

# NJLA NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

July 2023

Vol. 21 Issue 3

## Important Dates

### Administration and Management Section Meeting

Tuesday, July 13, 10:30 a.m.

### Sustainability & Resilience Section Meetings

Thursdays, 2 p.m.

July 13 & September 14

### Personnel Administration Subcommittee Meetings

Mondays, 2 p.m.

July 17, August 21, & September 18

### NJLA Book Store at the Collingswood Book Festival

Thursday, September 7, 8 a.m.

View the [NJLA Events Calendar](#) for all meetings and events.

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# OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



by **JESSICA TRUJILLO**

It has been my profound pleasure to serve as the NJLA President, and to work with, learn from, and collaborate with the passionate members of our library community. In the past, NJLA has functioned as a member-driven, grassroots organization which asked our volunteers to shoulder a great deal of responsibility and work. Witnessing how much work our NJLA members accomplish as volunteers is humbling and inspiring, but we have heard from our section and committee leaders that there is a need for greater support in fulfilling

their goals and missions that NJLA office infrastructure has not had the capacity to meet.

Prior to Brett becoming our new Executive Director, NJLA business continued, thanks to Cindy Czesak (part-time Executive Director), Eileen Palmer (part-time co-Executive Director for two months), Allan Kleinman (NJLA Treasurer), Alicia Gogh (Part-Time Web and Tech Specialist), Karen Cerra (Part-Time Assistant Executive Director), and myself. We evaluated how business was conducted within the NJLA office and saw what needed to be changed for NJLA to grow into the organization membership asked for: an organization that anticipates rather than reacts to situations that impact libraries, effectively communicates with its internal and external stakeholders, and creates a culture of inclusion and belonging. Meeting the needs of libraries and library workers in this rapidly changing world is paramount; ensuring that NJLA has the capacity to be responsive to our membership's needs is a high priority. I look forward to seeing the seeds planted in Kate's Presidential year and cultivated in my year, flourish and grow during Carina's and Jeff's presidential years.

During my tenure, I've been moved by how the most meaningful changes happened because somebody recognized a need and dutifully responded. NJLA leadership must support our members who volunteer so much of their time and energy because our active participation is the heartbeat of our organization. When we lend our time, labor, and voices to ongoing conversations within NJLA, we move forward. I hope all of our members take the time to explore and connect within the NJLA community. The voice we're missing might be yours.

Yours humbly,  
Past NJLA President, Jessica Trujillo

**Jessica Trujillo is the outgoing NJLA president and enrolled in a Ph.D. program at Emporia State University's School of Library and Information Management because why wait for life to impose changes on you when you can do it yourself? Her research focus is on EDI, leadership, and education.**



# INCOMING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by **Carina Gonzalez**

Thank you for electing me to be your 2023–2024 President of the NJLA. I cherish your trust and I will do my best to represent you and continue guiding NJLA forward.

In order to maximize our potential, Jeff Cupo, NJLA President-elect, and I will be working very closely to achieve our shared goals. We have decided to combine our presidential years and themes. The overarching NJLA theme for 2023–2025 will be Breaking Barriers. 2023–2024 will focus on Inclusive Collaboration and 2024–2025 will prioritize Simple Kindness.

My wish for NJLA is greater collaboration. I have had the opportunity to serve in librarianship as a school library media specialist, academic librarian, and a public librarian. This has allowed me to see the similarities that exist across the spectrum of our field, the strengths, and the challenges. In every branch of librarianship, I have seen such passion and dedication for libraries and the people who use our spaces and resources.

We need to talk to each other more across job descriptions, classes, races, orientations, and genders. And in turn, we need to actively listen and continue to put our policies where our platitudes are. There is so much we can learn from each other and I know we can make lasting and positive change for our association and the communities we serve through the power of our shared stories.

“Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope.” – Maya Angelou

**Carina Gonzalez (she/her) is a Senior Adult Services Librarian with the Piscataway Public Library and the incoming NJLA President. Her passions in librarianship include social justice, access, and intellectual freedom. She began her career as an Elementary School Library Media Specialist followed by being a High School Library Media Specialist. She then went on to become an Outreach Academic Librarian before finally finding her home in public librarianship. Carina is an accomplished writer, professional web designer, and entrepreneur. You can learn more about her at [www.librariancarina.com](http://www.librariancarina.com).**

# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

by **BRETT BONFIELD**

Can we be honest with ourselves when we study history, sociology, gender, and sex?

Can we embrace facts, truth, and the range of knowledge that encompasses literacy?

Is equity more important to us than comfort?

When I look at NJLA's Core Values, which echo and complement ALA's Core Values, I answer each of these questions in the affirmative. At its June 20 meeting, NJLA's Executive Board added sustainability to its list of core values. As Rebekkah Smith Aldritch reminded us during her opening keynote at this year's Annual Conference, sustainability is difficult. It requires us to be accountable to each other and to change our behaviors. We need to accept individual discomfort to create the systematic changes necessary to heal our world.

For many of us, fighting the urge to censor requires similar decisions and behaviors. For others, resisting censorship is what takes us out of our comfort zone. Here in New Jersey, we have faced multiple attempts at censorship in the past few months. At the time of this writing, we are trying to persuade the Sparta Board of Education not to institute de facto censorship in its collection development policy. We are also working with Senator Andrew Zwicker on legislation that would prevent these kinds of censorious actions by library and school boards in New Jersey. Along with our partners, this is one of the ways NJLA helps our state measure up to its commitment to honesty, literacy, and equity. We need your help.

On a more positive note, please join me in thanking Kate-Lynn Brown for her service as NJLA Newsletter Editor. If you are one of NJLA's hundreds of newer members who may be reading this publication for the first time, please take a few minutes to review the last few issues. They are a pleasure to read. I hope you will also join me in welcoming Kate-Lynn's successor, Erica Deb, who has agreed to share her time and considerable talent with us. NJLA is fortunate to have brilliant, generous volunteers on this committee, and across our committees, sections, task forces, and on our executive board.

**Brett Bonfield is NJLA Executive Director as of March 20, 2023. He has worked in libraries since 2006, including 11 years as the director of two public libraries in NJ. Most recently, Brett served as the Chief Operating Officer at the Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library. Brett has held leadership positions in nonprofits and library organizations including NJLA, the American Library Association, Public Library Association, Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati, and OhioNet. Brett received his MS in Library and Information Science from Drexel University.**





## NJLA Newsletter

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### **Executive Director**

Brett Bonfield

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## **OTHER NJLA NEWSLETTERS:**

**Use these links to access  
the latest newsletters from  
other NJLA Sections.**

[Professional Development](#)

[College and University](#)

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## **INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING?**

For all inquires, please contact

**[newsletter\\_editorenjlamembers.org](mailto:newsletter_editorenjlamembers.org)**

Proposals for the Fall 2023 issue are due on August 28th.

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# CONFERENCE BEHIND THE SCENES

by **MARYJEAN RIOU**

So you just got home from NJLA's Annual Conference and you're thinking, "I had a great time! I wonder how that all comes together?"

If you've never had the opportunity to volunteer on the conference subcommittee, the annual conference may seem like an enigma to you. It happens every year, with numerous panel sessions, featuring speakers from all over the state and beyond talking on infinite topics relating to our professional lives. But how do we go from program proposals to three days of valuable professional development and fun?

The conference subcommittee consists of three to four co-chairs, vice co-chairs, and regular committee members. Working together, this group collaborates with other NJLA sections and committees to craft a robust and exciting schedule for attendees to enjoy. Starting with reviewing feedback from the previous year, the committee meets to discuss successes and needed improvements from the last conference. Around the same time, co-chairs begin to meet with committees and sections to discuss session proposals, provide guidance on feedback about last year's sessions, and tips for how to craft a successful proposal. Once the proposals are all received, the committee meets to vote on proposals and begin building the schedule. At this time, if the committee feels like some aspects of a certain proposal could be tweaked or adjusted to fit a certain time slot, co-chairs will reach out to program planners to work with them more closely. Once the schedule is set, the co-chairs and vice co-chairs get to work on meeting with Harrah's Convention Center and setting up the exhibit hall.

The exhibit hall is a highlight for many attendees. The exhibit team works diligently to build relationships with vendors and sponsors to create an enriching experience in the hall. Exhibitors are a monumental asset to our conference, and are eager to support NJLA through program sponsorships and inviting conversations with attendees. While the exhibit team is hard at work, co-chairs work with Harrah's, NJLA, and the conference subcommittee to arrange the room setups, luncheon menus, and accommodations for attendees. At this



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phase in the planning, co-chairs work very closely with Harrah’s representatives to solve any technology issues from the previous year and add enhancements to the upcoming conference. Simultaneously, working groups within the subcommittee tackle different aspects of the conference, such as: attendee registration, exhibitors, and exhibit hall, advertising, and technology.

A clear takeaway is the many moving parts and collaborative steps it takes to organize and implement a successful conference. The conference subcommittee, along with the NJLA President, Executive Director, and office staff, work diligently towards this goal and hope that the effort put in is clear to attendees.

**Maryjean Riou is a teen librarian at the Hunterdon County Library. She has been working in NJ libraries for over ten years and have served on various NJLA committees and sections. This will be her second year as co-chair of the conference subcommittee.**

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# LIBRARYLINKNJ TECHFEST 2023

## A Unique Learning Experience for Library Workers Across the State

contributed by LibraryLinkNJ Tech Advisory Group (L-TAG)

LibraryLinkNJ Tech Advisory Group (L-TAG) is thrilled to share the resounding success of our recent TechFest events, which took place on April 19th at Morris County Library and April 27th at Cherry Hill Public Library, co-sponsored by LibraryLinkNJ and NJLA with special support from the NJLA Emerging Technology Section. TechFest brought together library workers, both newcomers and seasoned tech enthusiasts, for a full day of networking opportunities, informative presentations, and engaging discussions to stay up to date with the latest technology trends.



The highlight of each event was the captivating series of eight tech Table Talks, where participants had the chance to explore various aspects of technology and their impact on libraries. These Table Talks with hands-on demonstrations, provided practical insights and innovative ideas to enhance library services and engage customers in new and exciting ways. These interactive sessions covered a diverse range of topics, including:

- Adding Virtual Reality to Programming and Pedagogy hosted by Sharon Whitfield & Heather Dalal, Rider University- Moore Library
- Creating and Maintaining an Engaging Makerspace hosted by Tara Cooper-Weiss, George Washington Middle School Library
- Digital Cards and Database Cards hosted by Tricina Strong-Beebe, Hainesport Elementary School Library & Diana Price, Burlington County Library System (BCLS)
- Digital Citizenship: Copyright & Creativity Resources hosted by Kodi Sohl, Toms River High School North
- Help Desk Tickets for Patrons & Staff hosted by Jonathan Upton, LMxAC
- Introduction to Pixton: An Online Comic/Graphic Novel Creator hosted by John Gleason, Springville Elementary School Library
- Museum Key: Sharing/Lending Technology hosted by Corinne Bowen, Madison Public Library
- On the Road to Digital Literacy – BCLS Mobile Learning Lab hosted by Cat Janis Wishnefsky, Burlington County Library System
- Padlet: Your Swiss Army Knife for Curation, PD, and Engagement hosted by Skye Silverstein, Rosa International Middle School/NJASL

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- Streamline Efficiency with Google Tables hosted by Crystal Hooper, Somerset County Library System
- Technology for Libraries on a Budget: Coding robots for all ages hosted by Mary Fran Daley, Bernardsville Public Library
- Tech Tools for Marketing hosted by Carina Gonzalez, Piscataway Public Library
- Using the Gimet App to Track Service Statistics hosted by Rick Heming, Matawan-Aberdeen Public Library



One of the focal points of TechFest was the keynote presentations that shed light on the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in libraries - “Empowering School Libraries with AI: Benefits, Challenges, and Best Practices” by Elissa Malespina, Media Specialist Librarian at Union High School and “Libraries & AI” by Jim Craner, Library Technologist with

The Galecia Group. These renowned experts in the field delved into the transformative potential of AI technologies, discussing how they can enhance library services and improve efficiency. The thought-provoking discussions sparked new ideas and encouraged participants to explore the possibilities of integrating AI into their own libraries. The attendees provided feedback requesting more programs on this topic, and we will respond to their requests.

TechFest was not just about the presentations; it also provided an invaluable platform for attendees to connect and network with like-minded individuals. The event created a vibrant and collaborative atmosphere, fostering meaningful conversations and the exchange of ideas. None of this would have been possible without the dedication and generosity of the Table Talk presenters who selflessly contributed their time and expertise to make TechFest an invaluable experience. We are immensely grateful to the enthusiastic audience who attended TechFest, bringing their energy and passion to the event. Their active participation and engagement created a dynamic atmosphere, making TechFest a resounding success. We also express our sincere appreciation to Morris County Library and Cherry Hill Public Library for graciously hosting our TechFest events.



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Last but certainly not least, we would like to thank our planning team of L-TAG and LibraryLinkNJ staff for their hard work and support to host the events.

We are excited about the future of technology in libraries and look forward to hosting more innovative events that empower library workers and propel our field into the future. Stay tuned for updates on future events from LibraryLinkNJ!

The event materials, including handouts, main presentation recordings, and more photos, are available at: [librarylinknj.org/techfest2023](https://librarylinknj.org/techfest2023)

**For more information about LibraryLinkNJ Tech Advisory Group (L-TAG), visit [here](#).**

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## SECTION SPOTLIGHT: CONFERENCE FUTURE

by **ADRIANA MAMAY**

You probably know that NJLA has a Conference Committee, but did you know there is also a Conference Futures Committee? The NJLA Conference Futures Committee is composed of past NJLA Conference chairs, a co-chair of the Finance Committee, and NJLA's Executive Director, and is charged with thinking about the future of our association's annual conference. The NJLA Conference Futures Committee is so dedicated to their charge that three days after returning home from Atlantic City this past June, they convened to debrief with the conference still fresh in their minds.

The committee meets quarterly and discusses all conference possibilities, from schedule design to session types, future dates, as well as potential locations after 2025. The next 3 NJLA conferences are contracted to take place at Harrah's in Atlantic City, and the NJLA Conference Futures Committee is tasked with locating the best venue for our conference for 2026 and beyond, whether at Harrah's or elsewhere.

The committee recognizes that many members would like us to consider other location options, and takes those concerns very seriously! The needs of our organization and

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conference are complex, and venue decisions are not made lightly. To ensure that NJLA is contracting with the best venue for our needs, it works with a meeting management consultant who is familiar with our organization's unique requirements and the New Jersey conference venue landscape. Considerations for future conferences include:

- Date availability: Are dates available that do not conflict with other professional events (like ALA, PLA, ACRL) or religious and federal holidays?
- Does the venue have substantial parking space to accommodate attendees, vendors, and guest speakers?
- Are there reasonable options for overnight accommodations, preferably on-site, that are not cost prohibitive?
- Is there enough space to accommodate at least 700 attendees, allow for an exhibit hall with 70-90 vendors, luncheons, keynotes that draw larger audiences, the NJLA Store, and at least 8 smaller breakout program rooms – simultaneously?
- Does the venue have an affordable price tag for our non-profit association?

The members of the NJLA Conference Futures Committee are committed to ensuring the best possible conference experience for our growing membership. If you have any questions or concerns, reach out to Adriana Mamay at [AMamay@middlesexcc.edu](mailto:AMamay@middlesexcc.edu).



NJLA CUS/ACRL-NJ Luncheon  
at the 2023 NJLA Conference

**Adriana Mamay is the Chair of the NJLA Conference Future Planning Committee and has been a Reference and Instruction Librarian at Middlesex College since 2011. She is an active member of NJLA and currently serves on the Executive Board of NJLA and the Executive Board of NJLA CUS/ACRL-NJ, as well as other NJLA committees.**

# MAKERS DAY 2023 RECAP

by **EMILY WITKOWSKI**

New Jersey Makers Day (NJMD) celebrated its ninth year in March 2023! As schools and libraries continue to rebound in their programming efforts, we saw a 50% increase in NJMD program attendance from 2022 to 2023, with 233 registered sites boasting nearly 53,000 attendees, averaging 228 attendees per site. We saw a variety of on-site, in-person activities as well as take and make kits and longer term, collaborative projects that took place throughout the month of March.

For the first time in New Jersey Makers Day history, we had a registered site in each of New Jersey's 21 counties! In addition to the successful programs that were hosted throughout the state, we awarded a total of \$3,933.71 to nine libraries through our mini-grant program. Our mini-grant program has become a staple of NJMD, and allows us to support libraries that apply with inspiring and novel ideas to expand their New Jersey Makers Day programming.

These mini-grant projects ranged from a DIY mini golf course built by teen volunteers, to a day full of activities focused on STEAM for Educational Justice, to a community garden project focused on accessibility, and so much more!



NJMD at Hunterdon Central  
Regional High School



NJMD at Warren County Library

A big thank you to our sponsors, including the New Jersey STEM Pathways Network, Investors Bank, PhRMA, PSEG Foundation, LibraryLinkNJ, and Citizens Bank, without whom our mini-grant program and professional development opportunities would not be possible.

Last but not least, don't forget to save the dates for our 10th anniversary of New Jersey Makers Day: March 15-17, 2024! Registration and mini-grant applications will open September 18, 2023.

**Emily Witkowski is the Head of Teen Services at the Hunterdon County Library and the current chair of New Jersey Makers Day's Site Support Committee.**

# CSLP: COLLABORATIVE SUMMER LIBRARY PROGRAM

by SHARON RAWLINS

Summer is one of the busiest times of the year for any public library because it's summer reading/learning time! Large and small libraries alike offer patrons of all ages the opportunity to participate in summer programs that include free programming and reading for fun. To save you the time of having to create a manual and all the activities yourselves, the NJ State Library pays for all NJ public libraries' membership in the national Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP).

CSLP provides an inclusive literacy-based program for all ages that offers a unified theme, sharable resources, and professional support for its members. Library staff can access an online manual that contains activity and programming ideas for library patrons of all ages - from early readers (including English, Spanish and bilingual resources) to adults. Nationally renowned illustrators create the artwork, like Frank Morrison for 2023's "All Together Now" slogan promoting the kindness/friendship/unity theme.

This year's summer reading champion is Jenna Bush Hager from NBC's Today Show's Read with Jenna. Check out Jenna's kids and teens booklist, [Read with Jenna Summer Reading List](#) for great book suggestions for youth. CSLP also presents a virtual Summer Symposium each December, with keynote speakers like ALA Executive Director Tracie D. Hall.

CSLP is always looking for suggestions from library staff to help create the content for the manual, or volunteers to join CSLP's many virtual committees. Sign up for the CSLP online [newsletter](#) or check out CSLP's [website](#) to see how you can get more involved!



**collaborative**  
summer library program

**Sharon Rawlins is the Youth Services Specialist at the NJ State Library, Statewide Summer Reading Coordinator, and CSLP State Representative.**

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## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: NJLA INTERNS!

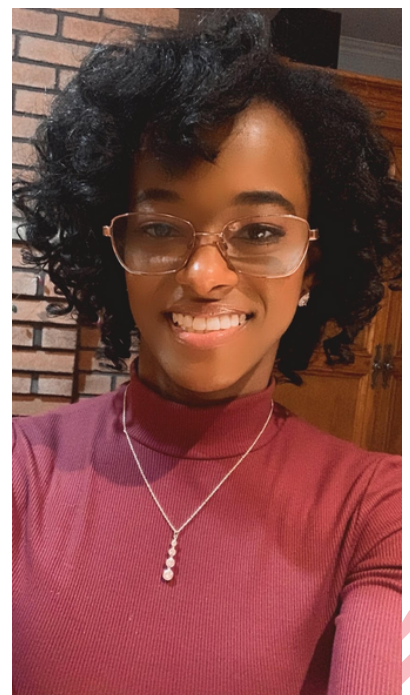


My name is Kate Mathe and I am a Rutgers University MLIS student graduating in May 2024 with a concentration in school librarianship. I currently work at the Mendham Borough Public Library and am learning a great deal about all aspects of the library. I am still deciding if I will stay in public libraries after graduation or look to work in a high school setting. I am a mom to two wonderful little boys, Everett (5) and Weston (3), and am also a fitness junkie, a fine food lover, and my 'to-read' pile is growing taller by the day. I served my internship on the Professional Development Committee and learned so much more than I could have hoped. I was lucky enough to be thrown into the action from the start, working with fellow committee

members to create surveys while learning the ins and outs of professional development. I am excited to continue contributing to this committee in the Fall as well as lend a hand to the Member Communication Subcommittee. Feel free to reach out to me at [kdonnell@rutgers.edu](mailto:kdonnell@rutgers.edu).

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My name is Danielle Pitter, and I am a first-year graduate student at Rutgers University's Master of Information program, studying Library and Information Science. I am also a 2022 ALA Spectrum Scholar, and the NJLA intern for the Library Workers of Color Section. The section focuses on the recruitment, advancement, and retention of librarians and library workers of color. My latest project for the section utilizes my writing and graphic design skills to create a poster for the NJLA Conference to share who we are and inspire people to join the section. I have been very fortunate to have been part of this section as a member for the past two years, and they are very supportive and dedicated to the library field. I'm excited to encourage BIPOC librarians with our section's activities. Feel free to reach out at [danielle.pitter@yahoo.com](mailto:danielle.pitter@yahoo.com).



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## PEOPLE AND PLACES

**John McBride**, 25 year retired reference librarian at the Metuchen Library and Westminster Choir College Library died on April 14, 2023. Memorial donations can be made in his memory to the Metuchen Library.

**Mike Bobish** became the new Director of the Highland Park Public Library, effective May 8, 2023.

**Maureen Langley** became the new Assistant Director of Public Services at the Plainsboro Public Library in April 2023.

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Have a job change, retirement, or announcement to share?

Email [newsletter\\_editor@njlamembers.org](mailto:newsletter_editor@njlamembers.org)  
to have it included in our next issue!