

NJLA NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

January 2025

Vol. 23 Issue 1

Important Dates

Opinion Surveys: Intelligence That is Priceless

Wednesday, January 8, 2 p.m.

Deadline: NJLA Executive Board Nominations

Friday, January 17

NJ Department of Health Resources Overview

Wednesday, February 12, 10 a.m.

Mt. Laurel Public Library Performer's Showcase

Wednesday, March 5

Special Collections Cataloging: A Beginner's Guide

Thursday, March 6, 10 a.m.

NJ Makers Day

Friday, March 21 - Sunday, March 23

View the [NJLA Events Calendar](#) for all meetings and events.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by **JEFF CUPO**

Boy howdy, I'm sure many of you, like myself, are worried about the state of the nation, the world. These are dark times. I've thought long and hard about what to say in this message. I am your president, the captain of the ship, and in times of crisis, the captain is expected to inspire confidence. They aren't supposed to panic and scream, "Oh my golly, we're going to sink!" And so, I hope I am able to give you at least a little morale boost.



So much of our profession, our livelihoods, our lives, are currently being threatened: Public Service Loan Forgiveness, intellectual freedom, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Department of Education, not to mention the rights of most of our patrons, our colleagues, and ourselves. New barriers are rising, but we have been in the business of tearing down barriers for a long time.

Ours is one of only a few professions that has a strong focus on helping our communities' most vulnerable populations: undocumented immigrants, LGBTQ+ youth, survivors of DV, homeless people, people who use drugs, and so many more. They all come to the library because they feel safe here; they trust and believe in us. It will be hard, but we will be there for them, we will care, and we will shield them against hate.

Of course, we owe ourselves some time to grieve. We need to give ourselves some grace to say that we're just hanging in there right now, and that's maybe all that we can do for a little while. But when we're ready, I say let's get fired up. Let us stand with one another. Let us be brave for each other and those we care about. Let's fight the darkness with what we do best, helping others with compassion and kindness.

Jeff Cupo serves as the Head of Information and Adult Services at Elizabeth Public Library. He manages EPL's Health and Wellness Station, which provides free life-saving items, including Narcan, condoms, feminine hygiene products, socks, etc. He led EPL in becoming one of the first libraries in NJ to hire a social worker, and one of the few libraries in the country to offer lockers for homeless patrons to store their possessions. Jeff also runs a monthly Homeless Focus Group for housing-insecure patrons to share ways the library can better serve them. As NJLA President, Jeff hopes to make practices like these more widespread, to improve the lives of our patrons across the state, and is more than happy to help anyone get started.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

by **BRETT BONFIELD**

Three days ago, as I write this message, the 119th United State Congress started its work by electing its speaker of the House. The next President will be sworn in two weeks from today.

New Jersey has its primary scheduled for June 10. That primary will determine the parties' nominees for Governor. There will be a lot of campaigning in the next six months.

We can anticipate uncertainty. Conflict. Ambiguity.



When I was a kid, the library was a haven. I went there for solidity. To find myself.

One day, when I was in high school, there was miscommunication about my whereabouts. The administration and my parents (incorrectly) believed that I was cutting school. My father knew where to look for me, and he was right in theory if not in fact. If I could have chosen anywhere to spend that day, it would have been my local public library.

I thought about that boy, the kid that I was, every time a child or teen showed up, in the middle of a school day, at one of the libraries where I worked. Their reasons were often more justified than mine would have been, their needs greater. They sought refuge, distraction, comfort. If they found that at the library, we were doing a lot of things right. And if we could help them improve their situation, we were doing everything right.

Libraries are a throughline during transition, individual and societal. A place where we encounter each other.

Libraries are the long view. Context and nuance. Recall and precision. Inquiry and solidity.

Sometimes people ask if libraries are still relevant. They aren't paying attention.

Libraries have never been more relevant.

Brett Bonfield is NJLA Executive Director as of March 2023. He has worked in libraries since 2006, including 11 years as the director of two public libraries in NJ. Most recently, Brett served as the Chief Operating Officer at the Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library. Brett has held leadership positions in nonprofits and library organizations including NJLA, the American Library Association, Public Library Association, Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati, and OhioNet. Brett received his MS in Library and Information Science from Drexel University.



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Use these links to access the latest newsletters from other NJLA Sections.

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INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING?

For all inquires, please contact

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Proposals for the Spring 2024 issue are due on January 27th.

RIDGEWOOD LAUNCHES DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY LIBRARIES

by **RANDI HAWKINS**

The Ridgewood Public Library just launched a Dementia-Friendly Library Initiative in partnership with Bergen County Division of Senior Services, Valley Health, the BCCLS consortium, and the Village of Ridgewood. We've seen an increasing need for services, and since the library already serves as a safe space for the community, we felt it was a natural place for people to seek out resources.

Our initial plan was to develop a curated collection of books, Reminiscence Kits, and supportive programming including educational presentations and Memory Cafes. We secured funding from our Friends of the Library and set out to build the book collection and also create Reminiscence Kits with themes like Beach Day, Cars, and Playful Pup. Each kit contains a book, a paint with water kit, one or two matching games, and some tactile items. They are styled as "tell me your story" kits to encourage people to explore and share their memories.

Just as we started creating our dementia-friendly collection, the BCCLS executive director shared that the Bergen County Division of Senior Services was hoping to kick off a Dementia Friendly Library Initiative. Serendipity at work! We volunteered to be the launch site for the countywide initiative with the goal of creating a scalable program that libraries of all sizes could use.

Community partnerships are the key to the success of this type of initiative. It is critical to listen to both the affected community and experts, so we invited patrons and local organizations into the work. Patrons shared their challenges and needs and gave us a starting point. We then looped in local organizations who shared their health educators, information, publicity support, and enthusiasm for serving those affected by dementia. The county supplemented our circulating collection with dementia-supportive books for adults and children, and additional Memory Kits.



"Beach Days" Reminiscence Kit

Article continues on next page.

Our kickoff event was the countywide launch on October 28th for a hybrid audience of 75 guests that included words of support from our partners and Deputy Director of Senior Services for Bergen County, Kerri Sherer. The featured talk by Valley Health LCSW Susan Breithaupt, "The Lowdown on Dementia," focused on identifying symptoms, strategies for memory care, and more. The audience was fully engaged and eager to share their challenges in the Q&A. The Bergen County Division of Senior Services, Act Now Foundation (a dementia resource center), and the Village of Ridgewood Board of Health all hosted tables at the event to speak to attendees and introduce their support materials. One of the benefits of holding this type of programming is that it brings all resources together in one place, with experts on-site to answer questions and direct people to relevant services.

Winter plans include launching a virtual caregiver support group, hosting a Memory Cafe, offering brain health screenings, and providing dementia health expert presentations. There are many ways, both big and small, that a library can be dementia-friendly and we look forward to learning from our work with patrons, programming, and partners as this program develops.

Visit us at <https://ridgewoodlibrary.org/dementia-friendly-libraries/>

Randi Hawkins (she, her), MLIS, MEd., MA is an adult services librarian at the Ridgewood Public Library. *This is her first year as a librarian, and her focus has been on improving services to communities of underserved patrons. Prior to her work as a Librarian, Randi taught at Bloomfield College and NJIT, and worked in financial services.



The advertisement features a green-tinted background of a grand library interior with high ceilings and arches. At the top, the text reads "LIBRARY OF CONGRESS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION" next to a logo of an open book with a flame above it. Below this, the main headline says "AMAZING IDEAS ARE BORN" in large, bold, white letters, followed by the tagline "when the library community gets together" in smaller white text. At the bottom, there is a section titled "PROUDLY SERVING AMERICA'S LIBRARY COMMUNITY" and a short paragraph: "For over 85 years, the Library of Congress Federal Credit Union has proudly served America's library community. We're here to help you write your financial story. To get started, join the Credit Union that exclusively serves the library community."

The Library of Congress Federal Credit Union is a supporter of the NJLA Newsletter. More information can be found [here](#).

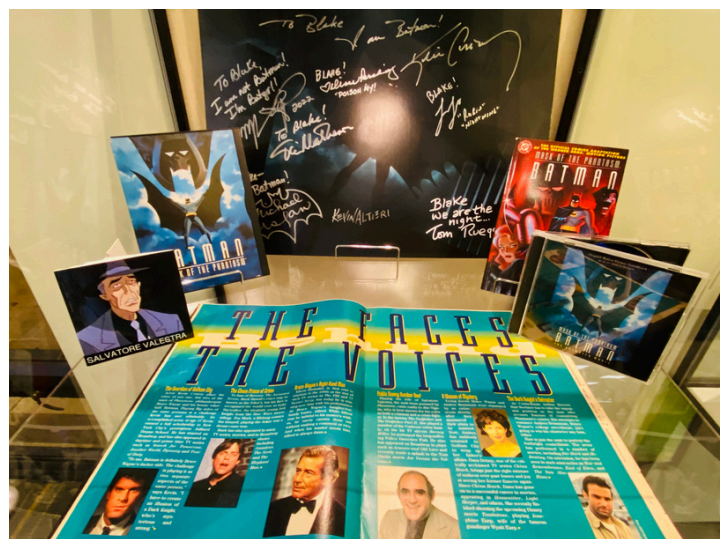
LITTLE FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY HOSTS ABE VIGODA EXHIBITION

by **JEFFREY MACHNO**

At the beginning for this year, we opened our new exhibition space to individuals and organizations to show their artwork and collections. A few months ago, while checking registration for an event, one of our patrons had registered using her maiden name, Carol Vigoda. This led to an immediate Google search and, once confirmed, I asked Carol if she would like to display her fathers memories here at the Little Falls Public Library.



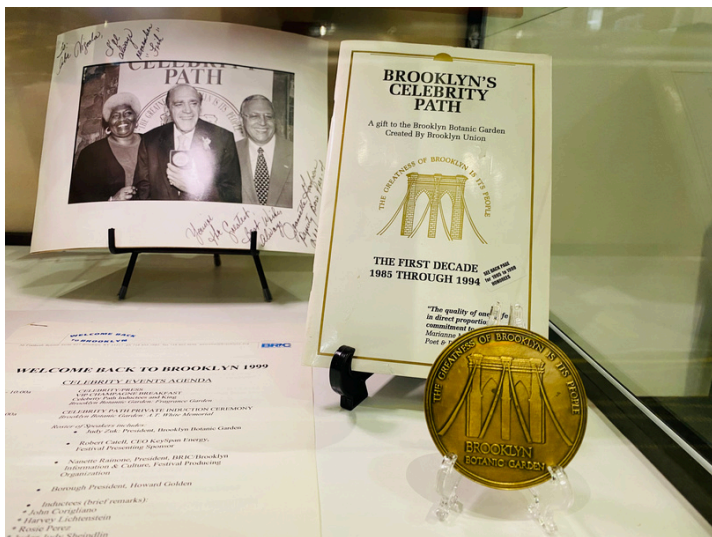
Carol Vigoda and Jeffrey Machno with Abe Vigoda Exhibit.



This is the first time that any of these wonderful and truly unique items have ever been seen by the public. The items range from Abe's original Godfather script and handwritten call sheet, to his bronze medallion from the ceremony commemorating him on Brooklyn's

Article continues on next page.

Celebrity Path, to letters from Bob Hope, Jack Lord, and Carl Reiner. Everyone who sees the exhibit always finds something that recalls a memory. Being able to have a collection of this magnitude, with this kind of Hollywood provenance is something that we are proud to offer our patrons and community.



Jeffrey Machno has been with the Little Falls Public Library since April of 2023 and in his current position as the Liaison of Adult Programming & Community Engagement since February of this year. He procures and coordinates exhibitions at the library, with director approval, as well as other cultural programs that are hosted both in person and on social media. Helping the library to be a beacon of art and culture is something that he approaches with great zeal.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Jenna Ingham

I launched my library career in the circulation department, where I served as a supervisor, and learned firsthand that it's much more than just checking out books. Circulation is the heartbeat of the library and the service we provide at the circulation desk embodies each library's unique brand. Though I'm currently the head of youth services at Verona Public Library, I'm thrilled to lead the new Circulation and Access Services Section (CASS) – a space to share ideas and celebrate this vital part of every library.



Whether your library has a circulation desk or not, I invite you to join us for a CASS meeting and help keep this section circulating!

AUTHOR TALK: KERRI SULLIVAN OF JERSEY COLLECTIVE

by JOHN POWELL

On Tuesday, September 17th, librarians Bart Everts and John Powell of the Paul Robeson Library at Rutgers University-Camden hosted a virtual author talk with Kerri Sullivan. Sullivan is the founder of Jersey Collective and editor of *New Jersey Fan Club*, a unique collection from Rutgers University Press. In this engaging session, she delved into the heart of New Jersey's vibrant cultural identity, and explored its artistic, historical, and social landscapes. As the driving force behind Jersey Collective, a platform that celebrates New Jersey's creativity through visual storytelling, Sullivan has dedicated herself to amplifying the voices and stories of the Garden State. Now in its tenth year, the talk was the capstone of Jersey Collective-related events at the Robeson Library. Events include a New Jersey-themed game night with Jersey Collective's Go Fish card game and Jersey tomato pies, and the exhibit "Ten Years of Jersey Collective," shown in the main exhibit space at the library.

New Jersey Fan Club brings together a diverse range of essays, poems, and visual art, all of which examine New Jersey's enduring impact on its residents and beyond. Sullivan provided insight into the creative process behind the collection, its significance, and the way it highlights New Jersey's rich cultural tapestry. She shared her experiences curating *New Jersey Fan Club*, along with her personal journey in fostering creative expression and New Jersey pride through Jersey Collective.



Kerri Sullivan visits the Jersey Collective exhibit at the Paul Robeson Library



Rutgers students playing Jersey Collective's Go Fish card game

John Powell is a reference librarian and the exhibits coordinator at the Paul Robeson Library, Rutgers University-Camden.

WORLD ON THE MOVE: 250,000 YEARS OF HUMAN MIGRATION

by **KATE-LYNN GRIMM**

The Piscataway Public Library was one of 15 libraries nationwide selected to host the World on the Move traveling exhibition. This exhibition was developed by the American Anthropological Association, together with the Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. It is administered by the American Library Association's Public Programs Office. The impressive exhibit was on display at the Kennedy Branch from September 28 through November 5. The Library hosted over 30 programs related to the themes of human migration, and also curated an accompanying exhibit "Journey to Piscataway" where community members were invited to submit their own migration stories. During its time in Piscataway, over 25,000 people came to view both exhibits.

Highlights of the exhibit period included a lively Opening Reception featuring local partners, a visit with acclaimed YA author Daniel Aleman, a virtual tour of the Tenement Museum in New York City, and several school field trips. At the Closing Reception, participants in the Journey to Piscataway project shared their stories and enjoyed remarks from the mayor and library staff. Teen volunteers served as docents to the exhibit, greeting visitors and answering basic questions.

If you are interested in viewing World on the Move, it is traveling through August 2025. An itinerary of host libraries can be found [here](#). A virtual tour of the exhibition and related resources can be found at understandingmigration.org



The World on the Move traveling exhibit.



Susan Vignulo and Kate-Lynn Grimm with author Daniel Aleman.

Kate-Lynn Grimm is a Teen Services Librarian at the Piscataway Public Library. She is also the Vice President of New Jersey Makers Day.

SECTION SPOTLIGHT

Retired Members Section

by **KATHLEEN MOELLER-PEIFFER**

INTRODUCING THE RETIRED MEMBERS SECTION OF NJLA!

The Retired Members Section (RMS) was founded in late 2023 by former New Jersey State Library Deputy State Librarian Kathleen Moeller-Peiffer.

For the past year, the officers have been:

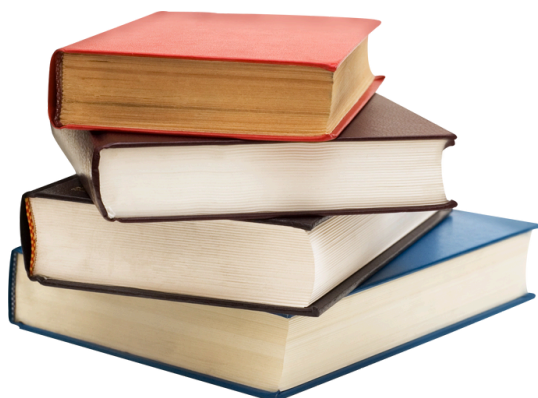
- Kathleen Moeller-Peiffer, President
- Scherelene Schatz, Vice-President/President-Elect
- Jayne Beline, Secretary
- Norman Gluckman and Susan Pober, Board Members



The section currently has just under forty members who live in New Jersey, as well as in new retirement locations. Due to dispersed membership, section meetings and programs have mostly been held via Zoom.

Over the past year, the group has held two section meetings (hosted by Eileen Palmer), and four programs:

- "Fall Prevention" presented by a physical therapist
- "Successful Aging" presented by the Director of the Successful Aging program at Stockton University
- "Lifelong Learning" presented by a member of Rutgers University's Osher Institute
- "Volunteerism" presented by staff of Jersey Cares



RMS members Eileen Palmer, Cindy Csezak, and Gary Saretzky also presented a session at the 2023 NJLA Conference entitled "Ready, Set, Retire?". A Zoom presentation by Robin Ryan, author of *Retirement Reinvention*, was not able to be shown to the group due to time constraints; however, it is posted to the RMS page on the NJLA website.

The most recent achievement by the Section is the establishment of the first ever "Lifetime

Article continues on next page.

Achievement Award!" For the full description of this award and the criteria for nominating a librarian please visit the [Lifetime Achievement Award page](#).

Anyone, even those who are not yet retired, are welcome to join the Section. We look forward to having new people and new ideas!

RMS President Kathleen Moeller-Peiffer graduated from FSU School of Library Science (now the College of Communication and Information). She worked in public libraries in Florida and North Carolina for twenty five years prior to transitioning to state library work when she moved to New Jersey. She spent a total of seventeen years at the New Jersey State Library, with a brief sojourn at the New Mexico State Library in between NJSL assignments. Kathleen is now retired and living in Williamsburg Virginia (where she soon will be volunteering at the Williamsburg Regional Library!)

SUSTAINABLE LIBRARIES INITIATIVE UPDATE

Interested in learning more about what the Sustainable Libraries Initiative (SLI) has to offer? In January, the Sustainable Libraries Initiative will be offering two introductory webinars geared towards helping new and prospective members make the most of the SLI resources and learn more about how to get involved with our award-winning program. Find details and registration links for the upcoming webinars at the end of this article.



**Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative**

Members of NJLA new to the SLI can opt-in to one-free year of membership, gaining you immediate access to resources and tools like a custom CO2 emissions calculator, policy and program examples, webinars, vendor list, continuing education opportunities and access to the National Climate Action Strategy for Libraries Implementation Guide. If you haven't yet already, [view the guide here](#). Leverage the National Climate Action Strategy for Libraries to guide your sustainability goals or bring your strategic planning to the next level!

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NJLA members can also receive a 20% discount for the Sustainable Library Certification Program (SLCP), which provides library leaders with a tested, structured path forward that can help raise the profile of the library as a recognized leader on the topic of climate action and community resilience.

Questions? Email sliadmin@suffolknet.org for details.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUSTAINABLE LIBRARIES INITIATIVE

The Sustainable Libraries Initiative (SLI) was created thanks to a group of colleagues who wanted to help libraries step up and own their role as sustainability leaders in the face of the effects of climate change. We've developed tools, resources and methodologies that help library leaders be more authentic and focused in their decision making; resource use; service and program design; and partnerships to align with the triple bottom line of sustainability: environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic feasibility. Come and learn about this project and what your library can access now that you can opt-in to a free membership to the SLI for the next year as a member of your state library association.

This webinar will take place on Tuesday, January 21 at 2 p.m. Eastern. Please click [here](#) to register.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUSTAINABLE LIBRARY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

During this webinar, you will learn about the Sustainable Library Certification Program. A panel of speakers whose libraries completed the SLCP will describe their journey and share their library's experiences.

This webinar will take place on Friday, January 31 at 3 p.m. Eastern. Please click [here](#) to register.



NJ'S UNSUNG LIBRARIES: PART 2

Highlighting the libraries who are too busy serving their patrons to highlight themselves

by **JEFF CUPO**

September Visit: Bayonne Public Library

Bayonne Public Library has faced some tough hardships over the years. They experienced two out of three branches closed by their city, a dwindling group of patrons and staff, and a renovation lasting a year and a half, twice as long as originally slated. But now, under new leadership, they have bounced back with astonishing speed upon reopening, and quickly launched a very full line-up of wonderful, impactful programs and services. A nearly never-ending renovation can really take its toll, but I saw a library that is thriving.



One of the staff members that made the biggest impressions on me was Boiler Operator & Maintenance Worker, Ralph Foglia. A 27-year veteran of the library, he proudly and passionately does it all: from painting to electricity to plumbing. He relishes every new challenge the building throws at him as an opportunity to learn a new skill. Despite other professional opportunities coming his way over the years, he is dedicated to his library family. He has also served as the VP of his union (Local 2261), as he enjoys helping others and solving conflicts. As we spoke, he noted that the word that keeps coming up for him when he thinks about his work at the library is "joy."



October Visit #1: Worth-Pinkham Memorial Library (in Ho-Ho-Kus)

Worth-Pinkham Memorial Library serves Ho-Ho-Kus's population of just over 4,000 from a cute library that was formerly a house. They are working to relocate to a more accessible building in the center of town. In the meantime, they have become the epitome of efficiency, the TARDIS of libraries, cramming so much in such a small area.

As with all of these libraries, it's hard to single out just one staff person, but I have to say, Circulation Assistant, Beena Garg, is quite possibly the most industrious person I've ever met. She is so passionate about her job, and she is ready to do anything and everything. Director Morgan Taylor joked that she has to do more work to make more work for Beena once she has done everything.

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Most notable about their library is their camaraderie. The amount of love and respect they all have for each other was wonderful to experience. Everyone had kind words for everyone else. They are what a team should be. It was such a good energy that I found myself writing “we” in my notes instead of “they.” My mind was subconsciously ready to join them! It was an amazing dynamic, and I was glad I got to be there for it.

October Visit #2: Collingswood Public Library

Collingswood Public Library eagerly serves not only the residents of Collingswood itself, but the surrounding communities as well, including Camden. In the words of Director Carissa Schanely, “So much of the services we provide to our resident and non-resident patrons are focused around homelessness, poverty, lack of employment, lack of technical skills, incarceration, and limited access to healthcare and mental health services – which are very much in need, but not abundant in supply.” They not worry about borders, but they happily embrace members of the public that are often considered undesirable or problem patrons elsewhere. They are truly breaking barriers. Their doors are open to all.



My biggest takeaway from my meeting with research librarian Sue Grella was that while this was very much an opportunity to celebrate her, instead, she wanted to use it as an opportunity to help her patrons. She opted to pick my brain, as a fellow urban librarian with a penchant for serving vulnerable populations. We spent hours just sharing ideas and resources for serving homeless patrons and patrons who use drugs. The knowledge, care, dedication, and humility displayed by Sue were genuinely inspirational, and I left Collingswood better equipped to help my own patrons (which isn't the point of *Unsung Libraries*, but I am grateful nonetheless).



November Visit: Long Hill Township Library

The first thing that stands out about Long Hill Township Library is the energy. It is a warm, inviting space, and all the patrons and staff seemed so happy to be there. It is such a positive experience walking through those doors; it's like something out of a movie.

From the anecdotes they shared, it sounds like their patrons feel the same way. With story after story of how their staff have touched the lives of individual patrons, their application was the one that made me cry. They spoke of one patron, who passed away suddenly. On her last visit to the library, she spoke about how much she loved the staff. Caring folks that they are, the staff went to her funeral where the rabbi and family spoke of how much the library meant to her.

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I chatted at length with the delightful duo of Victoria Owen, Library Assistant, and Jessica Buban, Children's Librarian. I appreciated the fact that both had started out on radically different career paths: Victoria in nuclear physics and Jessica studying criminal science. As Victoria put it, paraphrasing, "As a nuclear physicist, I didn't think you were supposed to love your job, but now I can wake up in the morning and look forward to work. It's like a Disney movie." For Jessica, the library is her happy place, and she is particularly proud of the connections she's made with the kids. Victoria loves anticipating what people will ask, summing up library work beautifully as: "We will solve your problem today."

CELEBRATION!

AC Heritage Collection's AC Research Club

by JACQUELINE SILVER-MORILLO

The Atlantic City Free Public Library, AC Heritage Collection's AC Research Club celebrated its one-year anniversary on November 15th. We had a party, gave out Ancestry DNA kits, and discussed what we wanted to do for the next year. The club is for history buffs in Atlantic City and beyond. Our meetings consist of genealogy research, how to search for historical information for free, learning how to scan family photographs and documents, mastering how to create a social media page dedicated to family history, learning how to utilize Heritage Quest, [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com), and FamilySearch, and much, much more.



Jacqueline Silver-Morillo is Senior Librarian/Archivist at the Atlantic City Free Public Library. She holds an MLIS with a concentration in archival management from Simmons University in Boston, MA. She has been the archivist for the AC Heritage Collections Archive for the last 7 ½ years and has worked with over 2,500 researchers worldwide. Her email address is jmorillo@acfpl.org.

A MESSAGE FROM PORZIO GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

by **BARBARA DeMARCO, VP**



The partnership between the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA) and Porzio Governmental Affairs (PGA) has been successful by any standard. NJLA's highest priority bill for 2024, Freedom to Read, was signed into law by Governor Murphy in December 2024. A reduction in the 2025 State Budget in Library Network aid was restored with extra funding. Relationships with key officials and staff in the Murphy administration and in the Legislature were forged and strengthened. A strategic plan developed by the Public Policy Committee and the PGA team was

followed. The result was goals were met.

Now we need to prepare for an election in November 2025 that will seat a new Governor and new members of the General Assembly in January 2026. There are multiple candidates vying for the Democratic nomination for Governor including former Senate President Steve Sweeney, Congresswoman Mikey Sherrill, Congressman Josh Gottheimer, NJEA President Sean Spiller, and Mayors Ras Baraka and Steve Fulop. The Republicans also have a handful of candidates to choose from including former Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli, State Senator Jon Bramnick, and conservative radio personality, Bill Spadea. The General Assembly experienced a large turnover of seats in the past election. As such, we anticipate that most of the current members of the General Assembly will seek reelection. As with all politics, the situation is fluid and the landscape changes with each month. Stay tuned.

As it relates to 2025, the New Jersey Library Association has made capital funding their number one priority this year. In addition, NJLA would like current FY2025 funding levels increased in FY2026. All this is to occur in a year when the current Governor is asking every Department of State Government for a 5% cut across the board. At the very least, state funding for libraries should not be reduced from current funding levels.

As with the 2024 goals, NJLA and PGA have been working out the nuances of a plan that will create a stable source of funding for library capital projects yearly separate and apart from the State Budget. Finding the right sponsors, establishing connections with like-minded groups and individuals, as well as creating momentum for the "why" will be critical to our success. Our hope is that the Governor and Legislature will see how libraries are foundational for all communities and support NJLA's ask.

As it relates to legislation and innovative partnerships, PGA has been working with NJLA, the Murphy administration, and representatives from companies that provide broadband services to access more federal funding for IT upgrades for libraries through the federal Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program. By way of background, the BEAD program was part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The goal of the program is to provide funding to underserved as well as unserved communities who currently do not have high-speed internet access. These conversations are on-going, and it is our hope that libraries will be the beneficiaries of additional funding.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CORNER

How Did I Get Here?

Check out the interview with Teen Services Librarian Jordan Hutchins from Hunterdon County Library! He details below how he got his start in libraries and what he enjoys about being a Teen Services Librarian.

Can you tell us a bit about your current position?

I have the privilege of being a teen services librarian, one of four at the Hunterdon County Library. It's a very dynamic and interesting job!

Did you always envision yourself working in a public library?

Not at all. I had some excellent library experiences as a child (Miss Patty in Council, ID is a saint) followed by rather lousy ones as a teen (stereotypical crabby, shushing librarians). So I felt mixed on public libraries. But when I graduated from undergrad, I had an opportunity to work with a summer feeding program that partnered with the local library to host meals. This library was incredible, offering a tremendous number of needed resources to its community. My experience there got the wheels turning in my mind and broadened my understanding of what libraries could be.

What's your educational and professional background?

Both have been diverse. I attended community college in North Carolina and transferred to Berea College in Kentucky where I majored in Communications and minored in Religion. This was based upon interest, not any set career goal, but my rationale was that any job could benefit from good communication. Soon after graduating, my father-in-law gave me a nudge to pick a "real" job and that got me thinking about the library. I found the University of Kentucky's program to be both robust and affordable. The job, and scholarships from my alma mater and the Kentucky Library Association, allowed me to graduate debt-free.

I worked part time at my local library to build my experience and get a feel for the job. I did this throughout my degree and for a couple years after I graduated. I started looking for full time library work soon after I hit the 5 year mark and the position at Hunterdon became available. Here I am!

What are your favorite things about your job?

The people. I enjoy interacting with people from all walks of life and a public library is a unique space in that anyone can utilize it. I get to meet the most interesting people and help them find resources that add value to their lives. I also work with a great team and am surrounded by other great teams, all working together to meet the diverse needs of patrons. The public library kind of feels like a large family, which I love.

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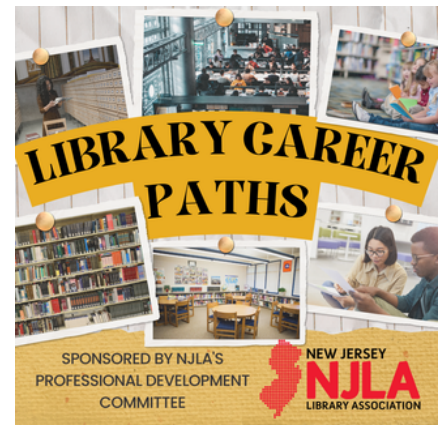
What challenges have you faced that you did not anticipate?

The people. I compared the library to a family and every family has its own issues. In my experience, people are the most dynamic and complicated aspect of an organization. It takes patience, compassion, and a commitment to good communication to navigate the ups and downs of life with people whether that be in the personal or professional sphere. Remembering that and working on those skills is a commitment of mine.

LIBRARY CAREER PATH SERIES

Sponsored by the NJLA Professional Development Committee

Interested in learning more about the various jobs in the library field? Or are undecided which path you want to take in the world of libraries? Then you have come to the right place! Click [here](#) to view the Library Career Path series on the NJLA Youtube Channel featuring several librarians, such as law, cataloging, business, youth services and more! Sponsored by the Professional Development Committee of the New Jersey Library Association. To learn more about the Professional Development Committee, please visit the [committee website](#).



UPCOMING EVENTS

Career Satisfaction

through Engagement and Empowerment:
Strategies that work



Sponsored by the
Professional
Development
Committee of NJLA

Tuesday
3:00-4:30pm
January 28, 2025

[Register for Zoom Link](#)

Do you feel engaged in your work? Do you feel a sense of empowerment in your job? What does engagement look like to you? Gallup, in its "State of the Global Workplace" report, categorizes an organization's employees as engaged (thriving), not engaged (quietly quitting), or actively disengaged (loudly quitting).

Join us for this interactive workshop to explore the concept of employee engagement and how it is related to, and intertwined with, institutional structures and personal factors. We will talk about strategies and tactics to promote and sustain an engaged workforce,

one employee at a time. The presenters, Linda Miles, the Open Education Resources Librarian at Michigan State University, and Susanne Markgren, the Director of Technical Services at Manhattan College, will provide an overview of the literature and research on employee engagement as a jumping point for a greater discussion with attendees where we will explore what engagement looks like from individual perspectives, considering workplace culture, relationships, communication, and self-care.

Please click [here](#) to register.



Interested in learning how to start strategic planning for your library's social media? Check out the recording of Social Media Strategic Planning presented by Hope Holroyd, Public Relations & Marketing Coordinator at Cherry Hill Public Library and sponsored by the NJLA Professional Development Committee [here](#).

Please also subscribe to the NJLA Youtube Channel as more recorded programs and other library related videos will be posted there!

PEOPLE AND PLACES

On December 31, 2024, **Mary C. Skramovsky** will be retiring from her position as district librarian for the Linden Public Schools. During her career, Ms. Skramovsky has worked as a high school, middle school, and elementary school librarian.

Jacob Crofoot began as an Adult Services Librarian at the Margaret E. Heggan Free Public Library in November 2024.

Springfield Free Public Library has the following staffing updates to announce:
Bonnie Lafazan, Director - August 2024

Ian Allcock promoted to Head of Technology and Circulation - August 2024

Christine Brandenburg, Assistant Director - September 2024

Samantha Manoff, Children's Librarian - September 2024

Kaitlyn Wilson, Youth Services Librarian - September 2024

Have a job change, retirement, or announcement to share?

Email newsletter_editor@njlamembers.org
to have it included in our next issue!