TO: PLA Board of Directors  
RE: PLA Strategic Plan Update  
DATE: June 12, 2024  
SUBMITTED: Mary Davis Fournier, PLA Executive Director

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT: Information

Over the course of FY24, the PLA staff advanced several aspects of the PLA Strategic Plan. The PLA Conference provided an opportunity and venue to adjust specific practices to meet goals. New funding and partnerships have also contributed to our goals. Increasing revenue and maintaining membership, foundational to all of PLA’s work, continue to be challenging within the overall organizational context.

2023-2024 WORK

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice (EDISJ) in working with and for libraries as places of equitable opportunity.

- PLA staff added a demographic question to the conference proposal form to build a more diverse speaker cohort. PLA has not previously collected speaker demographics, making a comparison impossible. However, selected program included:
  - Over 10 that directly addressed issues of race, including The Black Public Librarian in America and Indigenizing the Library;
  - Five programs that directly addressed gender and sexuality, including Trans Staff and Patrons: Where to Begin and Next Steps;
  - Five programs that directly addressed non-English speaking patrons and services, including Breaking Barriers: Engaging Immigrants and Building More Inclusive Communities;
  - At least programs that directly addressed working with disabled patrons and staff, including We See You: Programming for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Working Together: Developing Neurodivergent and IDD Inclusive Volunteer Opportunities.

- PLA was able to offer an expanded number of conference scholarships. Affiliate members and Spectrum Scholars were eligible scholarship categories. All scholarship winners received a free year of ALA and PLA membership. Forty percent of scholarship awardees were BIPOC. One-quarter of all awardees identified as LGBTQIA+ and about one-fifth identified having a disability.

  ➢ Implications: These intentional first steps successfully welcomed more diverse speakers and attendees to conference, while simultaneously offering learning and networking to all attendees. To fully move EDISJ goals forward, PLA will need apply a lens of membership engagement and retention to understanding which activities are most successful in building diverse audiences.

  ➢ Key questions: How do we measure building more inclusion and the impact of those activities?
Organizational Excellence: PLA is the most trusted and innovative public library membership organization.

- PLA continues to work toward embedding EDISJ into internal practices. This includes interrogating our own planning through an EDISJ lens, ensuring member groups are broadly representative, and sharing our emerging best practices with colleagues across ALA.

- PLA continues to prioritize membership and revenue growth by responding to field needs. PLA has also established regular communications with other library organizations, such as ULC, ARSL, COSLA, and OCLC to coordinate and share.

  ➢ **Implications:** Overall, ALA membership continues to shrink, which negatively impacts PLA membership. To mitigate those losses, PLA will need to be rigorous in prioritizing and aligning resources, which may mean making thoughtful choices about programs and services.

  ➢ **Key Questions:** Are current programmatic priorities still “right”? Are there opportunities for new or deepened partnerships to support key priorities?

Transformation: PLA works with and for public libraries as they evolve to become more responsive to and reflective of ever-changing community needs.

- Most of PLA’s work in Transformation has been in support of all literacies.
  - PLA is scoping an update to its popular *Every Child Ready to Read* suite of products, to include new research and best practices.
  - PLA continues to partner with AT&T in developing new DigitalLearn content and offering incentives to libraries to adopt DigitalLearn. In 2023-2024, over 8,000 learners attended DigitalLearn workshops hosted by public libraries.
  - PLA received an IMLS National Leadership grant to pilot approaches to authentic engagement of Spanish-Speaking families. Undertaken in partnership with the National Center for Families Learning, this work will enhance PLA’s family engagement portfolio, and support EDISJ goals.

  ➢ **Implications:** PLA plays an important role in supporting key priorities, including building digital inclusion and all literacies across communities. Partners outside the sector recognize PLA’s ability to advance shared priorities.

  ➢ **Key Questions:** How do we measure library impact on community wellness, another stated outcome of the Transformation goal?

Professional Growth: PLA offers inclusive pipelines and pathways for the professional growth of all library workers.

- By continuing to offer ongoing professional development opportunities through regular webinars, conferences, publications, project cohort participation, publications, and volunteer opportunities, PLA centers Professional Growth in all we do.

- PLA has led the division directors group to collective conversation with the ALA CE unit in order to streamline collaboration and elevate the visibility of division expertise. Eventual
goals for this collaborative work include mutual promotion of CE offerings, a more collaborative and division-supportive approach to ALA CE, and new models for revenue sharing.

➢ **Implications:** PLA has the systems, processes, and personnel in place to consistently select and deliver high quality content to the field. This is an important factor in ongoing financial stability and member retention.

➢ **Key Questions:** How do we extend our reach beyond our typical users? For example, reaching practitioners at different career stages or in underrepresented geographies.

**Advocacy and Awareness:** PLA is the national voice for championing public libraries as a public good.

- Censorship and other anti-library legislation increased dramatically over 2023, with the number of titles targeted for censorship at public libraries increasing by 92% over 2022. PLA coordinates closely with ALA colleagues in the Office for Intellectual Freedom, the Public Policy and Advocacy Office, and the Communications, Media and Marketing Office to craft messaging and support ALA’s external and field responses. PLA also works with member leaders to connect them to and prepare them for related media and other speaking opportunities.

- 1,511 libraries responded to the 2023 Public Library Technology Survey. This represents a 16.4% response rate, and an increase from the 12.6% response rate in 2022. Results will be published in summer 2024 in a free report on the PLA website and interactive dashboards available from Benchmark (librarybenchmark.org), enabling libraries to use the data for planning and advocacy.

➢ **Implications:** PLA is aligned with and informs ALA advocacy to most effectively position public libraries and their staff to counter censorship and bolster awareness of the vital roles of libraries in their communities. PLA is collecting and maximizing use of public library data for planning and advocacy at the local and federal levels.

➢ **Key Questions:** How can PLA best ensure we are amplifying and complementing the most relevant ALA resources? What are the processes and tools we can put into place to identify gaps and sustain coordination and measure our contributions to this work?

**LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024-2025**

PLA staff met in retreat at the end of February 2024. During this day-long conversation staff did a deep dive on the Professional Growth and Organizational Excellent goals. Identified priorities include:

- Parsing activities that resulted in better-than-expected conference registration and understanding how to apply those lessons to other PLA activities and work streams;
- Developing and piloting a redesigned Leadership Academy to support Professional Growth goals, with a goal of an expense neutral to eventual revenue generating model;
- Continuing to refine Committee, Task Force and Advisory Group alignment, with a goal of more closely aligning member groups to board priorities;
- Developing an approach to collecting regular member feedback to inform PLA planning and demonstrate impact, as well as planning for a broader member satisfaction survey in tied to the 2026 Strategic Plan revision.
With Conference behind us, PLA staff will revisit the suggested activities and approaches to further advancing these goals in FY25.