



MLA to Z

The Newsletter of the Maine Library Association

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**Maine Library
Association**

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Thank you for making the 2019 conference another success!

The Maine Library Association's annual conference was held at the Sunday River Grand Summit Resort in Newry, Maine, September 30 and October 1, 2019. There were more people attending this year than ever before, so thank you for coming!

Highlights from the conference included keynote addresses from Cory Doctorow and Wanda Brown; the Maine Infonet Pre-conference workshop September 29; and a fun evening a trivia emceed by Bryce and Matthew.

Thank you to all of the presenters, attendees, and vendors for making it possible, and thank you to our hosts at Sunday River.



Letter from the President

MLA goal setting and the annual conference

Looking forward to another great year

In August, MLA board members met at the beautiful Merrill Memorial Library in Yarmouth, Maine for a full day retreat. The group was split into three working groups and given topics to discuss. These working groups discussed topics that ranged from legislative issues to how the MLA calendar of events works. The groups then came up with ideas and goals for the work that the board needs to do over the course of the next year to keep MLA active, responsive to member needs, and fiscally sound. It will be an exciting year!

At the end of September, I had the fortune to see many of you at the MLA 2019 Annual Conference. What a wonderful few days it was in Newry, Maine at Sunday River! The conference had its highest attendance in recent years and there was an incredible energy in the halls and sessions during conference. The Maine Infonet pre-conference kicked things off on Sunday

with an engaging keynote from David Lee King and continued Sunday afternoon with a policy summit. Keynotes for the MLA Conference, Cory Doctorow and Wanda Kay Brown were well received as were the many sessions on topics of interest to Maine library workers. Conference Committee members will meet soon to debrief and discuss the feedback we received.

If you have not filled out the conference survey, please do so. We do listen and try to make adjustments in following years. We look forward to seeing you back at Sunday River next year!

Here is the link to our attendee survey: <https://forms.gle/88VDRrGwfx4ycmQaA>

Best regards,

Jen Alvino



Jeff Eastman: Updates from the last Council meeting

Addressing conference feedback

Dissolution of two interest groups

Conference feedback

The occasion of the conference gives us an opportunity to explain a little about what goes into it. Every year when we ask for feedback, inevitably someone asks why it has been at Sunday River for the last few years. There are several reasons, and I will try to lay out a few of the big ones:

- There are not many venues in Maine that can hold and feed as many people as come to our conference.
- We have signed a multi-year contract with Sunday River, which saves the organization, members, and conference attendees money. The last year of our contract is 2022.
- Going back to the same place year after year means that we don't have to negotiate every little detail like we would at a new venue. They say, "Same as last year?" We say, "Yup." End of negotiation.

Interest groups

At our last meeting, the Board dissolved the Reference and Adult Services Interest Group and the Technology Interest Group due to lack of activity.

Interest Groups exist to cater to the interests of members. We encourage the formation of Interest Groups because we believe that they address specific needs of categories of libraries and librarians, they offer opportunities to learn from and collaborate with other librarians in similar positions, and they strengthen our profession in general and in the niches to which they belong. But there is a minimum of activity expected, like regular meetings, and organizational structure with a succession plan in case key members need to step down. It would be nice for Interest Groups to offer some kind of event on a regular

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Updates from the Council meeting, cont'd from previous page

Conference feedback, con't

That means we can devote more attention to planning the actual substance of the conference. They understand our needs, and there is value in the “memory” of our relationship.

Three pieces of feedback that we often get are, “there is nothing to do in Bethel and nowhere else to stay besides Sunday River”, “I wish there were more networking opportunities”, and “there’s too much of a lull on Tuesday.” These statements seem to pull in different directions. If we held the conference in, say, Portland, where there is “more to do,” it might distract attendees from the conference itself and from interacting with attendees. The keynote speaker on Tuesday morning this year did go a little short, so there was indeed a lull, but that created time for interacting. We are considering moving some things around on Tuesday so that there is less lull and fewer people leaving before the last session. Finally, this year, we tried something new by offering pizza for dinner Monday night, inviting MLA Interest Groups especially to have tables open to anyone who wanted info on them, and calling it a networking event. We received good feedback on this event, so maybe we will try it again next year.

We take your feedback very seriously, because we would like you to get as much out of going to the conference as you can. If you have ideas for how to improve the conference, please consider joining the conference planning committee next year. We will start planning in only a few months.

Interest groups, con't

basis for other MLA members, other librarians, or even the general public to attend. A model example of an Interest Group is the Youth Services Section (YSS), which has its own executive board, a set of bylaws, annual awards, and events like *Beg, Borrow, and Steal*, where Youth Services librarians from around the state meet to discuss all matters pertaining to their jobs. Understandably, not every Interest Group is as large or has as enthusiastic members as YSS, but smaller groups can still benefit from organizing and maintaining activity. Unfortunately, there was not much active interest in the Reference and Adult Services and Technology Interest Groups. 

Would you like to participate in an existing Interest Group or even found a new Interest Group?

Contact President Jen Alvino or Vice President Wynter Giddings if you have questions.



Social Justice, Responsibility, and Inclusion

Discussing a new MLA interest group

by Wynter Giddings,
MLA Vice President

If you had not heard about it back in January, there was an incident at ALA Midwinter that involved a racist and sexist verbal attack by an ALA councilor on another councilor, which occurred at an informal discussion session. I won't go into more detail, as many of you already know about this, and this incident isn't exactly the point of this piece. If you want the story directly from the person to whom this happened, [click here to read about it on her blog](#).

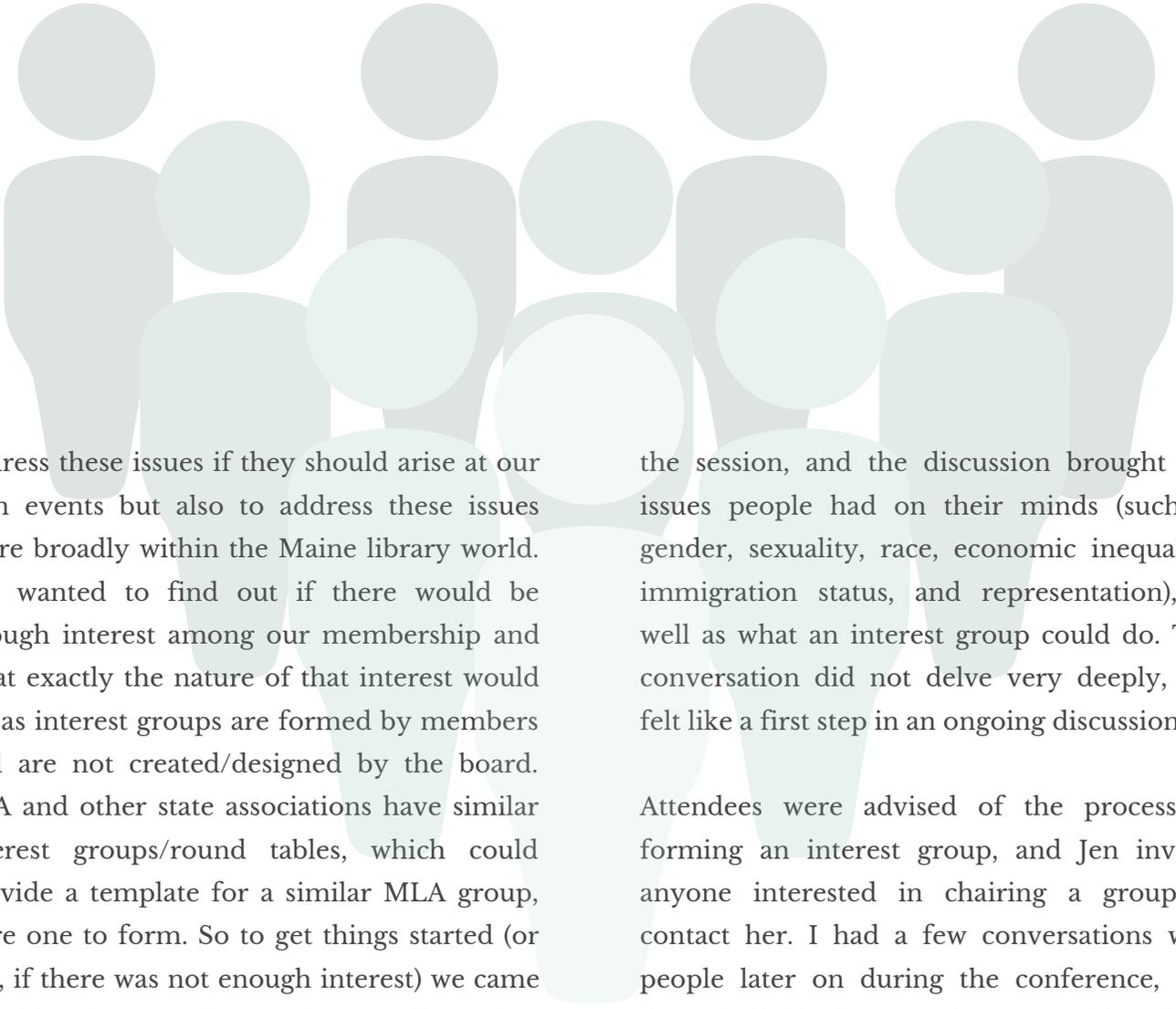
This incident led to a couple of discussions during MLA Executive Board meetings which, frankly, were tense and uncomfort-

able. I think that one thing we (board members who were present for these discussions) could all agree on, is that we did not have the vocabulary or the bandwidth to effectively address this and similar incidents in a way that felt right to us.

A few board members began to discuss the idea of forming an interest group within MLA, around social justice/responsibility and inclusion. We felt that perhaps a group of people interested in these issues could not only help MLA to appropriately

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Social Justice, Responsibility, and Inclusion, cont'd from page ?



address these issues if they should arise at our own events but also to address these issues more broadly within the Maine library world. We wanted to find out if there would be enough interest among our membership and what exactly the nature of that interest would be, as interest groups are formed by members and are not created/created by the board. ALA and other state associations have similar interest groups/round tables, which could provide a template for a similar MLA group, were one to form. So to get things started (or not, if there was not enough interest) we came up with a few questions to frame a discussion, which was held as a session at the MLA conference.

The session was led by Jen Alvino and myself; we gave a bit of background and then asked some questions, such as what particular issues interested people and what sorts of things they envisioned such a group doing. We also explained (broadly) the expectations of an interest group, which are specifically laid out in our bylaws. We had 18 attendees come to

the session, and the discussion brought out issues people had on their minds (such as gender, sexuality, race, economic inequality, immigration status, and representation), as well as what an interest group could do. The conversation did not delve very deeply, but felt like a first step in an ongoing discussion.

Attendees were advised of the process of forming an interest group, and Jen invited anyone interested in chairing a group to contact her. I had a few conversations with people later on during the conference, and those individuals seemed very positive about the idea and the conversation. One of the takeaways from the conversation that I feel I'd like to mention is that a group like this is bound to make some mistakes and have some uncomfortable experiences. Talking about these issues is often uncomfortable, and making mistakes is part of learning; I hope that this would not deter people from engaging with these issues. Time will tell if an interest group does form, but I feel good that we started the conversation.



Susan Preece

Director of Topsham Public Library and Outstanding Librarian of the Year

Can you tell us a little about your background and how you came to be a librarian?

My mother was pregnant with me when she was working in a Carnegie library in Winnipeg, Canada. She loved working in the library. For the rest of my childhood, when I was thinking about what I would be when I grew up, she would say, “You should work in a library. A library is such a fabulous place!”

I got my first job at the Mt. Kisco Public Library in New York when I was 16. A friend from school worked there and told me about the page job. It entailed putting books away and shelf reading. My first director there, Michael Steinfeld, is one of the most amazing people I have ever met and one of my inspirations in the library field. After college, I worked full time under him as a library clerk.

I took some time off of libraries to raise my boys and worked part-time at other jobs. When



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Susan Preece, cont'd from previous page

I was ready to go back to work and look for another full-time job, my mother was still saying, “You should work in a library. A library is such a fabulous place!” In order to work in the counseling or library fields (which both seemed viable options) I needed a graduate degree. Still not wanting to acquiesce to the library field (nobody wants to prove their mother right), I took a personality/job aptitude test as part of the decision-making process. The counselor who talked with me about the results said, “Have you ever thought about being a librarian?”

My mother said, “I told you so,” and I finally enrolled in the Master’s Library Science program in Public Libraries from Long Island University on the Dobb’s Ferry Campus receiving the degree in 1995. I give my mother credit/blame for starting this and pushing me toward the library.

I spent ten years in Children’s Services in New York, leaving as Head of Children’s Services in 2005 to become Director at the Topsham Public Library.

Tell us about your work at Topsham and any other projects you have worked on and would like to highlight.

The Board, staff, and I concentrated on getting policies and organizational structures in place in the first few years here. It was important to me to hear from the staff and the patrons to get a sense of what the needs were.

Thank you from Susan Preece for her MLA Award

Dear Friends,

I am incredibly honored and pleased to receive the MLA Outstanding Librarian of 2019 award. I am especially humbled when I look at the list of the many amazing individuals similarly honored. I am grateful to those who nominated me and those who supported my nomination. This award, however is not the accomplishment of this librarian. We are only as good as the team with whom we work. In my case, the Topsham Public Library staff and Board is my team. Their professionalism, dedication and enthusiastic participation in our endeavor to provide library service continually inspires me and makes me proud to be the Director at TPL

We are also only as good as the company we keep. I cannot think of a better group of people than the Maine Library community. You are kind. You are supportive. You truly care. You make me proud to be counted in your company!

Many thanks!

Susan M. Preece
Director
Topsham Public Library

Susan Preece, cont'd from previous page

I wanted to expand relationships with elected officials, community members, and stakeholders.

One of the most important things that we have done is to create a welcoming space where everyone has the ability to use our services along with the shared resources available across the state. Libraries are about connections within the community and in the world at large. There is a great energy in this library. The architecture is warm and inviting. The people here are happy, and the facility opens its arms and says, "Come inside--this is your place!"

You cannot be successful without a strong staff. I have been working in libraries since 1976. I have never worked with so many top-notch and dedicated employees [as in Topsham]. Almost all of the current staff began here as volunteers. Topsham is so lucky to have these people living and working here!

We have an incredibly supportive group of Topsham community members and library patrons. They are the reason we are here. The Friends of Topsham Public Library provide funding for virtually all programs through memberships and fundraising activities. We have strong support from the Selectmen and Town Staff. Twenty-one local Business Supporters, Whitten Society members, and many other donors and volunteers provide hours and dollars to keep the library humming.

I am most proud of the fact that we have accomplished our mission of being a community center for all ages.

What do you love the most about your work?

I love working with people and trying to get diverse groups with different goals to find common ground. Early on in my time at Topsham, a group of people wanted to establish a historical society. We worked together as partners, and the Topsham Historical Society provides amazing monthly programs for us here. Another nonprofit, the Cathance River Education Alliance, also provides monthly programming which supports both of us. The library worked closely with the Town of Topsham's Comprehensive Plan update.

As a last bastion of democracy, the public library is a place of ideas which can be mainstream or revolutionary. The goal of the library – creating community and an educated electorate – appeals to my 1960's and 1970's Aquarian tendencies. My staff would tell you that I am considered something of a "hippy."

As an outstanding librarian, what advice would you give other librarians, particularly those starting in the profession?

Don't forget that librarianship is an important calling. It is more than just a job. If you came to the library because you thought you could

Susan Preece, cont'd from previous page

quietly read and pick out books and other materials for your patrons, you may need to re-think your career choice. A library is really a revolutionary idea. I believe that public libraries are essential services. I am unwilling to sit quietly and be passive about putting our agenda front and center.

What are you reading right now?

I am reading *Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Who Helped Win the Space Race* by Margot Lee Shetterly; the graphic novel, *Monstress Vol. 4 - The Chosen* by Marjorie Liu; re-reading Erin Morgenstern's *Night Circus* in preparation for her next book coming out in November, and finally, Cory Doctorow's *Information Doesn't Want to Be Free*. I can't keep more than four books going at a time!



THANKYOU

For the Spotlight on a Librarian, Thorndike Press will generously donate a selection of large print books to the Topsham Public Library. Located in Waterville, Thorndike Press has been publishing large print for over thirty years.



The Outstanding Librarian of the Year Award was created in 1993 to highlight professional achievement and service to the Maine Library Community. The first recipient was Glenna Nowell, Director of the Gardiner Public Library who during her term as MLA President took on the fight against the rising tide to censor resources and materials in our state. Her efforts along with others led to the defeat of the "Obscenity Referendum" and garnered her not only the Outstanding Librarian of the Year Award but also a Hugh Heffner Award for championing Free Speech.

Many deserving recipients have followed in Glenna's footsteps as recipients of the Outstanding Librarian of the Year, recognized and applauded for their service to the cause of libraries in our state. For a full list of recipients, visit <https://www.mainelibraries.org/page-1712938>



From the Youth Services Section

Beg, Borrow, & Steal!

Register now for this year's Beg, Borrow, & Steal!

Join YSS on Friday, November 1st from 10-2 for a fun, info-filled workshop at the Maine State Library! For just \$25, you will get lunch, professional development, networking, and support the Youth Services Section of the Maine Library Association.

This year's Beg, Borrow, & Steal will feature our usual sharing/discussion session, a tour of the MSL UP Room, a short speech from our new Youth Consultant, Kara Reiman, and a rundown of what your YSS Board has going on. We will also be holding elections for YSS board member positions. If you know of someone awesome who would like to join the YSS board please nominate them!

YSS is looking for one Member at Large this year. This is a two year term. Members at Large work on projects not necessarily specified in the bylaws, and represent the interests of youth-related librarianship that might not otherwise have a voice. Attendance at meetings is expected, as well as attendance at any related conferences. Time commitment for these positions is not large, and they are a lot of fun. If you have any questions about the positions or about becoming a member of YSS, please email us at mla.youthlibrarians@gmail.com. 

Friday, November 1, 2019

10 AM - 2 PM

Maine State Library

Conference Room

230 State St, Augusta, ME 04333

\$25 per person; register today!





Maine Public Library Fund grant to Bonney Memorial Library in Cornish

MPLF Project Graphite to Pigment – June 2019

by Cheryl B Hevey, Library Director - Bonney Memorial Library, Cornish

The Bonney Memorial Library, Cornish, applied for a Maine Public Library Fund grant in 2018 in order to expand a pilot program “Summer Sketchers” into a more in-depth class, “Graphite to Pigment”. This was a 10-week course in the spring of 2019 ending with a public art show covering graphite, ink, and watercolor techniques. The grant enabled the library to supply all of the materials needed and allowed the students to keep the supplies in order to continue their art after the class ended. The program was taught by local artist Heather Newman.

The course provided handouts explaining composition, perspective, facial proportions, use of texture, watercolor technique, and color theory. Each class began with a brief lesson and then students had the option to work on the offered project (still life or working from images) or pursue their own ideas. Support was given for whatever the student was working on that week. Their projects ranged from many small thumbnails exploring an idea, technique or medium to pieces that took a couple of weeks to complete.



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News from Libraries around the State, cont'd from previous page

Two local artists graciously volunteered their time to share their talents and knowledge with the students. Tattoo artist Corey Oates visited during the ink portion of the course to share his journey to becoming an artist. His visit sparked intense discussion about what it means to be an artist and the many ways a person can learn about and pursue a career in art. Watercolor artist and farmer Natalie Beittel demonstrated several watercolor techniques to the students. A couple of students who had been struggling with watercolors had breakthroughs in understanding the medium and began to create in a different way after hearing her explanations.



After the course was completed, the library hosted an art opening in the community room with the artwork scheduled to be on display for two weeks. The students chose which pieces they wanted to hang and how the images should be cropped for matting. It was interesting to see what pieces they felt best represented their talents. Each artist chose between 2 and 5 pieces and their art was accompanied by a brief note explaining what was unique about each artist. The opening was a success, attended by students and their extended families as well as community members. The show received support and positive comments on the local community Facebook page.

The class had space for 10 and we reached capacity with all of the young artists attending for the duration of the class. We had a mix of homeschooled and public schooled students. Over the course of the 10 weeks the artists became comfortable enough to share

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News from Libraries around the State, cont'd from previous page

what they wanted to learn in the class and where they were having difficulties. They would often support one another with encouragement and advice or by lending phones to research images for reference. The atmosphere among the students was relaxed and they were all focused on creating for the hour and a half once a week.

The feedback for the class was overwhelmingly positive. We heard about how much the community needs local art programs for children, teens, and adults and students expressed how happy they were to have the library offering this program. Parents talked about how much their children enjoyed coming to the class each week and one parent mentioned her daughters would come home and talk about the techniques they learned. A couple of parents commented they noticed their teens drawing more at home, practicing what they learned. Two parents mentioned how much their kids enjoyed meeting the visiting artists. There were several requests to continue the program in some form from both students and parents.

The Maine Public Library Fund Grant allowed the Bonney Memorial Library to offer a fantastic art experience for our local teens.



Digital Badging at Thomas College

by David Smith, Librarian - Thomas College, Waterville

This past September, Thomas College launched its digital badging program. Digital Badges are a verifiable, modern way to show what you know to your peers, your professional network or current/prospective employers. Each badge contains information about how the badge was earned, what knowledge participants gained by completing the requirements, and what skills are related to the badge. Earning digital badges is a great way to prove your skills and make your resume stand out.

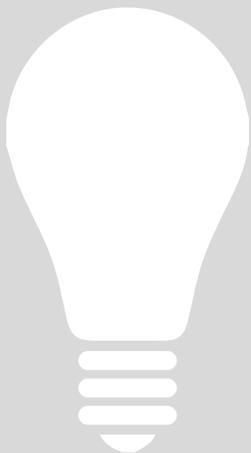
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The two initial badges being offered include one for Information Literacy created by the college's library. The IL badge is an excellent example of the growing trends behind badging itself. The two fields that have had the most interest in developing and promoting digital badges as a form of micro-credentials, Education and Business, are both concerned with demonstrating "soft skills." Information Literacy has long been an area closely associated with libraries in general but also of academic libraries in particular. The skill sets represented in information literacy are intrinsically connected to many of the soft skills teachers wish to instill in students and that businesses look for in employees.

Earners of the Information Literacy Badge are able to determine the nature and extent of their information needs, access needed information effectively and efficiently, evaluate information sources critically and incorporate information into their knowledge base, use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, and understand many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the access and use of information.

Thomas College's effort to further develop and make these skills more apparent is part of a growing movement within academia. The University of Maine System, The University of New England, as well as two of the state's community colleges; Central Maine and Eastern Maine, have badging systems in place. 



Has your library hosted a great program, received a grant, or hired a great new staffer? We want to hear about it!

Send your announcements and photos to MLAtoZeditor@gmail.com to be included in the next issue.



What's on your mind?

Your library colleagues want to know!
Send your submissions (photos, full-length articles, or short shoutouts) to

MLAtoZeditor@gmail.com

