**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS monthly regular meeting**

**Date** : Thursday, November 2, 2023

**Time** : 10:00 A.M.

**Place** : Sherborn Public Library

Sherborn, MA

**Board**

**Present** : Debby Conrad, Chair; Vicky Biancolo, Vice Chair; Karen Traub, Secretary; Mary Ann Cluggish; George Comeau, Esq.; Joyce Linehan; Jessica Vilas Novas

**Absent** : Barbara Barros; Stacy DeBole

**Staff Present:**

James Lonergan, Director; Andrea Bono-Bunker, Library Building Specialist; Kate Butler, Library Information Systems Specialist; Celeste Bruno, Communications Director; Rob Favini, Head of Library Advisory & Development Jennifer Inglis, State Aid Specialist; Rachel Masse, Assistant to the Director; Mary Rose Quinn, Head of State Programs

**Staff Zoom:**

Maura Deedy, Library Advisory Specialist; Lillian Sutton, Administrative Assistant

**Observers Present:**

Liz Anderson, Library Director, Sherborn Public Library; Phil McNulty, Executive Director, Minuteman Library Network

**Observers Zoom:**

Courtney Andree, Executive Director, Mass Center for the Book; Kathy Lussier, Network Administrator, NOBLE; Cate Merlin, Library Director, Peabody Institute Library, Danvers; David Slater, Network Administrator, OCLN; Sarah Sogigian, Executive Director, Massachusetts Library System (MLS), Angela Veizaga, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Boston Public Library

**Meeting called to order by Chair Conrad**

Chair Conrad called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M.

**Roll Call of Commissioners**

Chair Conrad stated that she is required to take a roll call of Commissioners to comply with the Open Meeting Law for hybrid meetings.

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| Commissioner Barros- Present Absent | Commissioner Comeau- Present | Commissioner Linehan- Present |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Present | Commissioner Conrad- Present | Commissioner Traub- Present |
| Commissioner Cluggish- Present | Commissioner DeBole- Absent | Commissioner Vilas Novas- Present |

Chair Conrad explained that she would be making a motion to comply with a consent agenda. A consent agenda is a board meeting practice that groups routine motions into the consent agenda. If there are no objections, the Chair can declare a motion passed, rather than counting votes for each motion separately.

Chair Conrad moved to adopt a consent agenda for agenda items #2- Approval of Minutes- October 5, 2023 Minutes, #7- Consideration of approval of municipalities meeting the requirements for the FY2024 State Aid to Public Libraries based on eligibility established in FY2024 for the Municipal Appropriation Requirement and in FY2023 for the minimum standards, #8- Consideration of approval of the FY2025 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Direct Grant Round Program & Budget, #9- Consideration of appointments to the State Advisory Council on Libraries (SACL), #10- Consideration of budget revision for the Massachusetts Library System (MLS), and #16- Adjournment.

Commissioner Cluggish seconded.

Chair Conrad asked for a roll call vote of the Commissioners for this motion.

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| Commissioner Barros- Absent | Commissioner Comeau- Yes | Commissioner Linehan- Yes |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Yes | Commissioner Conrad- Yes | Commissioner Traub- Yes |
| Commissioner Cluggish- Yes | Commissioner DeBole- Absent | Commissioner Vilas Novas- Yes |

**The motion passed.**

**Approval of Minutes from the regular monthly meeting:**

**October 5, 2023**

Chair Conrad asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 5, 2023 Monthly Meeting with updates to Commissioner Activities.

Commissioner Traub moved and Commissioner Comeau seconded to approve the minutes from the October 5, 2023, Regular Monthly Meeting with amendments.

**Hearing no objection, Chair Conrad declared the motion passed under the consent agenda.**

**Chair’s Report**

Chair Conrad presented the following report:

I will give a quick review of the meetings I attended in the past month, but I want to focus on two events in October that reminded me of the critical role libraries, the MBLC, and its partners play in supporting the right to read. On October 24, following the Executive Committee meeting held at the MBLC Office in Boston, I attended the 2023 Center for the Book Awards. I look forward to hearing authors talk about what inspired them to create their works and this event did not disappoint. I have attended the Book Awards in the past and what stood out most to me this year was how many authors and legislators spoke out against the movement to ban and limit access to library materials. It was a perfect lead into the October 30th hearing of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development about Rep. Balser’s bill “An Act empowering library access to electronic books and digital audiobooks” and the Acts ensuring freedom to read in the Commonwealth. I was able to attend the hearing virtually. I was impressed with the eBook testimony submitted by the library community particularly that of David Leonard from the Boston Public Library, Kathy Lussier from NOBLE and the Massachusetts Library Association Legislative Committee, and Jeanette Lundgren and her son Rory. The testimony submitted by librarians, a patron, and David Hansen, Executive Director of the Authors Alliance, spoke to the importance of providing a full range of eBooks and downloadable audiobooks for all patrons – a need currently unmet because of the cost of the materials. Terry Hart, attorney for the Association of American Publishers, spoke against the bill. When he compared it to the Maryland bill that had been thrown out in court because it was ruled that it violated Copyright, it was pointed out this bill did not duplicate the problems of the Maryland bill and was focused on consumer protections. Not surprisingly, I had some strong disagreements with his testimony, and I was left puzzled by his remarks that eBook publishing revenues were flat – was he implying that library circulation was driving down revenues or that the publishers were using library acquisitions to pump up revenues? He also mentioned the ability to easily copy eBooks – I am not sure what platform he had seen that allowed this. The legislators asked some excellent questions regarding his testimony, and I look forward to hearing about how this bill will progress.

The testimony in support of the Right to Read was powerful and quite frankly upsetting. I know several of the librarians who spoke about their experiences and their descriptions of the bullying to which they were subjected was painful to hear. No one should have to experience this just by doing their job. Mike Curato, author of the frequently banned book Flamer, spoke about how the book was a story about his coming of age as a gay teen and he read letters from young readers who identified with the story. The legislators were visibly moved by those letters and were disturbed by the stories shared by librarians. There was also testimony from Sam Whiting of the Massachusetts Family Institute. Mr. Whiting talked about how public and school libraries are restricting access to Christian, conservative, and age-appropriate materials and have added highly sexualized and liberally biased content to their collections. He stated that removing “vulgar” books from a library collection is not book banning. He referenced recent legislation passed in Missouri which bans libraries from buying materials deemed obscene and from having certain displays. His argument was that this is not a book ban as these titles are still available for purchase by consumers. I sensed strong support from the committee for some type of legislation to protect libraries, but I also felt there is no clear direction for legislation at this point. I have been sending emails to my legislators explaining what the legislation needs to contain and the need for swift passage of a bill that meets the needs of Massachusetts. It is important for Commissioners to support both of these bills. As there are multiple Freedom to Read bills out there, contact the MBLC for advice on which bills and provisions are most suitable for Massachusetts. I am also concerned that the threat to state aid to libraries might have no effect on the opponents to the Right to Read and that the ongoing campaign to place their candidates on school committees and library trustee boards could be very problematic no matter what legislation is passed. It would behoove all of us to keep these other “stealth” campaigns on our radar.

In addition to these meetings, I attended the monthly Executive Board meeting of the Massachusetts Library System on October 16 and the monthly Massachusetts Library Association Legislative Committee meeting on October 20. I am looking forward to attending the MLS annual meeting next week and I hope I will see many of you there.

This is the last meeting for Mary Rose Quinn, our intrepid government liaison. Mary Rose did a sterling job testifying before the Joint Committee hearing about the need for the Freedom to Read legislation. Her knowledge of the legislative and budget process as well as the regulations pertaining to libraries is amazing. On behalf of the current and past commissioners, I want to thank her for everything she has done to advance the cause of libraries in Massachusetts. I know that Rob Favini will also be an effective government liaison and look forward to working with him this year as we all focus on our very ambitious legislative agenda.

I also want to acknowledge the contributions made by the staff members who have or will be retiring before the end of 2023. Commissioner Comeau always says that the MBLC is a great organization because of its great staff. I agree.

**Commissioner Activities**

**Commissioner Biancolo**

* October 20: Attended meeting of MLA Legislative Committee, virtual
* October 21: Attended the Trustee Annual Meeting & Orientation at Shrewsbury Public Library
* October 24: Attended meeting of Executive Board
* October 24: Attended the Massachusetts Center for the Book event for the 2023 Mass Book Awards at the State House
* October 26: Attended annual meeting of Western Mass Library Advocates, virtual
* November 1: Attended the SACL meeting, virtual

**Commissioner Cluggish**

* October 3: Met at Statehouse with Garrett Casey, Sen. Creem's Legislative Counsel, to explain SD2673
* October 13: PR Committee Virtual
* October 20: MLA Legislative Committee
* October 21: MLTA Annual Meeting, Shrewsbury P.L.

**Commissioner Linehan**

* October 14: I moderated a panel at the Boston Book Festival. About 150 people came to hear authors Hannah Matthews, who wrote a book about her experience as an abortion doula and Felicia Kornbluh, who wrote a book about the history of abortion law.
* October 18: with the Lieutenant Governor, I attended the 50th anniversary of Gateway Arts, a program that serves people with disabilities, including aspiring writers. The event was at the Museum of Fine Arts. We enjoyed readings of some of that work done by author Tom Perotta and actor Amy Brenneman.
* October 24: I attended the Massachusetts Book Awards at the state house.

**Commissioner Traub**

* October 5: Trustee Orientation at Eastham Library
* October 13: MBLC Communications meeting- virtual
* October 17: ACLU Advocates Academy Censorship in the classroom; Your Right to Learn webinar
* October 21: MLTA annual meeting- Shrewsbury Public Library
* October 24: MBLC executive committee meeting
* October 26: WMLA annual meeting virtual featuring Andrea Puglisi's presentation Protect Yourself: Online Harassment Prevention Strategies for Library Workers

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Director Lonergan presented the following report:

* October 11—Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) State Program Report (SPR) refresher webinar
* October 12— Mass. Broadband Institute Digital Equity Working Group meeting, Massachusetts Bay Community College, Wellesley
* October 13— Mass. Library Association (MLA) Executive Board meeting, virtual
* October 15—Presented at “State of the States” session at the New England Library Association Conference in Springfield, Mass. with fellow New England state library agency chiefs
* October 16— Mass. Library System (MLS) Executive Board meeting, virtual
* October 20—Mass. Library Association (MLA) Legislative Committee meeting, virtual
* October 24— MBLC Executive Committee meeting, virtual
* October 24—Mass. Center for the Book’s 23rd Annual Massachusetts Book Awards ceremony, State House
* October 25—Joint Intellectual Freedom Task Force meeting, virtual
* October 26—Western Mass. Library Advocates (WMLA) Annual meeting, virtual
* October 29-November 1—Chief Officers of State Library Agencies Fall Conference, Newport, RI
* October 30—Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development Hearing on Access to Library Materials, virtual

The **Chief Officers of State Library Agencies** (**COSLA) Fall Conference** was held from Sunday, October 29 through Wednesday, November 2 at the Newport Harbor Island Resort in Newport, Rhode Island. The meeting included sessions on COSLA’s place in the national library ecosystem and the annual membership meeting and elections. IMLS Director Crosby Kemper and Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) spoke about national library issues and the upcoming reauthorization of the Museum and Library Services Act (in 2025), the legislation governing the Institute of Museum and Library Services. COSLA representatives have been appointed to the ALA Committee on Legislation’s MLSA Reauthorization Task Force, which began meeting in September. They plan to have a report with recommendations for the reauthorization by June 2024. Senator Reed is expected to be the lead MLSA sponsor again. Regional councils (including COSLINE, the Council of State Library Agencies in the Northeast) held separate meetings during the conference. Finally, this is the 50th anniversary year of the founding of COSLA and we attended a “gala” (both current and some former chiefs) at Ochre Court, one of Newport’s mansions.

I submitted written testimonyforthe hearing on **H.3239, *An Act empowering library access to electronic books and digital audiobooks***, which the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Culture held on Monday, October 30 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:40 p.m. A recording of the hearing is available at: <https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/4763>. My testimony was an updated version of my remote testimony from the first hearing on this bill in November 2021. The consensus was that the MBLC would not testify in-person or virtually on this bill (MLA Leg Comm planned for speakers from various library constituencies), however Mary Rose led off the testimony for the library community on the two anti-book ban bills being considered during the same hearing and will discuss the hearing in more detail during her report.

October was a busy month on the **E-Rate** front:

* MBLC’s E Rate consultant Aleck Johnson is putting the final touches on a template RFP for use by the Networks. Once completed this template will make it easier for Networks to apply for E Rate funds.
* Kate and Paul met with the Massachusetts Educational Technology Administrators Association (METAA) to find out how they support school districts in applying for E-Rate, particularly how they make use of the state’s master purchasing contracts.
* Kate and Aleck Johnson attended a day long E-Rate training conducted by Universal Service Administration Company (USAC) and hosted by the FCC in Washington DC.
* Aleck has submitted several hundred corrections to Massachusetts library information to the USAC. This updated library information will increase the accuracy of Massachusetts library information and will improve the application process for our libraries.
* MBLC’s second E-Rate webinar, *E-Rate Before You Apply* ran on November 1st and covered how libraries can prepare for a successful and stress-free application process. A recording of the webinar will be available on the MBLC’s E Rate trainings page: <https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/e-rate/trainings.php>. Our first webinar, *Benefits of E Rate,* has had 79 views since it went up.

**MLS, MBLC, and Tech Goes Home Gateway City Initiative**: On October 27th, Sarah Sogigian and Rob Favini met with [Tech Goes Home](https://www.techgoeshome.org/) (TGH) CEO Dan Noyes to discuss expanding TGH’s training program to include libraries in Gateway Cities across the Commonwealth. TGH’s mission is to empower communities to access and use digital tools to overcome barriers and advance lives. TGH brings computers, internet, and training to those without so students can do homework, adults can find jobs and manage finances, seniors can connect with loved ones, and all can lead healthier lives. TGH will be building on past successful partnerships with libraries in the Metro Boston area, including the Boston Public Library.

**Jail and Prison Library Manga Collections:** Over the past year the MBLC has been working with Department of Correction and County Jail librarians to curate, purchase and deliver a collection of Manga books to corrections libraries across the state. After many vendor ordering delays, Shelley Quezada delivered a 7-box set of Manga books to MCI Framingham, a facility that houses an all-female population.  This is the second set of books delivered to a corrections library. The program will continue throughout the year.

**Libraries Partnering with Department of Youth Services (DYS) Facilities:** In 2008, Boston Public Library (BPL) Youth Services established a relationship with the MA Department of Youth Services (DYS), the state agency serving teens who are court-involved. Since then, librarians have provided monthly library services to the two Metro Boston facilities for young people ages 14-21. In 2021 MBLC ARPA funds created a core collection of books to serve the teen population. Maty Cropley and Jess Snow are currently heading the program for the BPL. They reached out to Shelley and Rob to see if the MBLC could assist in establishing a pilot program designed to connect libraries with DYS centers across the state to expand library services to their teen populations. Shelley and Rob connected Maty and Jess with staff from the Flint Library in Middleton who will use the BPL pilot program template to reach out to their local DYS facility to establish regular library services. The hope is to have more libraries across the state participate in the pilot program.

Fifty-nine people attended the **Mass. Library Trustee Association’s (MLTA) Annual Meeting and Conference** on Saturday October 21, at the Shrewsbury Public Library. The keynote speaker was Chris Chanyasulkit, PhD, MPH, who is a public health practitioner, advocate, keynote speaker, and master connector who speaks nationally about public health; literacy; civic engagement; and racial, gender, and health equity. She is the President of the American Public Health Association (APHA), a mom of three, a dog mom of two pups and an avid reader. Dr. Chanyasulkit is also a Library Trustee at the Public Library of Brookline and a member of our State Advisory Council on Libraries (SACL). Maura Deedy delivered the MBLC update on our budget, legislative activity, pending bills related to libraries, and upcoming retirements.

Following the MLTA Meeting and Conference, Maura Deedy delivered a Trustee Orientation to 43 trustees.

Earlier in the month at Eastham Public Library, following our October Board meeting, both Maura Deedy and Rob Favini led a Trustee Orientation for 26 people. It had been 3 years and 11 months (or 1430 days) since our last in person orientation, which was held on November 5, 2019.

**MPLCP**: Lynnfield did not approve their provisional construction grant at their town meeting on October 16. Andrea will report on next steps that Lynnfield is considering during our meeting today.

The **Communications Team** has been creating the narrative to accompany the funding request for the **FY2025 Legislative Agenda**. The team has also reached out to affiliates to begin the process of developing affiliate sheets. They also met with the construction consultants to get input on what should be included in the construction legislative sheet. The affiliate sheets and the construction information will be included on the legislative agenda website and will be available to print for in-person meetings. The team will meet with the statewide PR Committee in mid-November to get feedback and anticipates that the complete legislative agenda will be available in December.

The **Ultimate Library Road Trip: Western Massachusetts Edition** launched in October. The communications team worked with members of Western Mass. Library Advocates (WMLA) and Buyer to develop the site and materials. WMLA joins SAILS and OCLN in working with the MBLC to participate in the road trip which is a fun way to highlight resource sharing.

Promotional materials for databases and for ComCat were made available to order during October and more than 100 libraries ordered over 25,000 items.

**Staff news**:

Three of our five veteran staff members who have announced their retirements will be leaving us in November. Susan Gibson’s last day is Friday, November 3, and Shelley Quezada and Mary Rose Quinn’s last day with us will be Thursday, November 30.

Please join me in thanking them all for their dedicated service to the MBLC and to the Commonwealth’s libraries and best wishes to Susan, Shelley, and Mary Rose for the future!

**Legislative Report**

Mary Rose Quinn, Head of State Programs presented the following report:

The final steps in the budget process:  
The Governor has 10 days to review the budget and take action to either approve or veto the budget. The Governor may approve or veto the entire budget, veto or reduce specific line items, veto outside sections or submit changes as an amendment to the budget for further consideration by the Legislature.

Following any legislative overrides to the Governor's actions, the budget is finalized and is commonly referred to as the "General Appropriations Act" for the upcoming fiscal year.

### <https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FinalBudget>. The Acts of 2023. Chapter 28

**AN ACT MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2024 FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THE DEPARTMENTS, BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, INSTITUTIONS, AND CERTAIN ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMONWEALTH, FOR INTEREST, SINKING FUND, AND SERIAL BOND REQUIREMENTS, AND FOR CERTAIN PERMANENT IMPROVEMENTS.**

Although the Legislature has finalized the FY 2024 appropriation, it has yet to vote on the funding bill to close out the FY 2023 budget. This has delayed the annual budget report from the Comptroller and left many ongoing budget priorities unfunded. The House and Senate have until Thanksgiving to resolve their differences and vote to close the books on last fiscal year.

A hearing was held before the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development chaired by Representative Mindy Domb and Senator Paul Mark on Monday, October 30. Thank you to Kathy Lussier who provided not only expert testimony, but the link and time stamps included in this report for those who were unable to attend or view in real time.

For those who missed the hearing, the video is available at [https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/4763](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/4763__;!!CPANwP4y!V3DQnUQ3Z0aNCSh_D-LrsHfhJZsDKNUfTG_4gRoRtdkDsQeQLQgLuVlkQINz_Nd8wQwLwQILRBoA6AOAN3wNawc$)  
  
Timestamps for each of the library speakers are below:  
  
3:17 Sen. Oliveira - S2447 (Freedom to Read)  
Ebook bill testimony  
9:10 Rep. Ruth Balser - H3239  
12:53 Terry Hart, attorney for the AAP (Watch it for the Q&A at the end).  
29:41 David Leonard, President of the BPL  
37:34 - Sen. Kennedy - agritourism break  
41:50 Kathy Lussier, MLA Legislative Committee co-chair  
50:07 Jeanette Lundgren and son, Rory  
58:45 Palma McLauglin, patron  
1:02:05 Emily Alling, Associate Dean for Library Services, MCLA  
1:05:45 Lisa Downing, Forbes Library, Northampton  
1:09:15 Dave Hansen, Executive Director of the Authors Alliance, a group to advance the interests of authors who want to serve the public good by sharing their creations broadly.   
  
Freedom to Read bills  
1:14:40 Jeff Raymond, Millbury, avid library user  
1:17:49 Debbie Froggatt, Massachusetts School Library Association  
1:21:17 Mary Rose Thibault Quinn, MBLC  
1:32:32 Andrea Fiorillo, Reading Public Library & Co-Chair of MLA-IF/SRC  
1:39:43 Kerry Cowell, head of school libraries, Medfield  
1:44:26 Mike Curato,  author of Flamer  
1:48:44 Jane Ichord, School Library Teacher, Lilla Frederick School in Boston  
1:54:10 Monica Burke, Acton Library Trustee, also spoke on H3239  
1:59:23 Rep. Hawkins, with Attleboro School Committee member Scott Domenici and student Scarlett Domenici (Amy Rhilinger-Librarian, they did a fabulous job!)  
2:08:10 Jocelyn Michalewich Tavares  
2:13:02 Danielle Margarida, parent and librarian.  
2:17:05 Sam Whiting, Massachusetts Family Institute

My MBLC testimony on anti-book banning legislations, expanded to include the information about the joint statement on the MBLC website and information requested by Chair Domb (highlighted) follows:

*Good day, and thank you Chair Domb and Chair Mark and the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development for the opportunity to testify at this hearing in support of House bill, H.4005, An Act ensuring the freedom to read in the Commonwealth and Senate bill S.2447, An Act protecting against attempts to ban, remove, or restrict library access to materials. Thank you, Representative Hawkins and Senator Oliveira, for your leadership on this issue.*

*My name is Mary Rose Quinn, and I am the Head of State Programs and Government Liaison for the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC).**The MBLC is the agency of state government with the statutory authority and responsibility to organize, develop, coordinate, and improve library services. The MBLC strives to provide every resident of the Commonwealth with full and equal access to library information resources. We support the work of libraries that create environments where people feel included, respected, and welcome.*

*The bills being heard today, and others filed here and elsewhere, support preserving library collections from attempts to censor or ban materials. We fully support legislation that protects library collections from doctrinal, partisan, ideological, or other agenda driven interference; legislation that protects every residents’ right to read and access books they need to live, learn, work, and thrive in this Commonwealth; legislation that protects from threats and retaliation, library front line workers and the library professionals who have the education, expertise, certifications, training, and statutory authority and mandate to build and develop library collections.*

*Last week, The Massachusetts Center for the Book held its Annual Massachusetts Book Award Ceremony here in the Great Hall. Some of the Authors and titles we honored and celebrated have been banned, censored, and silenced in other states and have even been challenged here. We need to protect their voices and to continue to provide their important words and works in our collections.*

*The MBLC supports strengthening our existing statutes in Chapter 78 of the General Laws to better protect our libraries and the public they serve. In the 1980s, the Legislature, working with the MBLC, had the foresight to adopt section 33 in Chapter 78 which governs collection development in libraries. With the threatened book bans and challenges here and across the country, amplified by a social media that did not exist in the 1980s, we urge you to consider expanding the scope and protections in section 33 and include the section as one of the minimum standards of the State Aid to Public Libraries Program.*

*Book challenges in Massachusetts’ school and public libraries have quadrupled in just one year, mirroring the surge the*[*American Library Association has reported*](https://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2023/03/record-book-bans-2022)*nationwide. Challenges here reflect a national agenda that targets specific members of our communities including LGBTQ+ individuals and people of color.*

*Why are the numbers higher here than in states that are actively legislating book bans and censoring materials? Those states are blocking and silencing the voices that would speak up against the censorship and removal of materials from collections. Librarians are fired, collections are removed from the shelves, libraries are defunded and closed. Here in Massachusetts, we are encouraged to speak up and report book challenges and bans in our communities and at the state and federal levels of government.*

*Earlier in the spring of this year, the MBLC, along with its library affiliates and partners, published a joint statement to stand with librarians against censorship and intolerance.* [*https://mblc.state.ma.us/censorship-freedom/joint-statement.php*](https://mblc.state.ma.us/censorship-freedom/joint-statement.php)*. It can be found on our website and we continue to encourage everyone to read and sign the statement in support.*

*And finally, we are grateful to have a Legislature and a Governor willing to protect the right of all residents to read; a Legislature and a Governor that listens to our issues and provides opportunities like this hearing to express our ideas freely and openly. We have a long tradition of standing up for what we know is right and celebrating the diverse voices that make this Commonwealth great. Thank you.*

Testimony on the library related bills began with a representative from publishers against the eBook legislation and ended with opposition from the Massachusetts Family Institute against the anti-book banning legislation. Testimony from a representative from a publishing group that supports eBooks noted that while it is important to make a profit, authors in their group recognize it is important to make a difference. Dave Hansen spoke as the Executive Director of the Authors Alliance, a group to advance the interests of authors who want to serve the public good by sharing their creations broadly.

Going forward, MLA is encouraging anyone who is willing to submit testimony on either or both of the bill topics, to submit testimony to Derek Dunlea at the Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY**:** Written testimony may be submitted to the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development by emailing the Committee’s Research Director at [Derek.Dunlea@mahouse.gov](mailto:Derek.Dunlea@mahouse.gov) and Senate Chair’s Legislative Director at [Gabrielle.Hanson@masenate.gov](mailto:Gabrielle.Hanson@masenate.gov). Please use the subject line “*Written Testimony – TACD 10/30/23*”.

As a reminder, the bills heard on Monday were:

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| [H.3239](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H3239) | An Act empowering library access to electronic books and digital audiobooks | [Ruth B. Balser](https://malegislature.gov/Legislators/Profile/RBB1) |
| [H.4005](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H4005) | An Act ensuring freedom to read in the Commonwealth | [James K. Hawkins](https://malegislature.gov/Legislators/Profile/JKH1) |
| [S.2188](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/S2188) | An Act modernizing library access to electronic books and digital audiobooks | [Anne M. Gobi](https://malegislature.gov/Legislators/Profile/AMG0) |
| [S.2447](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/S2447) | An Act protecting against attempts to ban, remove, or restrict library access to materials | [Jacob R. Oliveira](https://malegislature.gov/Legislators/Profile/JRO0) |

The MBLC will continue to work with all of the anti-book banning bills’ sponsors and the Committee on Tourism to ensure alignment of the texts with the library landscape in Massachusetts. Thank you, Commissioner DeBole, for arranging the meetings with Representative Hawkins’ Legislative Director, Tara Major, and with Derek Dunlea from the Office of Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development. Thank you, Celeste Bruno, for providing many of the talking points from data collected in the recent surveys and from past and present legislative agenda narratives. Thanks also, Maura Deedy, for suggesting the language regarding librarians as collection experts and professionals. The Committee seemed extremely receptive to our message and supportive of our goals. We are truly fortunate to work in a commonwealth that supports education, literacy, and reading as a right for all its citizens.

**Consideration of approval of municipalities meeting the requirements for the FY2024 State Aid to Public Libraries based on eligibility established in FY2024 for the Municipal Appropriation Requirement and in FY2023 for the minimum standards**

Jen Inglis, State Aid Specialist, presented for certification 131 municipalities meeting the requirements for the FY2024 State Aid to Public Libraries program.

Ms. Inglis reminded the Commissioners that these awards are half payments. The remainder is paid at the end of the grant cycle. The total first half payments for the first group of municipalities is $2,839,00.00.

Commissioner Comeau moved and Commissioner Cluggish seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners certifies that the communities on the attached list have met minimum standards of free public library service and awards each a FY2024 Library Incentive Grant (LIG), a FY2024 Municipal Equalization Grant (MEG)and a FY2024 Nonresident Circulation (NRC) offset in the indicated amounts, totaling $ 2,839,000.00, and authorizes any additional FY2024 State Aid to Public Libraries disbursements that may be possible toward the end of the grant cycle.

**Consideration of approval of the FY2025 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Direct Grant Round Program & Budget**

The State Advisory Committee on Libraries (SACL) met on November 1st and discussed the FY2025 grant round. For this year’s grant round the emphasis will be on creativity and flexibility to ensure that libraries deliver the programming and services that have been a hallmark of the MBLC’s direct grant program.

SACL is extremely pleased to announce the FY2025 LSTA Direct Grant Program opportunities:

* Access for All
* Amplifying Digitized Special Collections
* Anytime STEM Learning
* Archives Arrangement and Description
* At the Table
* Citizenship Corners and Expanded English Language Services
* Civic Hub
* Creative Communities
* Dig In
* Go Local
* Health and Wellness
* Managing Fine and Decorative Arts
* Mind in the Making
* Open
* Open for Business: Supporting Small Business Development and Entrepreneurs
* Pathways to Success
* Protecting Priority Collections
* Strength in Families

Fact sheets with full descriptions of grant offerings can be found on the MBLC website: <https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/lsta/grant-opportunities/index.php>

The grant round will be announced next week with Letters of Intent due December 6, 2023 and grant applications due April 10, 2024. The budget for the FY2025 program is $500,000. Please contact me with questions, if you would like additional information, or if you need assistance accessing grant fact sheets.

Commissioner Vilas Novas moved and Commissioner Biancolo seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners approves the Program and Budget for the FY2025 Library Services and Technology Act direct grant round in the amount of $500,000 as recommended by the State Advisory Council on Libraries and detailed in the documentation presented in agenda item 8.

**Consideration of appointments to the State Advisory Council on Libraries (SACL)**

The Statewide Advisory Council on Libraries has reappointment recommendations for SACL representatives representing underrepresented populations and library users. The LSTA staff is pleased to present the following candidates for reappointment:

* Representing underrepresented populations: James Gleason, Perkins Library, Watertown, MA.
* Representing library users: Chris Chanyasulkit, Brookline, MA

Commissioner Cluggish moved and Commissioner Biancolo seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners reappoints James Gleason, Perkins Library, Watertown, MA and Chris Chanyasulkit, Brookline.

**Consideration of budget revision for the Massachusetts Library System (MLS)**

Massachusetts Library System, Inc., received a budget increase for FY24 in the amount $1,551,200. This was another significant increase and will bring our FY2024 budget to $12,438,200.

This Budget revision was approved by MLS Board on September 11, 2023.

Below you will see how the increase was allocated to the different lines:

* We increased online Content $150,000
* Ebook was increased by $152,429
* Computer Hardware, Software and Online Utilities increased by $68,637.75
* Workshop Providers, Conference expenses, Marketing increased by $433,855.23
* Special projects by $700,000

With these increases we are able to offer our members more workshops and conference opportunities, while adhering to the goals and actions outlined in our Strategic Plan documents.

Commissioner Comeau moved and Commissioner Cluggish seconded to approve the budget revision submitted by the Massachusetts Library System.

**Report from Massachusetts Library System**

Sarah Sogigian presented the following report to the Board.

**Strategic Initiative 1**

**MLS ensures its services are sustainable, prioritize member needs, and equitably serve all member types.**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Goal | Actions | Measurement of Success | **Monthly work towards goal** |
| MLS ensures service value to all member types. | MLS will create new avenues for active member engagement, including task forces, class leaders, and project engagements. | *MLS will report to member libraries on an annual basis the number of active member engagements.* | Changes made by the new School Library Membership Policy are being implemented.  Sarah Sogigian and Rob Favini (MBLC) launched their 2023 Road Trip program  Two Masscat public library members (Huntington and Becket) have signed contracts to join C/WMARS, with support from MLS. |
| MLS will continue to strengthen its partnerships and collaborations to allow MLS to focus on what it does uniquely well. | Utilizing the newly created partnership policy and process, MLS will explore possible partnership work with the Library for the Commonwealth and other organizations. | *MLS will report to member libraries on an annual basis the value of their partnerships.* | We launched the five-part webinar series with ALA on intellectual freedom topics. Three webinars occurred in February with 176 participants at the live events and 94 views of the recordings. Two additional webinars will occur in March. Recordings of the webinars will be available for 18 months.  We continued working with MBLC and other organizations to host a webinar series on mental health supports and libraries. One webinar occurred in February and two will occur in March.  Staff from MLS, MBLC, public libraries, and other New England state libraries began the *Touchpoints for Libraries* train- the-trainer program to teach the Touchpoints program to Massachusetts library staff. The training will continue in March.  We continued working with other New England states on this year’s Summer Summit, to help libraries prepare for the youth and adult summer library program. The event is scheduled for March 31. |
| New services will be designed to deliver the greatest statewide impact, able to expand and contract due to available funding and need. | MLS will evaluate current, new, and proposed services using a new internal service review process. | *MLS will ensure that services are able to expand and contract due to available funding, need, and capacity.* |  |

# **Strategic Initiative 2**

**MLS empowers leaders to emerge at every level of library service, connecting staff throughout the stages of their careers.**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Goal | Actions | Measurement of Success | **Monthly work towards goal** |
| MLS promotes excellence and continuity by providing professional development, conversation, and community around leadership. | Together with our partners, MLS will lead the planning of learning opportunities on leadership and management topics and ensure networking options in our engagements. | *MLS will report to member libraries on an annual basis the leadership and management learning opportunities hosted and the reflection from participants.* | We scheduled a series of four workshops with the Employers Association of the NorthEast on HR topics relevant for libraries (employment Law, interviewing, performance management, and documentation skills). They will take place March through May.  We are working with EANE to schedule four community chats on HR related topics. |
| Leadership, professional development, and networking opportunities will have flexible offerings in order to include participants from various library types, library sizes, and resources. | MLS will explore the creation of grants and/or scholarship opportunities to support member library staff in their professional development work. | *MLS will report to member libraries on an annual basis the number of opportunities available, awarded, and the reflection from participants.* | We launched the Language Learning Grant program and approved 20 applications in February. |

# **Strategic Initiative 3**

**MLS will take the lead in facilitating important conversations, and support member-facing initiatives focused on DEI: diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and social justice.**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Goal | Actions | Measurement of Success | **Monthly work towards goal** |
| MLS will integrate the core values of diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and social justice into its policies, practices, procedures, and programs. | Utilizing learnings from our work last year, MLS will continue its review of documents, resources and practices to ensure they align with core values.  In partnership with trusted experts, MLS will begin an accessibility audit of MLS services. | *MLS will demonstrate both increased resource allocation as well as substantive, visible progress in representation throughout MLS services.* |  |
| Following the lead of trusted experts, MLS will build awareness in using the DEI tenets with member library staff to identify and eliminate barriers to inclusive library services. | Utilizing established services, MLS will showcase member libraries that are using the core values of DEI within their communities. | *MLS will report to member libraries on an annual basis the DEI learning opportunities hosted and the reflection from participants.* |  |

Browse Borrow Board

* 1. Info guide, including regional transit authority’s (RTAs) onboarding
     1. <https://guides.masslibsystem.org/ld.php?content_id=74185220>

**Report from Library for the Commonwealth**

Angela Veizaga, Director of Strategic Partnerships gave the following report:

**Books Unbanned**

The Boston Public Library is joining the [Brooklyn Public Library’s Books Unbanned initiative](https://www.bklynlibrary.org/books-unbanned) to fight censorship and book banning by offering teens and young adults nationwide free access to e-books and e-audiobooks from its digital collection. The BPL is the third library to enter the growing network, joining Seattle Public Library.

Teens and young adults ages 13 to 26 who live in the United States can now sign up for a free eCard from the BPL, which allows them access to frequently challenged and banned e-books and e-audiobooks from the BPL's collection. The simple application is available at [bpl.org/books-unbanned](https://www.bpl.org/books-unbanned).

Books Unbanned helps counter the series of increasingly coordinated and effective efforts to remove books from public and school libraries across the nation. The [American Library Association’s Office of](https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/book-ban-data) [Intellectual Freedom](https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/book-ban-data) reported that so far 2023 has seen a 20 percent increase in attempts to censor library books and resources.

The BPL’s Books Unbanned initiative is funded through private support raised by the Boston Public Library Fund, the philanthropic arm of the BPL. Individuals interested in how the Fund supports Books Unbanned can learn more at [bplfund.org/booksunbanned/.](https://bplfund.org/booksunbanned/)

The BPL’s Books Unbanned card is valid for one year and is designed to complement access to resources for teens in their local communities. Teens and young adults who sign up can check out a maximum of 10 titles at a time and place a maximum of 10 holds. The Books Unbanned card provides access to a collection curated from BPL’s digital holdings of more than 300,000 e-books and e-audiobooks. Cardholders can place holds and check out e-books and e-audiobooks on the BPL’s online catalog.

**Book Unbanned Update**

Latest update 1,007 registrations and 327 total checkouts.

**Browse Borrow Board Update**

Browse Borrow Board has 1,248 sign ups and 440 checkouts.

**New Genealogy Resource: My China Roots**

[My China Roots](https://www.mychinaroots.com/) is a genealogy resource for people researching the Chinese diaspora. This resource provides access to international collections that cover Mainland China, Southeast Asia, North America, and the Caribbean. This resource also includes genealogy clan books, immigration case file indexes, Chinese association membership records, Chinese business directories, overseas Chinese cemetery records, guides to get started, and more. Patrons can search for records in English and Chinese across all collections. My China Roots includes over 150 million searchable individuals and over 14 million images.

**November is Native American Heritage Month**

Native Lives, Native Stories Booklist 2023 is a list of recommended reads published in the previous year for children, teens, and adults concerning the experiences of the Native and Indigenous communities throughout North America. This list is part of the Boston Public Library's annual observance of Native American Heritage Month. Pick up a copy at any of our locations while supplies last, or read it online here: https://bpl.bibliocommons.com/list/share/1902592239/2398836239

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 1:06 P.M.



Karen Traub

Secretary