**NJLA County Libraries Section (CLS) Meeting**

**November 16, 2023, 10:30am- Virtual Meeting**

Join Zoom Meeting:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86221340835?pwd=MmlGak1CVVd3UWFDWkRZaVF3enFNdz09>  
Meeting ID: 862 2134 0835  
Passcode: 028335

**Section Charge:** To help promote the interest of County Library staff in NJ and the professional interests of its members in conjunction with the objectives and goals of NJLA.  The section operates as a forum of all levels and types of staff to network and exchange ideas on topics that pertain to County Library systems. The section also advocates for County Library interests.

**­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­Agenda:**

1. **Welcome and Introductions:** Christina Nemphos (Burlington County Library System/BCLS), Cassie Collucci (Somerset County Library System/SCLSNJ), Ellen Callanan (Sussex County Library System/SCLS), Chip McAuley (Mercer County), Will Porter (SCLS), Rosy Wagner (BCLS), Brendan McCarty (Cumberland County Library), Natalie Webber (SCLS), Will Porter (SCLS), Kyle Brinster (BCLS), Jen Amorese-Berrios (SCLSNJ), Julie Knapp (SCLS), Judith Pissano (Gloucester County Library System/GCLS) , Susan Waltner (SCLS), Kyle Brinster (BCLS)
2. **Conference Updates**

* ***Conference Sessions:*** Rosie has submitted proposal on the Lifelong Learning Dept. at BCLS; Christina will reach out to Kate Jaggers re a possible proposal for a program for Circulation Assistants; Ellen is working on the “Structuring Your Career” (to be renamed) panel and proposal; Cassie will work on a proposal for a program on planning Staff Development Days---possible propose as a pre-conference?
* ***Luncheon Planning:*** Judith, Jen A.-B., and Heather Lubchansky are planning and will submit a proposal. More info to be shared at our January meeting

1. **Executive Board Update**-*Will Porter, NJLA Executive Board Liaison:* 1. ***Mini-grants*** guidelines, process, application, and rubric developed by the NJLA mini-grant task force were approved at last Executive Board meeting--announcement forthcoming; 2. ***First Amendment Auditors*** more active now in NJ libraries, including County Libraries—important to prepare staff members as to how to handle—libraries should have guidelines for this that have been approved by their attorney; 3.The MOU for the ***Sustainable Libraries Initiative*** has been approved, so that membership is renewed for another year; 4. There is an MOU to store ***NJLA archives*** at the Talking Book and Braille Center; 5. A ***new NJLA Associate Director (Katy White) and Office Manager (Alicia Gough)*** have been selected. Unclear as to whether one or both have started yet
2. **Elections** -Cassie Collucci, *Vice-President County Libraries Section:* election info for next year will be coming out soon—please consider running for a County Library section leadership position; available positions starting in July 2024 are ***President (1 yr. term),*** ***Vice-President (1 yr. term), Secretary (2 yr. term),*** ***Member-at Large***. Reach out to Christina if interested in presidency; talk to current officers for more info on other leadership positions within the County Library Section
3. **Updates** , *Christina Nemphos, President County Libraries Section*
   * ***December Meeting and Jan Meeting Topic/Presenters*:** no December meeting; January 18 be a Zoom meeting focused on volunteering, either a group discussion or a panel (TBD); contact Christina with suggestions/ideas for this meeting
   * ***Upcoming Meeting Topics/Presenters needed****:* February15: Zoom meeting on marketing, will partner with PR and Marketing section for this one; March 21: Heather L. to present on AI, in-person (with Zoom option) at the SCLS Louise Childs Branch in Hopatcong; April18: Digital Divide (Zoom meeting); May16: Employee engagement, in-person at BCLS (with possible Zoom option)
   * ***County Library Contact List:*** Christina is collecting information on contacts at each county library who will be the point people in communicating information about our section and its meetings to the rest of the staff in their respective libraries
4. **Grant Presentation and Group Discussion**
   * ***COVID Community Response Grant-Brendan McCarty, Outreach Librarian Cumberland County (***[***brendanmc@cclnj.org***](mailto:brendanmc@cclnj.org)***, (856) 453-2210, x26104***:
   * This was Brendan’s first grant; ongoing partnerships have resulted from this very successful experience:
     + $137,000 grant funded by the CDC and administered through the NJ Dept. of Health
     + Cumberland County applied in September 2021; short-time frame of 3 weeks between announcement and proposal due date
     + Monthly events included ‘Walk for Wellness for Mental Health Awareness Month’, ‘Men’s Health Meet-Up’ with free dinner, “Safe Summer” skin cancer awareness with free food, back-to school event with free supplies and dinner, “Boost Up Breakfast” on September Fridays for addiction month, and a Skate-a-thon event
     + Purchases included biometric testing station (weight, BP, BMI), “COVID Collection” of informational materials
     + Recommendations: 1. Get help when possible (reach out to Grant Program Manager, they want you to succeed); 2. Bring in community partners early (his helped with application process including letters of support); 3. Check-ins with fellow grantees throughout project for idea sharing, brainstorming, and social support; 4. Takeaway items, such as library-branded tote bag giveaways with supplies, providing free food, and hosting in a good location are important; 5. Enlist partner agencies to assist with promotion 6.Buy-in from county stakeholders very important, especially Finance; 7. Have a “hook” for events that will interest people in attending; 8. Pre-plan as much as possible, and make sure library has the capacity to meet grant deliverables
     + Challenge: SAGE grant software was not easy to use (this was confirmed by other attendees as well)
   * ***Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) Grant- presented by Natalie Webber, Library Associate, SCLS (****on behalf of* ***Heather Lubchansky, Principal Technician|MIS, SCLS, hlubchansky@sussexcountylibrary.org):***
     + $61,000 grant funded by FCC as part of American Rescue Act); applied through ECF site
     + Three rounds of funding; applications submitted in Round 2 (60 Chromebooks) and Round 3 (60 Hotspots with monthly service)
     + Challenges with application process: 1. Needed formal approval from Commissioners prior to application deadline in order to apply; 2. Very detailed grant requirements required sifting through ECF site to find all; 3. Long timeframe for grant approval necessitated finding substitutions for equipment, which required more forms and time (this happened twice!); 4. Although library opted for invoices to be sent to USAC directly, County still needed to “accept” grant and established PO showing “net zero” cost before orders could be placed
     + Record-keeping requirements: loaned devices needed to be tracked & records of loans kept for 10 years
     + Hotspots were very popular–60 wasn’t enough to keep up with demand!
     + Would do it again, but hope that future funding opportunities would have fewer recordkeeping restrictions/requirements
   * ***County History Partnership Program Grant- Kyle Brinster, Local History & Genealogy Librarian, BLCS (kbrinster@bcls.lib.nj.us):***
   * This was Kyle’s first grant:
     + $10,000 (grant cap) from the County Historical Partnership Program through the NJ Historical Commission re-grant program
     + Grant money being used to inventory BCLS collection in its NJ Room (8,000 items) and to create a website for the NJ Room which includes digitized resources
     + Digitization decisions are based on fragility and uniqueness of information
     + BCLS is still “in the thick of” the grant (i.e., it’s ongoing), so no metrics to report yet
     + Challenges included: 1. Inability to use grant funds for capital projects (county restriction); 2. Roadblocks with the PO in January 2024 (grant was 75% pre-paid and 25% reimburseable); 3. Many vendors which BCLS would like to have used did not accept POs *(Will P. from SCLS suggested that procurement cards may help in these situations);* 4. Application was geared more toward historical societies than libraries.
     + Takeaway: It’s important to have multiple backup plans
5. **Questions/Other:** Heather L. will be submitting an NJLA proposal for a program on AI.

**Next Meeting:** January 18th at 10:30 via Zoom; see you there!