Board members

- Chair: Jody Wurl, Hennepin County Library
- Chair-elect: Kristin Schneider, Carver County Library
- Past chair: Julia Carlis, Dakota County Library
- Secretary: Megan Krueger, Moorhead Public Library
- Member-at-large: Jodi Carlson Grebinoski, Virginia Public Library
- Member-at-large: Jamie Hoehn, Dakota County Library

Response to the COVID-19 pandemic continued

Minnesota confirmed its first case of coronavirus on March 6, 2020. The first vaccinations were delivered in December 2020 just as variants began to appear in the U.S. In January 2021 the U.S. death toll surpassed 400,000. By the end of 2021 the death toll surpassed 800,000.

Vaccinations were prioritized for essential workers. Library staff under CDC guidelines did not qualify for first access and were not labeled essential. The onus to find vaccines was laid on individuals with only minimal facilitation by some employers. Most employers recommended staff get vaccinated but did not require it. By the end of 2021 some employers indicated they would require vaccines for staff.

Monitoring your health, testing, isolating, and masking became a routine as libraries re-established the availability of most services. Most programming continued to be offered online, but meeting rooms, limited computer use, and browsing the collection found people in buildings once again, generally with masks requested but not required. By the end of 2021 with the highly transmissible Omicron variant becoming prevalent, some cities issued a mask mandate. No state-wide mask mandate was issued in 2021.

Segments of our communities pushed back against mask requirements which led to tough customer service interactions with staff. Unfortunately many of these community members became confrontational and sometimes abusive. Challenges over displays and items in collections started escalating, coming from community members who did not feel the history and experiences of marginalized groups reflected their values or reflected well on the United States. “Critical race theory” became a broadly used term and being against its teaching/application the stated cause for some of these challenges.

The Public Library Division opted once again to not host Public Library Division Day, usually scheduled in late spring. Instead, the Board hosted a number of online listening and sharing sessions using the Zoom platform. The sessions included presenters from other subunits who described the work they do for MLA, and also included time for open conversation.

Library staff continue to experience a great deal of personal and professional stress as they adapt to sudden and traumatic changes at home and at work. Minnesota libraries serve a
number of vulnerable communities that are being impacted more severely by the pandemic than others. Supply chain problems, labor shortages and escalating prices are causing hardships for many. They also impacted the publishing industry (especially the paper shortage) where the effects may not be fully experienced by libraries until 2022.

Annual division meeting

At this MLA Annual Conference meeting, members identified a number of topics they would like to explore with the help of the PLD Board. Notes are available from this meeting.

- Collection development
- Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
- Programming, especially focused on community needs such as media/information literacy, civics literacy, etc.
- Refining services for specific communities
- Staff support, especially regarding self-care and professional development

Listening and sharing sessions

- February 8, 2021
- August 31, 2021
- October 27, 2021

About 64 people attended these sessions, parts of which focused on introducing PLD members to the work of other MLA subunits.

Board election

The new officers were appointed in December 2021 and will assume their duties in January 2022. The call for candidates only netted one applicant.

- New chair elect: Jamie Hoehn, Dakota County Library
- New member-at-large: Tiffany Ross, Moorhead Public Library

Our thanks to outgoing member Julia Carlis, 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.