

# Massachusetts School Library Association

Annual Report 2017-2018



"Warm Up America" service project at Dean Technical, Holyoke. Lynn Dutsar, school librarian

## Equity and Access: The Massachusetts School Library Study

MSLA worked diligently over many years to urge the Massachusetts legislature to pass a bill in support of school libraries. In 2014 a bill was passed forming a commission to conduct a study of the status of Massachusetts school libraries, gather data, report findings, and make recommendations supported by data. This commission's report, *The Massachusetts School Library Study: Equity and Access for Students in the Commonwealth*, was released in March. Primary researchers are Dr. Robin Cicchetti and Dr. Carol Gordon.

Moving forward, it falls largely to MSLA to promote awareness among key groups. The report is a very big deal for Massachusetts school libraries. It's also one of only a handful of meaningful school library research studies in the United States. Supporting this study and raising awareness of the study's findings is MSLA's first priority. To that end, MSLA is hiring an advocacy consultant for 2018-2019.

The study found that Massachusetts public school students do not have equity when it comes to their school library programs:

- **Every student should have a school librarian, BUT:**
  - One in five schools have no licensed school librarian
  - The majority of school libraries have no support staff, so librarians are performing clerical work, when they could be teaching students
  - Fewer than half of Massachusetts school districts have a library or technology director to oversee their programs
  - There is no one at DESE charged with overseeing school library programs and no comprehensive data regarding the number of schools with licensed school librarians in Massachusetts public schools
- **Every student should have access to a school library, BUT**
  - Libraries in many districts are frequently closed, significantly more often in urban districts, often to provide testing spaces or due to lack of staff
  - Many schools have "fixed schedule" programs where students can access the library just once a week, not when they need research materials or a new book to read
- **Every student should have access to information, digital resources and technology, BUT:**
  - Urban school districts have significantly less access to information technology compared to rural and suburban districts
  - Many districts have limited access to computers in the school library and poor internet access, and this is more common in urban and rural districts

- **Every student should have equitable funding for library programs and materials, BUT:**
  - Budgets and funding sources for school library programs and materials vary widely throughout the Commonwealth, but overall, funding is not adequate in most districts to provide newer print or digital resources or technology
  - The Massachusetts Library System provides a number of subsidized resources for school libraries, but many school libraries do not take advantage of these resources; for example, one-third of schools do not use state-funded electronic resources, and only 30% of schools participate in the Commonwealth e-book program
- **Every student should have access to library instruction and help, BUT:**
  - Instruction in school library programs is widely inconsistent across the Commonwealth, with wide variation in the number of classes taught in each school, the grade levels taught, and the ability of school librarians to collaborate with teachers to plan research and literacy projects
  - In some districts, librarians report covering multiple schools, managing study halls, having space closed for testing, and numerous other factors that interfere with their ability to teach

**For more information:** *The Massachusetts School Library Study: Equity and Access for Students in the Commonwealth* is available [online](#).



Kindergarten ocean-based breakout, Bement School, Deerfield, Marcia Bernard, school librarian

## Awards Committee, Co-Chairs: Amy Short, Ann Perham, and Paige Rowse

Awards celebrate both the achievements of the individual as well as the importance of the profession of school librarianship.

We made 26 awards at the MSLA Annual Conference in March:

- 1 - School Library Advocate
- 1 - Administrator Advocate
- 3 - Peggy Hallisey Lifetime Achievement
- 3 - Service Award
- 7 - M.S.L.A. (MA Super Librarian Award)
- 5 - President's Award
- 3 - MSLA Web Seal of Excellence
- 1 - Audrey Friend Scholarship

For all award recipients, the Awards Committee sent out letters to their administrators and also made press releases as requested. We sent 21

traditional printed letters and emailed 35 letters to administrators. In all, 35 news outlets received a press release.

To maximize the advocacy benefit of the awards, many of the recipients were honored in their home districts at a school committee meeting or faculty meeting.

Changes this year included the use of review task force volunteers to evaluate nominations for the Web Seal of Excellence, President's Award and the Super Librarian Award. This was the first year that we awarded the President's Award and Super Librarian Award by merit instead of by region.

Thanks to Amy Short, outgoing co-chair. For 2018-19, Wendy Garland will join the Awards Team.



Kindergarten students act out a poem at Plympton Elementary, Waltham. Judi Paradis, school librarian

## Southeast Region, Director: Allison Barker

### Events

November at Silver Lake Regional High School

February and March at Norton High School

March at Barnstable High School

Stacey Knibloe, a Gale trainer from MLS, gave a fantastic refresher about the Gale Databases available to us as Massachusetts school librarians. She also walked us through the updates and new

changes, strategies to find similar information on databases no longer available, and ways to view our usage statistics.

### Communications

- Updated the webpage
- Reached out to members
- Emailed lapsed members

## Northeast Region, Co-Directors: Laura Harrington and Barb Fecteau

### Events

November "Advocating for Elementary Libraries" was a panel presented by Mia Morgan, Dr. Jennifer Price, and Karen Sekiguchi at Sargent Elementary School in North Andover by librarians who work in districts who have successfully reinstated elementary libraries.

April: "MSLA Conference Recap Roundup" was an opportunity for attendees and non-attendees of the annual conference from the area discussed what they considered the highlights at Beverly High School.

May: "Northeast Tech Talk" was a presentation by Heather Chang about how she received funding

for and set up her amazing new resource at Ipswich Middle/High School. Karen Sekiguchi brought iPads and augmented reality tools that blew our minds.

### Communication

- Updated the webpage
- Greeted new and returning members
- Reached out to lapsed members

### Outreach

- Recognized award winners at school committee meetings
- Followed up with local newspapers about award winner

## MetroWest Region, Co-Directors: Amy Bloom and Patsy Diver

### Area events

Fall 2017 - Meet and Greet at Franklin High School, with Tricia London

We met to share new ideas, explore the wonderful new library, and hear about nearby area events.

March 2018 - Gale database was scheduled but cancelled because of conflicts with similar events. Next year we hope to collaborate with neighbors to make it a combined event

Spring 2018 - Co-sponsored with MLS: Creative and Enticing Booktalks and Displays for Youth Communication and Outreach

- Connected with lapsed and new members

- Updated the M-W web page
- Connected with Stephen Spohn about possible Gale info day next year.

## Boston, Co-Directors: Karen Davidson-Heller and Deeth Ellis

We kept the Boston area page updated and attended each monthly board meeting. Highlights include

- Four members of the Boston Area took home 2018 Massachusetts School Library Association awards. Bonnie McBride, Fenway High School; Morgan Van Clief, Shaw Elementary, won the President's Award; Susan Harari, Boston Latin School, won the SUPER Librarian Award; Maura O'Toole, The Mather School, won the Friend Scholarship.
- BPS Library Department Panel Presented at MSLA - Deeth Ellis, Debbie Froggatt, Bonnie McBride and Morgan Van Clief presented on their Action Research and DESE Pilot program.
- Deeth Ellis & Cate Arnold, Boston Latin School, presented at MSLA on their work with 8th grade US History on Media Bias and Promoting Civil Discourse on Race

MSLA Committees

- Karen Davidson Heller served on website Seal of Excellence committee
- Deeth Ellis served on MSLA president nominating committee

Events

June - 12 people attended a tour of the Boston City Archives with Marta Crilly, Archivist for

Reference and Outreach at [The Boston City Archives](#). Marta Crilly was the lead archivist responsible for cataloging mementos from the Boston City Marathon Bombing. She showed us these holdings and focused on archives they hold related to women's history in Boston.

March - 8 people attended "Hosting an Event in Your Library" at Fenway High School. A group gathered in the Boston area and after recognizing our four MSLA award winners, we heard rich presentations from librarians sharing their expertise and practical strategies for building collaborative programming from Robin Brenner, Teen Librarian, Public Library of Brookline; Laura Koenig, Children's Services; Jess Snow, Teen Services Team Leader, Boston Public Library, Copley Square; and Rebecca Coll, Executive Director, Wondermore, on hosting author visits in schools

November- 12 people attended a meeting with [Stephen Spohn, Resource Sharing Director for the MA Library System \(MLS\)](#).

Stephen spoke about the MA eBook Collection, Axis 360, customizing the "magic wall" and scoping your collection to block particular categories of books for young adults. Steve was accompanied by Tressa Santillo, Electronic Resources Coordinator for MLS, who also commented on using the eBook collection. The workshop was presented at Boston Latin School where Deeth Ellis, Head Librarian, gave a tour of the very busy Keefe Library (grades 7-12).

## West Region, Co-Directors: Lani Blechman, Sarah Forfa, and Claudia Palframen

Highlights include

- Sarah Forfa (South Hadley High School) was elected in October as the third co-director from the West Region.
- In an effort to create a comprehensive list of school libraries in Franklin, Berkshire, Hampden, and Hampshire counties with staff listed and contact info (regardless of professional status), we began compiling data from DESE, MSLA membership directory, and school websites: [Western Mass School Librarians Directory](#).
- Two Western MA librarians were winners of MSLA awards this year: Leslie Lomasson, Lifetime Achievement; Sarah Forfa, President's Award.
- Monthly PLC meetings at the Collaborative in Northampton were well-attended. Area directors represented at every meeting this year! Both new and returning librarians participated.
- Lani Blechman facilitated the "White Privilege, School Libraries and Racial Justice" session at the MSLA Conference in order to

continue the West Area objective to "center racial and economic justice" in Massachusetts school libraries.

- Given the major changes made to the MSLA awards process, area co-directors

encouraged the awards committee to create a specific outreach plan for the West Region given our different geographic and networking connections.

## Forum, Editors: Katherine Steiger and Reba Tierney

*The Forum*, edited by Katherine Steiger and Reba Tierney, published robust issues with informative, member-driven articles covering new children's picture books, technology in the library classroom, advocacy, librarians as curriculum partners, summer reading, planning author visits, makerspaces, censorship, high-school-to-college research transition, and so much more. [Check out the newsletter](#). Columns have become very popular

and we recruited a library teacher to take over the secondary column. We were also saddened by the loss of our Picture Books columnist, Char Sidell, and did not replace her for the Spring issue. In the fall, we do have someone new taking the column over. Also, we continued the practice of allowing award winners to choose which issue to write for which spread the articles over the entire year rather than crowding them into one issue.

## Financial Long-Term Planning, Report of the Subcommittee



In September a committee was formed to study and propose a plan for long term financial health. Budget data was collected from school library associations serving states throughout the country. As a result, MSLA made three changes effective July 1, 2018:

- Membership voted to raise annual membership dues to \$50 for Professional and \$25 for Retired / Paraprofessional / Unemployed. Student dues remain \$0.

- MSLA will strive to maintain 10% of operating costs (approximately \$10,000) in a reserve account.
- MSLA will reduce travel expenses; no more than 2 people will attend AASL national conference, ALA annual conference, and ALA midwinter conference. MSLA will return to the model where president and past/elect president serve as affiliate representatives to AASL.

The following people, in addition to working as school librarians and fulfilling their usual roles on the MSLA board, also made time to serve on the long-range financial long-term planning subcommittee: Jennifer Dimmick, Laura Gardner, Katherine Steiger, Carrie Tucker, and Jennifer Varney.

## Treasurer's Report Year-End FY18 (as of 6/9/18), Jen Varney, Treasurer

<u>Net Worth as of June 9, 2018</u>	
Assets: Cash and Bank Accounts (Main Street Bank)	
Money Market	\$8,012.95
CD	\$32,770.13
Checking	\$33,821.41
Total Cash and Bank	\$74,604.49
Total Assets	\$74,604.49
Liabilities	\$0
Overall Total	\$74,604.49

## President's Report, Carrie Tucker

This year, if nothing else, was a year of new things!  
A few highlights:

### Annual conference in Worcester

Trying new things is both scary and exciting, especially when the attempt involves 367 conference attendees and 41 exhibitors descending on a new venue for a two-day conference. Highlights included A.S. King, Jennifer Casa-Todd, conversation with Gregory Maguire and Jane Yolen, an overview of the Massachusetts School Library Study, and sessions covering everything from making your principal your ally, fighting fake news, media bias, and much more. Interesting fact: 15% were first-time attendees.

### AASL National Standards

In November AASL's [new national standards](#) were unveiled at the American Association of School Librarians conference in Phoenix. MSLA helped members learn about these standards through conference presentations by Anita Cellucci and Reba Tierney.

### Bookmark

A very busy bookmark contest team lead by Laura Gardner and Cathy Collins switched things up this year with an awards ceremony at Jeff Kinney's bookstore, An Unlikely Story. Happy families and a few words from the Wimpy Kid author himself made it a great evening!

### A sad note

Unfortunately, our year was not without profound sadness. Members have experienced tragic family losses and continue to suffer serious illnesses. Also, we lost Char Sidell, who helped plan our conferences for countless years and authored a column in the *Forum* right up until her passing.

### Thanks!

Annual reporting would not be complete without thanking board members who served diligently, some for many years: Amy Bloom, Rachel Bouhanda, Anita Cellucci, Cathy Collins, Laura Gardner, Liz Phipps-Soeiro, Amy Short. Best wishes to them as they move on to new endeavors.

Furthermore, any year-end gratitude is wholly inadequate if it does not mention Executive Director Kathy Lowe. Kathy not only serves as sounding board, reviewer, institutional memory, manager of details, and organizer, she does all this with patience and unwavering good humor.

### Moving forward

Supporting the Massachusetts School Library Study and raising awareness of the study's findings is MSLA's first priority for 2018-2019. Look for ways to get involved in the coming weeks and months. We are 705 members strong! Let's make great things happen not only in our schools, but across the state!

**Respectfully submitted,  
Carrie Tucker, President**

