

Association of Connecticut Library Boards
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Association of Connecticut Library Boards Newsletter

The Association of Connecticut Library Boards (ACLB) is Connecticut's library trustee organization representing public library boards throughout the state.

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Providing Digital Access for All Individuals and Communities

As the Covid-19 pandemic drove us into our homes and onto our computers for activities and services that we previously enjoyed in person, segments of the population found themselves on the other side of the “digital divide,” without access to needed resources because they lacked online connectivity. The Connecticut State Library is addressing this problem through the Advisory Council for Library Planning and Development (ACLPD)’s Digital Inclusion Task Force.

The State Library is using \$500,000 of the \$2,775,000 it was awarded from the American Rescue Plan Act by the Institute of Museum and Library Services to pilot a digital navigation project in partnership with the state’s libraries. The aim is to enable “digital inclusion” whereby individuals have access to resources in areas including healthcare, employment, education, and many others.

Digital inclusion refers to the activities necessary to ensure that everyone has access to and use of information and communication technologies. It includes five components:

- Affordable, robust broadband internet service
- Internet-enabled devices meeting the user’s needs
- Access to digital literacy training
- Quality technical support
- Applications and online content to enable self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration.

One of the resources the State Library has cited as an aid in this project is the Digital Navigator Model web site at:

<https://www.digitalinclusion.org/digital-navigator-model/>.

The site provides background information on digital inclusion and notes that most people have had to navigate home access to internet, devices and technical support on their own, which results in some being unable to participate fully in our society, democracy and economy.

The Digital Navigator Model is provided by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, a community of digital inclusion practitioners and advocates who speak with a unified voice to promote home broadband access, public broadband access, personal devices and local technology training and support programs.

This spring the Alliance sponsored a weekly Net Inclusion webinar series covering topics such as “The Structural Racism behind Digital Inequity,” “Weaving Digital Inclusion into Existing Community and Government Programs” and “Partnering with Healthcare Organizations to Increase Digital Equity.”

While the digital divide has been with us for some time, the Covid-19 pandemic has driven home the need to address it yet more proactively. The ACLPD’s newly formed Digital Inclusion Task Force is doing just that for the people of Connecticut.



Association of CT Library Boards

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Our Mission

- Enable member library boards to improve library services in their communities.
- Broaden trustee knowledge of current developments in the library field.
- Improve communication and cooperation among library boards.

What We Do

- Provide workshops geared to the needs of trustees across the state.
- Maintain strong liaison with library-related organizations on the state and national levels.
- Provide consultant help to library boards and individual trustees

Executive Committee

President: Gail B. Richmond
Vice President: Carol Mikulski
Secretary: Wendy Berlind
Treasurer: Susan Phillips
Membership: Susan Phillips

Newsletter: Denise J. Stankovics
Jan Glover: Resource Coordinator
Dawn LaValle, CT State Library, *ex officio*
Barbara Leonard, Friends of CT Libraries (FOCL), *ex officio*

Overseeing Libraries is Similar To Home Ownership

By State Librarian Deborah Schander

In addition to recently becoming the new State Librarian, I have also become a first-time homeowner. My house was built in the 1950s, so it's had several previous owners, each of whom made a lot of decisions about home repair and maintenance. One owner, for example, was extremely diligent about upgrading the infrastructure of the house; the roof is in good repair, and the heating and cooling systems impress every inspector and worker who visits. Someone also put significant thought into landscaping, and it's been delightful to see which flowers and plants are appearing and disappearing as the seasons progress. But it's also clear that the yard had been neglected in recent years, and saplings, weeds, and "volunteers" (plants that take root themselves, rather than being deliberately planted) are being cleared away so that former effort can shine again.

As I have begun to settle into my home and piece together more of its history, I realized that buying a new home is a lot like starting a new job in library administration: you are building upon the successes and challenges of your predecessors. Decisions have been made about infrastructure and the budget, about staffing and partnerships. Some of those decisions you agree with. Some you don't. Others were great choices at the time but might need updating. And it's your responsibility to navigate your library through that landscape: what stays, what goes, and what do you tackle next?

And Connecticut is not just one library—it's a whole neighborhood of libraries, each with its own history. What's needed at one library may not be what's needed at another; some libraries seem as if they're always trying new things, and others feel as if they're always catching up. That's okay. We support each other, respect our differences, and remember what's important: that each library is working toward providing the best library services it can.

As library board members, you each have a role in this process and conversation, too. Some of you have been doing this a long time, and it's old hat. Others of you are new and wondering exactly what your place in the organizational structure is. Let me encourage each of you to think of it like home ownership. Recognize and celebrate your library's past successes. Listen when your director expresses concerns and proposes solutions. Know when outside factors might derail your efforts—and when they can bolster your plans. And remember: everything we do is an ever-evolving process.

Thanks so much for letting me join the neighborhood! I look forward to working with you.

Deborah Schander the 11th Connecticut State Librarian, assumed that post in January. She recently served as the Executive Director of the Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Law Library Center for Information & Technology and Associate Professor of Law at the Seton Hall Law School. Previously she was employed at Vanderbilt University's Alyne Queener Massey Law Library in Nashville, Tenn., and at Georgia State University College of Law in Atlanta, Ga.

Have you visited our web site lately?

<https://aclb.org>

The Association of Connecticut Library Boards web site contains a wealth of information for library board members. From the Home page you can access:

**ACLB Public Library Trustee Handbook
Membership information**

Advocacy resources

Links to sites on a variety of subjects

Previously published newsletters

A new addition to the Resources link is our recently developed **form for evaluating library directors**.

Libraries Work to Prepare for Whatever the Future Brings

One of the lessons learned by libraries from the Covid-19 pandemic experience was that they were not necessarily geared up to respond as well as they should to the needs of the communities that they serve with appropriate programs, services and resources. To be better prepared in the future for whatever emergencies arise, the Resource Sharing Committee of the State Library's Advisory Council for Library Planning and Development (ACLPD) is implementing strategic foresight techniques to anticipate and respond to impending social, technological, environmental, economic, political and consumption trends.

As a first step in this effort, this spring the State Library's Division of Library Development held a series of workshops titled "Lead Your Library: The Importance of Foresight and Vision to Library Success." Led by interim State Librarian Maureen Sullivan, the sessions provided library directors with an understanding of the state's vision for resource sharing and prepared them for the pilot work to be done by their libraries.

The anticipated outcomes of the workshops included understanding the importance of strategic foresight and vision to the future of libraries and their effective leadership; learning and putting into practice critical leadership behaviors for involving library staff in the development of a compelling vision for their library; having more confidence in participants' ability to lead transformative change; and getting a good start on planning and developing a process for their libraries' future vision.

Over the summer a "Lead Your Library" pilot program will include all types of libraries—public, special, academic, school, and those serving people with disabilities. Participants will plan and develop a process to form a collaborative future vision for their libraries.

Orientation to the pilot will focus on the state's vision for resource sharing with best practices, strategies and tactical actions; strategic foresight scenarios regarding decisions libraries make today that will affect their ability

for future planning; staff training; goals; and an evaluation instrument.

The state's resource sharing philosophy has as a goal that "Connecticut's libraries willingly cooperate and collaborate with each other and affiliated organizations to provide maximum access to materials, services and expertise for the mutual benefit of all."

Earlier programs on resource sharing included the 2020 series, "The Future is Shared: Libraries Sharing Resources, Three Possibilities for 2030," led by Maureen Sullivan. Teams of Connecticut librarians presented different scenarios of the future showing how they envision libraries and resource sharing based on community needs 10 years from now. The scenario planning tool provided an ethnographic analysis or holistic scan of various scenario possibilities by highlighting potential partnerships, services, disruptions and opportunities to begin working for the best outcome.

While planning for our libraries' future has always been an important consideration, crises like the Covid-19 pandemic serve as a reminder that the unexpected can occur at any time and we need to be ready to respond as quickly as possible to the best of our ability. Efforts like strategic foresight planning will help ensure that our libraries are prepared for the challenges of the future.

CLA Fund Drive to Support Libraries

Partnered with EveryLibrary, a national organization (EveryLibrary.org) that helps libraries by ensuring stable funding and access, the Connecticut Library Association has reached its \$5,000 fund-raising goal. Funding from the campaign will support library staff who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to offer critical services to the state's communities.

CLA (<https://ctllibraryassociation.org>) is a professional organization for librarians, staff, Friends and trustees working together to improve library service in the state, advance the interests of librarianship, and increase public awareness of libraries and services.