



MLA to Z

The Newsletter of the Maine Library Association

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Maine Library Association

mainelibrary@gmail.com

55 Main Street, Unit 49

Belchertown, MA 01007

207.744.7919

mainelibraries.org

MLA and the Maine Freedom of Information Coalition

by Jim Campbell, MFOIC Board President

MLA has been a member of the Maine Freedom of Information Coalition (MFOIC) for over a decade. MFOIC is a statewide 501(c)(3) organization made up of groups and individuals committed to ensuring that information generated by government agencies in Maine is available and accessible to the general public, as are the meetings and proceedings of government and semi-governmental agencies or groups such as utility districts. Librarians and libraries have a commitment to ensuring that patrons have access to as wide a range of information as possible, and that commitment to information access fits well with MFOIC's goals and activities. A representative of MLA serves on the MFOIC Board of Directors.

In addition to following the progress of legislation and other activities that might limit public access to government information, MFOIC undertakes projects

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to evaluate how well government agencies execute their responsibilities to make records and other information public when requested. Most recently, MFOIC sent Freedom Of Access Act (FOAA) requests to 135 law enforcement organizations in Maine seeking information about citizen complaints and police disciplinary action and record keeping. The results of that initiative were sent to press organizations in Maine for dissemination to the general public.

In previous years, MFOIC has cooperated with college political science classes to conduct audits of town governments to see how well those agencies were responding to Maine's open government laws.



MFOIC has also sponsored Sunshine Week Awards to people in Maine who have made outstanding contributions to keeping government information accessible to the public; has offered input to legislative committees regarding proposed bills that would adversely affect access to government information; has submitted, or joined with others in submitting, Friends of the Court documents in legal cases; has offered comments opposing proposed changes to judiciary rules that would make some court records unavailable to the public; has testified at hearings on whether and in what form to make court documents available online; and has, in recent state elections, offered all candidates an opportunity to pledge their commitment to open access to government information, and has published the results on the MFOIC website (mfoic.org).

MFOIC also engages in public educational activities, offering presentations on Maine's open government laws and regulations to groups that request them. MFOIC has cooperated with libraries on several occasions to disseminate information to the public about Maine's open access laws. Some years ago, MFOIC Board members made free presentations open to the public in libraries in every county of Maine.

MFOIC received a grant to provide a DVD of short video scenarios depicting situations that Maine people sometimes encounter when seeking information on a variety of subjects, from tax assessments to officials' travel expenses. Each short scenario ended with an unresolved

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question, and was followed by an answer and explanation from former Governor, and now Senator, Angus King. In addition to sending copies of the DVD to every incoming member of the Maine Legislature, a copy was also sent to every public library in Maine (which MFOIC hopes is in your catalog!).

The list goes on and these and other initiatives are a product of volunteer activity by MFOIC members - MFOIC has no paid staff. But the organization does have expertise on its Board and among its members to disciplines ranging from Constitutional law to broadcast and print journalism to archival expertise, and, of course, to knowledge of Maine libraries and what they offer to Mainers of all types.

MLA is proud to be a valuable part of the Maine Freedom of Information Coalition. Anyone who would like more information about MFOIC, or to become part of the organization, is welcome to send a note or question to mfoic@earthlink.net.

Jim Campbell is former Intellectual Committee Chair of MLA, a former ALA Counsellor from MLA, and present MLA representative on the MFOIC Board, currently serving as MFOIC Board President.



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MLAtoZeditor@gmail.com

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Innovative ideas. Letters to the editor. Photos.
Long articles. Short shoutouts.
We want to hear from you.



Letter from the President

Wynter Giddings



Well folks, 2021 was a tough year, and while the inclination may be to focus on looking forward and to leave the past behind us after such a year, I want to acknowledge the hard work of those who helped to make 2021 an incredibly productive year for MLA. When looking back over the year, I am so proud of our board and the members of our committees and interest groups for creating so many opportunities for our members to learn, share, and connect.

Our former Membership Chair Jenna Mayotte began a popular series of Coffee Chats, which has been continued by Sarah Skawinski, who stepped into that role in July. We hosted eight virtual Coffee Chats in 2021 on a variety of topics, with a total of 239 registrants. We have more lined up for 2022 and are always looking for new hosts/ideas!

As we could not put together an in-person Maine Library Legislative Day at the State House, former Legislative Committee Chair (and current Vice President/President-Elect) Sonya Durney worked with MSL and a small committee to organize a month-long series of legislative advocacy activities and trainings, in the form of Library Advocacy BINGO. This was a fun way for us to learn more about how to effectively advocate for libraries and library-related legislation. As it turned out, two of the participants have become the new Chair and Vice Chair of MLA's Legislative Committee, Savannah Sessions and Amy Stone.

Other committees and interest groups have hosted virtual discussions and events: Intellectual Freedom Committee chair Joanna Breen hosted a discussion of the article Trippin' Over the Color Line: The Invisibility of Race in Library and Information Studies (Honma, T., 2005); a 4-part series on how to host Dungeons & Dragons programs at your library which was hosted by Chris Libby and organized by our Youth Services Section Chair Danielle Fortin;

More Coffee Chats are lined up for 2022, and we are always looking for new hosts and ideas.



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an Archives & Special Collections gathering hosted by our interest group Chair Sharon Pietryka; Rural and Small Libraries gatherings hosted by Lee Koenings; and the annual Beg, Borrow, and Steal event (also coordinated by YSS), which featured Marijke Visser, the new Library Specialists Section/CE Coordinator at Maine State Library.

We also held our annual Maine Academic Libraries Day virtually, thanks to our Academic Libraries Chair Sarah Lucchesi, and our (virtual) Annual Conference which was put together by our amazing Conference Committee, chaired by Jen Alvino.


A special thanks to Jeff Eastman and the rest of the Communications Committee, who have worked hard to promote these events and to help facilitate registration setup and social posts.

We have also done a lot of work behind-the-scenes. One project I have to mention is the Wage Study Committee that you might have heard about recently. It is chaired by Kate

I am so excited we are doing this work, and I hope that it will result in stronger, more effective tools and standards for what we pay librarians and library workers in Maine.

Wing who will continue our wage study/advocacy work and who will also serve on a similar NELA committee, to coordinate our efforts regionally. I am so excited we are doing this work, and I hope that it will result in stronger, more effective tools and standards for what we pay librarians and library workers in Maine.

Well, I think I have used up my allotted space for this newsletter! I wish I could name each person who has hosted a Coffee Chat, served on a committee, or otherwise helped to make this a really productive year for MLA, so anyone not mentioned by name here, THANK YOU!

I can safely say that MLA will offer as much, if not more, for our members in 2022 and I look forward to seeing you at our Annual Conference at Sunday River on May 23-24 (and the Maine Infonet Pre-Conference event on May 22). Happy New Year! 



Mark Your Calendar

Coffee Chat: Setting Boundaries with Patrons

Thursday, February 17

Noon – 1 p.m., Zoom

Last day to propose a session for the conference

Friday, February 25

[Call for Speaker Proposal form](#)

2022 New England Collaborative Summer Summit

Friday, March 4 (Details TBA)

Coffee Chat: Collection Development & Censorship

Thursday, March 17

Noon – 1 p.m., Zoom

Library Legislative Day

April 3 – 9 (Details TBA)

Last day to apply for Ainsworth Scholarship

Friday, April 22

<https://mainelibraries.org/scholarships>

Maine Infonet Pre-Conference

Sunday, May 22 (Sunday River)

Annual Conference

May 23 – 24 (Sunday River)

Conference Committee

Annual Conference will be in person and safe (and awesome)

The MLA Annual Conference Planning Committee's work is underway! We look forward to seeing colleagues, talking libraries, and learning new things with everyone in person at Sunday River, May 22 – 24. Our theme this year is TRUSTED. Deborah Caldwell-Stone of the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom will be one of our keynote speakers. I would specify that conference is May 23 – 24, and the Maine Infonet pre-conference is May 22, featuring Kristina M.J. Powell, Executive Director of the Telling Room.

Did you know?

"The Association held its first annual meeting in 1901 with 27 members attending. Papers and discussion in the early meetings covered a broad range of subjects including Faults and Failures of Library Buildings, How Can College and Public Libraries Cooperate?, Opening the Public Library on Sunday and People in the Library." ([From our website](#)). Funny how timely these topics are!

Call for Proposals

Want to share your expertise with the Maine library community? We invite you to fill out our [Call for Speaker Proposal form](#) for MLA 2022. Applications will be accepted through Feb 25th. Accepted programs will be notified in the first week of March.

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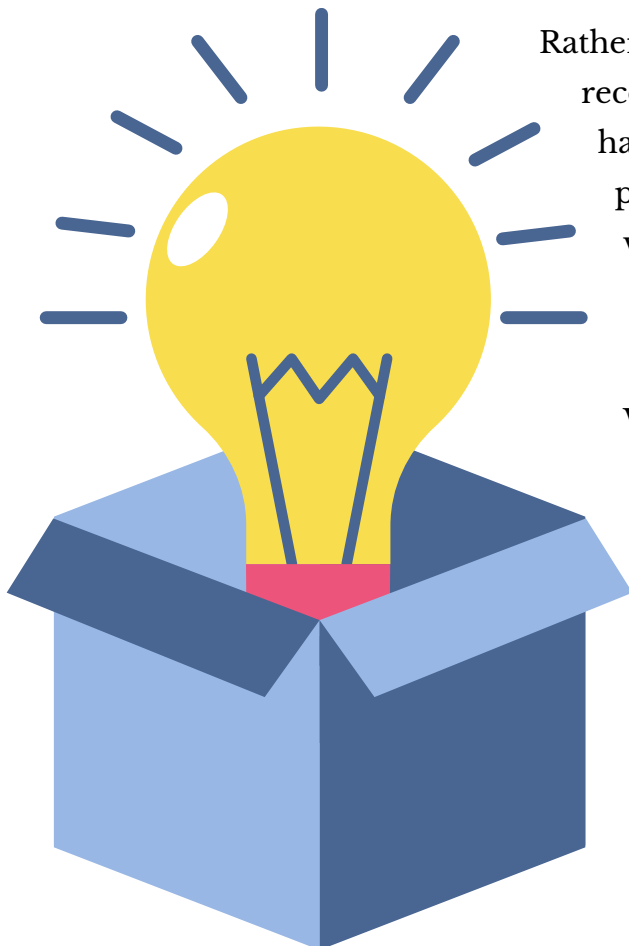
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COVID Precautions

We will do our best to make this event as safe as possible. We will require proof of vaccination for all participants and will require masking indoors, which have been standard requirements in event spaces since we have learned to live with COVID in our lives. We will also place fewer chairs in session rooms to decrease capacity and give attendees a bit more space. We are also looking at boxed lunches as opposed to the usual buffet lunch. Please consider these rules before registering, and agree to follow them when we see you at Sunday River.

Awards

It is still a little too soon for us to put out the call for awards nominations, but I wanted to let you know that we will do things a bit differently this year. The MLA usually gives two awards at the annual conference: one to an outstanding librarian, the other to a journalist. The outstanding librarian award will remain, but we are opening the second award to a broader range of potential recipients.



Rather than focusing on a journalist, we would like to recognize any other non-librarians who have worked hard this year to advance the mission of our profession from the outside. This could be a volunteer, a board member, a teacher, a professor, a writer, a builder, a town councilor, or, by all means, a journalist.

We hope that loosening the guidelines on whom you nominate will help us to become aware of how many people around us contribute to our success. Again, it's too early, details will be coming soon, but I wanted to rattle your imaginations about who in your circle deserves recognition. 🌱

A brief history of the Basket Raffle

You've probably seen the Basket Raffle at MLA Conferences. Maybe you've donated a great basket, bought 50/50 tickets, or maybe you were lucky enough to win a basket. For all of that, we say thank you! But do you really know why we have the basket raffle?

Back in 1944 a fund was established for the purpose of providing loans without interest to Maine residents attending library schools. In 1979 it was renamed in memory of Phyllis E. Ainsworth, the first Southern Maine Library District Consultant. The first Phyllis E. Ainsworth Scholarship was awarded at the 1995 MLA conference to a member of the first USC cohort. The first conference grants were given in 1999.

Some folks will remember when the committee mailed raffle tickets to every library in the state for a \$500 LL Bean gift certificate. Apparently it's illegal to send raffle tickets through the USPS, so that funding stream dried up. For a time there was a live auction at the MLA conference, which was replaced by a silent auction, and in 2012 the silent auction morphed into the now beloved basket raffle.

We are now taking applications for the Phyllis E. Ainsworth Scholarship

Applicants must be residents of the state of Maine, must be enrolled in an accredited library science program, must have a B average or better, and must be an MLA member. More details are on [our website](#) . Applications are due by April 29.

We also have grants for attendees of our annual conference. The application deadline has not been announced, but you can [check our website for forthcoming details](#).

Debbie Lozito is the Director of the Edythe Dyer Library in Hampden and Chair of the Scholarship Committee for MLA.



BLAST FROM THE PAST

Last year, my co-worker (Nissa — you all know Nissa) was cleaning out her desk and happened to find a copy of The Maine Entry newsletter from 1994, which was the first time MLA announced the Ainsworth Scholarship. Phyllis Ainsworth lived in Yarmouth and was a trustee at the library, which is probably why someone had saved this copy of the newsletter that mentioned the scholarship named in her honor.

— Jeff Eastman, Merrill Memorial Library, Yarmouth

THE MAINE ENTRY

FALL '94

Phyllis E. Ainsworth, Remembered

The Student Loan Committee of the Maine Library Association was established in 1944 for the purpose of providing loans without interest to Maine residents studying library science. In 1979, the fund was renamed in memory of Phyllis E. Ainsworth, the first person to have held the position of Southern Maine Library District Consultant. Starting in 1995, the committee will offer, in addition to loans, a one thousand dollar scholarship that will, too, be named after Mrs. Ainsworth. A biographical sketch follows to acquaint candidates and observers with Phyllis Ainsworth.

Born in Portland in 1917, Mrs. Ainsworth lived in southern Maine most of her life. She attended high school in Montreal Quebec, and graduated from McGill University. She also studied at Columbia University, the University of Chicago, Boston University, and the Uni-

versity of Maine. She married Edward Ainsworth. They lived in Yarmouth and had two sons, Edward, an educator, and Thomas, a lawyer. Mrs. Ainsworth died in February 1979.

Mrs. Ainsworth was a woman of firsts, the first librarian at Yarmouth Junior-Senior High School Library, the first librarian at PRIME, the Portland Regional Instructional Media Experiment, originator of the library at the Baxter School for the Deaf, and the first Southern Maine District Consultant. Mrs. Ainsworth served as Southern Maine District Library Consultant from November, 1974, to August, 1976. During that time she developed a comprehensive district library plan, trustee workshops, district book review sessions and centralized processing via the New England Library Information Network. Mrs. Ainsworth served as a member of the

Maine Library Commission and as a trustee of the Merrill Memorial Library in Yarmouth.

Retired librarian, Phoebe Tonseth remembers Mrs. Ainsworth's spirit, courage and marvelous cooking. "She could bake up a storm and realized the importance of food to librarians." Her experience in school, public, and special libraries and her concern and enthusiasm for people and reading made her, according to Mrs. Tonseth, a librarian's librarian. Ann Larabee, librarian at Falmouth Memorial Library, describes Mrs. Ainsworth as one of her favorite people, pleasant, engaging and genuinely nice, and recalls her knowledge of the community as a significant asset.

Phyllis Ainsworth had the recipe for success. Her accomplishments, ethic and spirit are worth recounting and give firm grounding for the loan and scholarship fund.

MLA Scholarship

The Student Loan Committee of the Maine Library Association announces the creation of the **Phyllis E. Ainsworth Scholarship**. **The one thousand dollar grant will be given to a student enrolled in a graduate level program.** Applicants must be a Maine resident and a member of MLA who has worked in/or demonstrated interest and support for libraries. Applications must be submitted to the Student Loan Committee by April 1, 1995 and the recipient will be announced at the 1995 MEMA/MLA Conference. **Complete details and an application form will be included in the Winter issue of The Maine Entry.**

Planning a remote Library Legislative Day

The Legislative Committee is excited to continue work advocating for libraries and all library-adjacent people in Maine for another year.

The Maine Legislature meets on a two-year cycle with a long regular session in the first year (approximately six months) and a short regular session in the second year (approximately four months). 2022 is a short session year, and also an election year. Fewer bills are introduced and passed during the short session, which means legislators have more time to take calls from constituents. Now is the perfect time for your advocacy efforts, especially as candidates hit the campaign trail.

Here are a couple of advocacy ideas:

- Learn who your elected officials are.
- Email your elected officials, introduce yourself, and invite them to your library (virtually or in person)
- Find proposed legislation you're interested in and attend a public hearing to observe:
- Host a candidates forum at your library

Library Legislative Day 2022: Save the date: April 3-9.

MLA hosts an annual advocacy event called Library Legislative Day. Library Legislative Day is typically held in the Hall of Flags at the State House, but alas, no events will be held in the Hall of Flags this year.

Fear not, library advocates! Your Legislative Committee is hard at work planning an engaging and fun remote advocacy event for Library Legislative Day. We are abiding by some prudent hiking advice and keeping it “low and local”: meaningful activities that can be completed in 10 minutes with a focus on advocacy in Maine and our local communities. We hope you will join us!

Savannah Session is District Elementary Librarian in Oxford Hills – MSAD #17 and Chair of the Legislative Committee for MLA.



A note from the YSS Chair

As we move into Summer Reading Mode, continue with Story Times and other regular library events, I wanted to take a moment to say thank you to everyone. The continued services we have struggled with over the past two years and our dedication to continuing those services has been amazing and humbling to watch. Libraries have stepped up in a difficult time and done so much to make a difference for our communities.

Please remember to take care of yourselves and your own health in addition to pouring your energy into your community. If you find yourself floundering or needing some backup in any way, please reach out to your colleagues on the Youth Services listserv, the Youth Library Facebook group, or a member of YSS. We're here to help and listen.

Thank you for all that you do.

Danie Fortin is Teen Services Librarian at McArthur Public Library in Biddeford and Chair of the Youth Services Section for MLA.



Explore: Oceans of Possibilities

On Friday, March 25, join YSS and the Maine State Library for a fun-filled oceanic exploration into summer reading!

This virtual planning session will dive into this year's CSLP manual, offer tips for using Beanstack, discuss methods for tracking books or reading, and, of course, give us time to talk about programs.

Is your library focusing on a different theme? Join us and share your theme! Others might have some great ideas to share or past experiences you can glean from. Are you struggling with virtual vs in-person again (aren't we all...)? Crowdsource ideas and best practices from others who are in the same boat as you! Join us for this fun and informative session as we highlight the Oceans of Possibilities for all ages.

This year's workshop will be on Friday, March 25, 2022.

Registration details coming soon.





YOUR (friendly, neighborhood) **COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE** **WANTS YOU** (Yes, you!)

The Communications Committee of the MLA is responsible putting out this quarterly newsletter, maintaining MLA's website and social media presence, keeping members up to date on MLA happenings, and awards at the annual conference.

We are seeking one or two MLA members to join us in our communications efforts. Also (not to scare you), one of us — any of the current Communications Committee members or a new recruit — will need to be vice-chair of the committee. The added role of the vice-chair would be to assume the responsibilities of the chair, should I need to step down for any reason.

If interested, let's chat! Email me at communications@mainelibraries.org.

— Jeff Eastman, *Communications Committee Chair*