Public Library Division of the Minnesota Library Association
2020 Annual Report

Board members

- Chair: Julia Carlis, Dakota County Library
- Chair-elect: Jody Wurl, Hennepin County Library
- Past chair: Angela Petrie, Stillwater Public Library
- Secretary: Margaret James, Dakota County Library
- Member-at-large: Megan Krueger, Moorhead Public Library
- Member-at-large: Jamie Hoehn, Dakota County Library

Response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd

Minnesota confirmed its first case of coronavirus on March 6. The World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus a pandemic on March 11. On March 13, Governor Tim Walz declared a peacetime state of emergency in Minnesota and on March 16 closed places of public accommodation. Libraries throughout the state closed their doors, with staff either working from home or using leave. On March 25 Walz issued a stay-at-home order for Minnesota which was lifted on May 18. Some libraries became early adopters of curbside pickup services during this time, with other libraries following in their wake. On May 18 Walz modified his order to “Stay Safe Minnesota,” and retailers were allowed to re-open at 50% capacity. Many libraries opened their doors for grab and go services.

The Public Library Division canceled our in-person event, Public Library Division Day, scheduled for April 17. Recognizing the need for library staff to connect with each other for mutual support and idea sharing as we adapted our service models in response to the pandemic, the Board scheduled a number of online listening and sharing sessions using the Zoom platform starting in May 2020.

Public libraries responded to the crisis by making their online resources and services more accessible to patrons through the purchase of additional eMaterials, modifying the registration process for library cards, moving programs online, and staffing the Ask Us reference service to meet demand. Many libraries, recognizing their role in providing access to wi-fi and computers to those without these tools, started exploring ways to help people access them in a world that now relies on online schooling, telehealth visits, and online services. Throughout, it became apparent that library staff are experiencing a great deal of personal and professional stress as they adapt to sudden and traumatic changes at home and at work. It also became apparent that Minnesota libraries serve a number of vulnerable communities that are being impacted more severely by the pandemic than others.

In addition to the stresses of the pandemic, civil unrest hit the Twin Cities when George Floyd was murdered by a Minneapolis police officer on May 25. #BlackLivesMatter protests began in the Twin Cities on May 26 and quickly spread to other cities around the world. In Minnesota, Governor Walz activated the National Guard on May 28. Over the next few days, the police,
white supremacists, peaceful protesters and bad actors mixed together in a volatile combination that resulted in property damage and violence. These protests impacted a number of communities as well as the library staff who live and work in them. The #BlackLivesMatter protests and the repercussions of the pandemic reveal how systemic racism is both a public health and justice issue that needs to be dismantled quickly and fully. On June 26, 2020 MLA released its Statement on Systemic Racism. PLD fully supports efforts within our division and the broader organization to make libraries allies and resources to build equity, diversity and inclusion. In our division meeting at the Minnesota Library Association annual conference, attendees encouraged PLD to engage in this work as a primary focus in 2021.

Listening and sharing sessions

- October 20, 2020
- July 28, 2020
- June 30, 2020
- May 26, 2020
- May 5, 2020

About 291 people attended these sessions, which can be viewed on YouTube. Transcripts and video links are available on the PLD page of the MLA website.

Board election

The new officers were elected in November 2020 and will assume their duties in January 2021.

- New chair elect: Kristin Schneider, Carver County Library
- New secretary: Megan Krueger, Moorhead Public Library
- New member-at-large: Jodi Carlson Grebinoski, Virginia Public Library

Our thanks to outgoing members Angela Petrie, Stillwater Public Library and Margaret James, Dakota County Library

PLD budget

We didn’t spend any money this year since we didn’t host PLD Day. Our budget was $100 from MLA and we’d usually get additional funds from sponsorships and registrations to help cover expenses for the event.