference will take place on May 22-23 at Sunday River Ski Resort - Grand Summit Hotel in Newry, Maine.

We are pleased to announce that the conference schedule and session descriptions are live! Visit the [conference page](#) on our website to see what we have planned this year.

Highlights:

- Monday Keynote with **Tracie D. Hall**, Executive Director of the American Library Association
- Trivia with Meg Gray of Bangor Public Library
- Morning Yoga with Marie Hurrell
- Tuesday Keynote and Book Signing with author **Monica Wood**
- Lunch welcome from **Lori Fisher**, Maine State Librarian

Register for the
Conference



ADVOCACY

IN ACTION



Annual Conference 2023
May 22-23

Sunday River Resort
Grand Summit Hotel in Newry, Maine

Registered for the Conference?

Get a discounted rate on dinner with Stephen and Tabitha King

Did you know that if you're registered for the Annual Conference that you receive a discounted rate to attend the fundraising dinner with Maine authors Stephen and Tabitha King?

Celebrated Maine authors and philanthropists, the Kings are major supporters of the work that libraries do and the ideals the library profession upholds, such as intellectual freedom and digital equity.



The [ALA reported](#) that in 2022 there were **1,269 demands to censor books in the United States**, nearly double the record-shattering 729 challenges recorded in 2021. This year there have been numerous attempts to censor books in Maine, and current proposed legislation could place educators and school librarians in legal jeopardy over book collections.

Proceeds from this event will help to fund the MLA, in support of our mission to promote and enhance the value of Maine libraries and librarianship, to foster cooperation among those who work in and for Maine libraries, and to provide

leadership in ensuring that information is accessible to all citizens from their libraries.


This fundraising dinner precedes the MLA annual conference and will take place on **Sunday, May 21, 2023, at the Grand Summit Hotel Ballroom at the Sunday River Ski Resort in Newry, Maine**. Learn more and register for this event by visiting www.mainelibraries.org.

Tickets to the event include a three-course meal, a drink ticket. A cash bar will be available. We hope to see you there!

**Register for the
Fundraiser**


UMaine Franco-American Programs receive \$350K grant

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) awarded a \$350,000 project grant to the University of Maine Franco American Programs to digitize archival materials and make them openly available online. UMaine will conduct the project on behalf of the Franco-American Collections Consortium, a collaboration of university archives that maintain collections of books, documents, manuscripts, photos, oral histories, art, maps and artifacts related to French and Acadian heritage and communities.

Once digitized, all of the items will be hosted online at the **Franco-American Digital Archives/Portail franco-américain**, which provides bilingual access to Franco-American materials at institutions throughout North America. The portal was created with support from a previous NEH grant that the University of Maine Franco American Programs received in 2020. 

Bangor Public Library celebrates 140 years

Bangor Public Library is turning 140 this month! To celebrate this monumental birthday, BPL has historic photos displayed in the lobby, and they hosting events all month, including a special birthday celebration on Saturday April 15. The celebration will feature a raffle and all-ages activities, including crafts, a book repair workshop, and a lecture on the Women's Clubs of Bangor in the early 20th Century. For a full roster of events, please visit our website:

<https://www.bangorpubliclibrary.org/2023-april-schedule>. We hope you can join us! 

Financial literacy resources available for libraries

The Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) is offering free financial literacy resources for libraries on their website. The page houses digital resources and materials that can be easily shared with students and families and can be accessed anytime. These resources can be used to grow your library's collection of financial materials for learners of all ages. With printables, mailable publications, games, and more—share financial knowledge on several topics such as money management, and higher education savings and planning.


The initiative also aims to raise awareness of the \$500 Alford Grant, a higher education grant program unique to Maine residents, and NextGen 529®, Maine's Section 529 plan. Visit

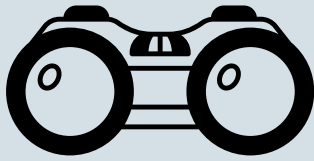
<https://www.famemaine.com/forlibrarians/> to learn more.

FAME has also recently added new College Savings Counselors to their staff who are available to come to events at your location. They could be a guest reader at your library's story hour, speak to a parent group, or participate in programming of your choice. Just reach out and ask!

If you'd like to have one of FAME's College Savings Counselors come to your library, please reach out:

Maire Pelletier serves the following Maine counties:
Androscoggin, Cumberland, Kennebec, Lincoln, Oxford, Sagadahoc, and York
207-620-3508, mpelletier@famemaine.com

Christopher Young serves the following Maine counties:
Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Knox, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington
207-620-3503, cyoung@famemaine.com 



A LOOK AHEAD

April is

National Poetry Month, School Library Month

23-29 National Library Week

23 Shakespeare Day

27 **Reading Roundup** -- Keynote Jason Reynolds

29 Indie Bookstore Day

May is

Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Mental Health Awareness Month, Jewish American Heritage Month, National Clean Air Month, and No Mow May

21 **MLA Fundraising Dinner**
with Tabitha and Stephen King
(Sunday River, Newry, ME)

22-23 **MLA Annual Conference**
"Advocacy in Action"
(Sunday River, Newry, ME)

June is

Pride Month, Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month, African-American Music Appreciation Month, Effective Communications Month

15 **Coffee Chat** (via Zoom)
Intro to Sustainable Libraries Initiative
with Rebekkah Smith Aldrich

15 **Maine Academic Libraries Day Conference**

About those Coffee Chats ...

Do you have a topic that you would like to learn more about or an area of expertise that you would like to share with your library peers?

We invite topic suggestions from readers, as well as suggested meeting times. Please send your recommendations to

membership@mainelibraries.org

Follow Us on Social Media



Write to us.

communications@mainelibraries.org

Tell us what's happening at your library. New programs. Innovative ideas. Letters to the editor. Photos. Long articles. Short shoutouts. We want to hear from you.