

# NJLA NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

June 2021

Vol. 19 Issue 1



Incoming President Kate Jagers (L) receives the NJLA Badge of Honor from outgoing President Jen Schureman Brenner (R)

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For more information about this opportunity, please contact Ally Blumenfeld at [ablumenfeld@jclibrary.org](mailto:ablumenfeld@jclibrary.org)



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## OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by **JEN SCHUREMAN BRENNER**

Thank you. It's short and to the point, kind of like me, but it sums up my Presidency. Thank you to all of the members that voted me into office, to Tonya Garcia for trusting me to take over her term so she could focus on her health. Thank you to the 2019-2021 Executive Board members who supported me in my role and counseled me to help me be the best leader that I could be. Thank you to the many committee chairs that accepted their appointments and took on more than they bargained for thanks to the pandemic. Thank you to Pat Tumulty for all of the knowledge you bestowed upon me and assisting me in my very first Legislative endeavors. Thank you to the wonderful search committee for taking the time to find us such a wonderful new Executive Director in Juliet Machie, and thank you Juliet for the vision and experience you bring to NJLA. A very special thank you goes out to my families. My library family for allowing me the opportunity to hold such a position, and my family who supported me in every way even when it meant hours of zoom meetings. Thank you to all NJLA Members and all that you do. Without you, there is no way that NJLA or NJ in general would have survived this past year. It has been my honor and privilege to serve as your President. I look forward to seeing where we go from here.



**Jen Schureman Brenner is the director at the Cumberland County Library.**

## INCOMING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by **KATE JAGGERS**

The history of NJLA is steeped in tradition. Since 1890, the New Jersey Library Association has advocated for the advancement of library services, provided continuing education and networking opportunities, and supported the principles of intellectual freedom and promoted access to library materials for all. It has also shown tremendous respect for its Executive Board and Officers, as well as the efforts of all of the volunteers that contribute to the success of the Association.

More than 130 years later, NJLA both honors its history and recognizes its shortcomings and privileges. As we work toward recovering from the vast trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic over the past 15 months -- a time during which libraries have survived, continued to serve, and creatively improvised in order to bring the best to our communities -- NJLA looks forward to Embracing Opportunity.

Over the next year, NJLA strives to work to improve internal communications and transparency. We will do whatever we can to clarify NJLA's structure and opportunities for engagement and participation. We are working on mentorship programs, and initiatives are in progress for increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion not only in our Association but within our profession as a whole, at all levels of library work. There is a lot of work ahead of us. But I am so encouraged by the recent response to the NJLA Committee Choice forms, as well as participation in elections for Section Executive Boards, and it is so clear that we are all ready to get to work!



**Kate Jagers is the director at Highland Park Public Library.**

# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

by **JULIET MACHIE**

The world as we knew it has changed. We are surviving from a lethal virus; but we are also fighting fear, fatigue and disruption. I want you to pause for a minute. Stop! Breathe! Inhale! Exhale! You have weathered the storm for the last 15 months. Sometimes you felt overwhelmed, but you are still here.

And you are thriving, in the midst of enormous uncertainty.

No matter what happens next, we know that renewal is upon us. How we provide library services is dynamic, but what we do as libraries remains the same. We will continue to evolve, to meet the challenges ahead, and the changing needs of the communities we serve.

Our libraries serve as community anchors, and they are poised to become a greater resource in a post-pandemic environment. Libraries build community. Whether you are in a public library, an academic library, a school library, or a special library, I have become accustomed to the valuation of a community by the strength of its library.

As you invest in the communities you serve, it is NJLA's goal to invest in you; to equip you to be your best self, as you serve the needs of your communities. We will continue to do this through engagement, training and advocacy. We will continue to amplify your voice, in representing the issues that impact the work that you do.

Thank you New Jersey libraries for all you do and all that you represent. NJLA is here for you, working hard to support you, to encourage you and to be your helping hand. Together, we will continue to rise to the challenge as we renew our energies, in service to New Jersey's libraries.

**Juliet Machie, Ed. D., is the Executive Director of the New Jersey Library Association.**



## Important Dates this Summer

### Public Policy Committee Meeting

Friday, July 2

10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

### Finance Committee Meeting

Wednesday, July 21

10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

### Readers' Advisory Section Meetings

Mondays, 2 p.m.

August 2

September 13

### Young Adult Services Section Meeting

Friday, September 17

10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

## INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING?

For all inquires please contact [newsletter\\_editorenjlamembers.org](mailto:newsletter_editorenjlamembers.org).

Proposals for the Fall 2021 issue are due on AUGUST 16TH.



## NJLA Newsletter

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*Embracing  
Opportunity*

## OTHER NJLA NEWSLETTERS:

Use these links to access the full newsletters from other NJLA Sections

[Professional Development](#)

[College and University](#)

[History and Preservation](#)



## NJLA CONFERENCE, FROM THE POV OF A FIRST TIMER

by Lena Leacock

In typical virtual fashion, my first NJLA conference began with audio issues, which were easily fixed through the help information provided on the PheedLoop platform. Once technical difficulties were sorted out, I was able to join my first session and dive into the conference.

One of the major themes throughout most of the sessions I attended, including those presented by keynote speakers, was aimed at diversity, equity, and inclusion within organizations. Sessions I attended showcased ways that libraries can promote and encourage these driving principles within our communities through our policies, procedures, programs, goals, and missions. Creating committees devoted to providing equity and inclusion within our organizations is essential to continuing staff training and education, as well as meeting our organizations' goals and demonstrating commitment to serving all members of our communities.

I found some of the tech-driven sessions informative and useful for finding new ways to keep library workflow efficient both for staff and users. Having the recordings available from these sessions allows me to refer to them as tutorials and take some extra time on my own to explore the content. Overall, I would say my first NJLA conference was a positive experience. The platform was user friendly and the speakers were engaging and informative. That being said, I am really looking forward to attending an in-person NJLA conference next year and being able to network, engage, and interact with librarians across New Jersey.

Lena Leacock is a Senior Assistant Librarian at Teaneck Public Library.



## CLASS OF 2021 EMERGING LEADERS

by **Steve Hrubes and Keisha Miller**

For the first time since its inception 19 years ago, the NJLA Emerging Leaders program took place virtually. Sponsored by NJLA, the Professional Development Committee, and Leadership & Education, the 2021 class brought 30 participants together from public and academic libraries throughout the State of New Jersey. To apply to the Emerging Leaders program, prospective attendees need to be an NJLA member in good standing and a librarian who has been working in libraries for five years or less.

Emerging Leaders participated in virtual sessions that introduced leadership skills while exploring leadership styles and networking. A diverse group of speakers from the state of New Jersey, representing the library profession in various practices, joined us for sessions. In acknowledgment of support and continued partnership, special thanks is given to the New Jersey Library Association, the New Jersey State Library, The Talking Book & Braille Center, Hackensack Middle School, Middlesex County College, and Rutgers University along with the many libraries across the state for extending their staff to offer leadership tips and tools to this year's Emerging Leaders. With appreciation for their time, knowledge and expertise, we especially thank Joslyn Bowling-Dixon, Jennifer M.S. Brenner, Sophie Brookover, Peggy Cadigan, Maureen Carroll, Leslin Charles, Cory Fleming, Joshua Greene, Linda Hoffman, Kate Jagers, Ann Kennedy, Melissa Kopecky, Bonnie Lafazan, Sarah Lester, Andrea Levandowski, Juliet Machie, Adriana Mamay, Jennifer Nelson, Marie Radford, Joanne Roukens, and Adam Szczepaniak. The planning of this wouldn't have been possible without the fellow committee members of the 2020-21 Leadership and Education Committee. We celebrate each of you and your accomplishments and wish you continued success in your path of leadership!

See **page 9** for all this year's Emerging Leaders!

For more information about the program, please visit: <http://njlamembers.org/leadershipeducation>.

**Steve Hrubes and Keisha Miller are Co-Chairs of Leadership and Education Committee, 2020-21.**

## NJLA CUS/ACRL-NJ Presents Wellness Wednesday Check-Ins

by **Adriana Mamay, Cara Berg, Bonnie Lafazan, Amanda Piekart, Alyssa Valenti, and Hilary Westgate**

Throughout the past year, each of us has navigated the unanticipated effects of a pandemic that continue to uproot our personal and professional lives. Fostering connections with others is critically important during this time, especially when opportunities for in-person interactions are limited.

In January 2021, members of the NJLA CUS/ACRL-NJ Executive Board discussed ways in which they could support the mental health and well-being of librarians in a reassuring and uplifting virtual environment. Inspired by Tracie Hall's keynote address at the 2021 VALE/ACRL-NJ/NJLA CUS Users' Conference and a Roundtable Discussion entitled Beyond the Job: New Skills, Hobbies, and Reads in the COVID-era hosted by Hilary Westgate and Adriana Mamay at the same conference, members of the Executive Board created Wellness Wednesday Check-Ins.

These bi-monthly check-ins are participant-driven and intended to be a place where librarians come together to discuss work and personal matters. Additionally, activities such as meditation, chair yoga, coloring, games, journal activities, and hobby discussions are used to further engage attendees. Wellness Wednesday Check-Ins provide opportunities to connect with colleagues and alleviate pandemic-related fatigue.



Academic and public librarians have participated in these sessions, which began in March, 2021. It was heartening to connect with supportive colleagues after a tumultuous year. Attendees felt a sense of camaraderie and agreed that a break, however brief, from everyday responsibilities to focus on our well-being was a welcome necessity.

**All authors, pictured above, are members of the NJLA CUS/ACRL Section. From L to R: Alyssa Valenti, Adriana Mamay, Bonnie Lafazan, Hilary Westgate, and Cara Berg**

# THE "GAMIFICATION" OF CONFERENCE

by PHAM CONDELLO

Zoom fatigue. Virtual burnout. Computer weariness. These were just some of the phrases that came to our minds when the Conference Committee was planning the 2021 NJLA Virtual Conference. For the past year, people have spent their days in front of computers, presenting programs, attending training sessions, and finding new ways to bring services safely to our patrons. When everyone was already tired of sitting in front of a screen, how were we going to entice them to want to attend our two-day, fully virtual conference?

The Conference Committee had a problem. One of the reasons why people kept coming back to the conference every year, besides the amazing speakers and presentations, was the prospect of seeing their old friends, making new ones, and networking. After the year we had, people craved that in-person socializing and who could blame them? I would have loved to see someone besides my partner, my mom, and my dentist; but COVID wasn't playing, so neither was the Conference Committee.

The Executive Board and the Conference Committee went back and forth trying to decide if NJLA was going to offer an in-person, hybrid, or completely online experience. When we finally came to the decision to offer the conference virtually, the Conference Committee was tasked with creating a conference that had the familiar experience of an in-person event. We wanted the attendees to be engaged rather than feeling like they were attending an all day zoom training.

During brainstorming sessions we asked, "What was the one thing that everyone loved besides the educational learning opportunities, the in person socializing, and the ice cream?" The answer was clear. Free stuff! We already knew that we were going to offer a Trivia Night, a photobooth, and networking rooms, but what else could we offer to make the conference more entertaining? The answer was gamification.

So, what is gamification? Scattered throughout the virtual conference were codes participants could collect and exchange for points. The codes could be found by visiting exhibitors, poster sessions, viewing social media posts, attending keynotes and networking events, and more. Once participants obtained enough points, they would redeem them for a chance to win one of the many donated prize packs. Prizes ranged from tattoo sessions and books to programs and self care kits. Winners were announced at the end of the conference, their names selected from a virtual prize wheel.

Not only did the gamification provide friendly competition among colleagues and friends, but helped to encourage participants to speak with organizations and vendors that they may have otherwise skipped. Hundreds of people took part in our virtual scavenger hunt and had a great time participating.

Thank you to everyone who made this conference a success—attendees, presenters, sponsors and exhibitors—you made history by being a part of the first ever NJLA virtual conference! And a special thank you to the Conference Committee. We couldn't have done it without you. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone in person at the 2022 NJLA Conference at Harrahs.



Pham Condello is the Managing Librarian of Youth Services at the Old Bridge Public Library.

## NJLA SECTION SPOTLIGHT: TECH SERVICES AND COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

by LINDA TRIPP

Video games with figurines integral to game play. A set of 10 minibooks for beginning readers. Non-traditional items like cake pans and hot spots. How do you make it work? Catalogers ensure all kinds of materials are findable, along with solving packaging, labeling, and shelving challenges. Reaching out to colleagues for guidance or for brainstorming thorny problems can be a game changer, particularly when you are the library's sole technical services staff. Our section offers professional development, with regular meetings, conference programs, workshops, and trips to a variety of libraries and archives. But as a means to exchange information: commiserate about vendors, suppliers, and meeting high demand; or the bane of all libraries—what to do with weeded materials—this section is priceless!

After adjusting to the challenges of an all-virtual environment, I have enjoyed my role in section leadership, but it's time to step down. On tap for the upcoming year is a tour of Rutgers University's technical services department, a look at inclusive subject headings, cataloging and metadata for digitized items, and other suggestions made in our recent membership survey. Typically held the third Friday of the month, upcoming meetings will be a hybrid of in-person and virtual. Section events can be found on the NJLA calendar and are emailed via Memberclicks.

**Linda Tripp is the Collection Development Librarian at the Somerset County Library System of New Jersey.**



### FEATURED PARTNER:

## NEW JERSEY STATE LIBRARY

by JENNIFER NELSON

I've been thinking a lot lately about equity, diversity, and inclusion in libraries, especially library employment, and wanted to start a conversation.

It seems as if we, as a profession, may be at a crossroads of sorts. We prize diversity and are committed – as individuals and institutions – to equity in hiring and inclusion as a workplace value. On the other hand, we laud the master's degree as a required professional credential. Yet we know that obtaining a master's degree is a tremendous barrier to entry. Despite efforts from IMLS-funded library programs in the last 25 years, librarianship remains predominantly white and female.



It seems to me that there are all kinds of ways we can work to diversify the profession if we stop talking first about master's level library education. We can start with thinking about how inclusive our programs and services are to make sure children of color have positive experiences in library use. But it goes beyond that.

It feels a little heretical and, to be honest, privileged, to assert that maybe we need to rethink the role of the master's degree in library services. But at the same time, I've worked with dozens of highly qualified and successful non-degreed librarians over the years, many of them people of color. Some of the most creative library directors I've had the pleasure of working with lacked a library degree, instead coming from backgrounds in law, public administration, education or public policy. These individuals brought one thing to their role: a passion and commitment to the role of the library in strengthening communities.

In the interests of realizing our values related to equity and diversity, maybe we should put the MLIS degree on the backburner. If we instead focus on recruiting talented people from a range of academic and professional backgrounds, we can achieve the diversity that we value and spend our time establishing inclusive workplaces where our values guide hiring decisions.

**Jennifer Nelson is the State Librarian at the New Jersey State Library in Trenton. She can be contacted at [jnelson@njstatelib.org](mailto:jnelson@njstatelib.org) 609-278-2640 ext. 101.**



## PEOPLE AND PLACES

**John Arthur** will be the new director of the East Brunswick Public Library beginning on July 8, 2021.

**Jeff Cupo** is the new Head of Reference at Elizabeth Public Library, effective April 8, 2021.

**Eleonora Dubicki**, Reference and Instruction Librarian, will retire on June 30, 2021 after 18 years of service at the Guggenheim Memorial Library at Monmouth University.

**Leslie Kotzas** is the new Director of the Keyport Public Library, effective June 28, 2021.

**Alexandria (Alex) Laudisi** joins Elizabeth Public Library as a Children's Librarian, effective May 10, 2021.

**Janet Torsney** is the new director of the Brielle Public Library.

**Have a job change, retirement, or announcement to share? Email [editor@njlamembers.org](mailto:editor@njlamembers.org) to have it included in our next issue!**

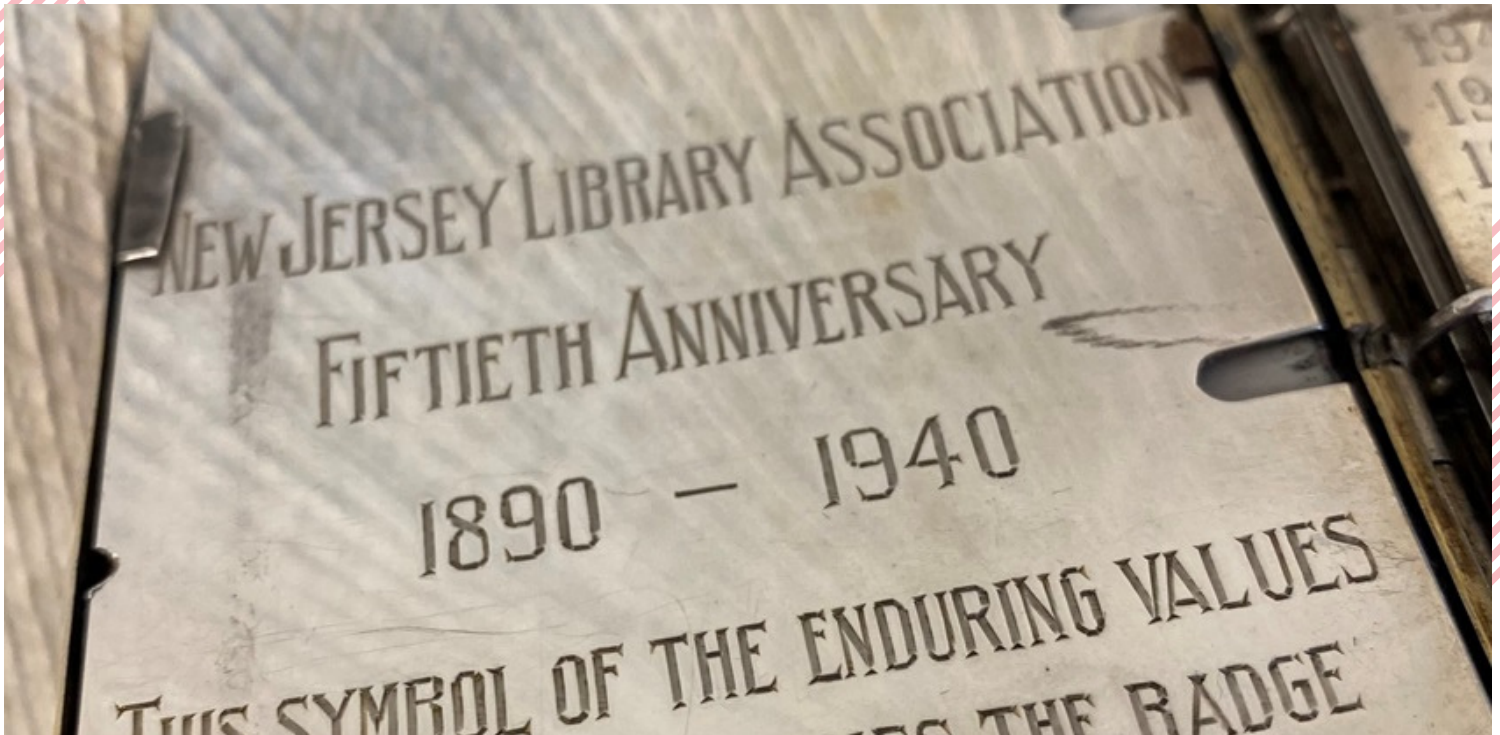
### Member Spotlight

**Samantha McCoy**, Director of West Caldwell Public Library, is currently NJLA's Treasurer. McCoy believes in New Jersey Libraries, and sees her role as supporting the many talented and smart folks who do the heavy lifting in NJLA--lobbying, educating, and advocating--which she sees as the trifecta of the organization's work.



Librarianship is McCoy's second career--a serendipitous one! She first graduated with an art degree, and was working as a kitchen and bath designer when she realized her heart wasn't in it any more. At the time her now husband was a teacher, and she went back to school to explore that field. While earning a second Bachelor's in history at William Paterson University (30 history credits in two semesters!), she worked on her thesis at the National Archives and was struck by how relaxed and knowledgeable the staff were. After learning they were librarians, she immediately applied to Pratt for a MLIS.

McCoy is currently reading Nelson DeMille's 1988 classic, "The Charm School" and listening to "Platypus Police Squad" by Jarrett Krosoczka.



The NJLA Badge of Honor

**New Jersey Library Association**  
**PO Box 6467**  
**Lawrenceville, NJ 08648**  
**609-482-1282**

# PEOPLE AND PLACES

## Congratulations to the 2021 NJLA Emerging Leaders class!

**Leala Arnold**, Newark Public Library

**Jessica Bielen**, Livingston Public Library

**Janelle Bitter**, Raritan Valley Community College

**Mary Boykoff**, Maplewood Memorial Library- Hilton Branch

**Kate-Lynn Brown**, Piscataway Public Library

**Akiema Buchanan**, Paterson Free Public Library

**Teresa Carlton**, GCLS Swedesboro Library

**Erica Deb**, Matawan Aberdeen Public Library

**Jessica Gentile**, South Plainfield Public Library

**Gabriella Graziul**, Burlington County Library System

**Molly Hone**, Montclair Public Library

**Jennifer Kaari**, East Orange Public Library

**Yolanda Keahey**, Jersey City Free Public Library

**Katherine Kotacska**, Middletown Township Public Library

**Heather Kristian**, Pennsauken Free Public Library

**Saskia Kusnecov**, Fairleigh Dickinson University

**Jennifer Larsen**, Sayreville Public Library

**Sarah Mason**, Westminster Choir College of Rider University

**Jennifer Mentzer**, Margaret E. Heggan Free Public Library

**Kiersten Paine**, Montclair Public Library

**Justin Portelli**, Maurice M. Pine Public Library- Fair Lawn

**Jacqueline Quinn**, Teaneck Public Library

**Jasmine Riel**, Cherry Hill Public Library

**Jane Sawyer**, West Orange Public Library

**Sarah Teichman**, Hudson County Community College Libraries

**Lisa Thornton**, Scotch Plains Public Library

**Dana Vocht**, East Brunswick Public Library

**Nora Walsh**, Princeton Public Library

**Brittany Whitfield**, Greenwich Public Library, GCLS

**Katrina Zwaaf**, Somerset County Library System of New Jersey

