

BACKGROUND

Libraries throughout Michigan are centers for learning and self-discovery, providing free and open access to information to all residents. Libraries are simultaneously community centers, tourist destinations, places to read, places to gather and socialize, places to study, and places to learn – cultural institutions in the heart of every community, and on every campus, throughout Michigan.

With a goal to help public, academic, cooperatives, school and special libraries and library professionals succeed, the Michigan Library Association (MLA) is recognized statewide and nationally as the leading statewide assembly with a 128-year record of quality services and programs focused on ensuring the health and vitality of these key cultural institutions. We serve as a forum for collaboration, cooperation, and partnerships, cultivating cutting-edge ideas and awareness of best practices in an open and supportive culture.

Since 1891, MLA has been a vibrant and dynamic service organization with a diverse membership of more than 325 libraries and 1400 library professionals in rural, suburban and urban areas. Although some services are exclusive to members, MLA's oversight of professional development, education and advocacy services broadly assists residents, municipal leadership, business leaders and visitors; all who are invested in building healthy and dynamic communities in all 83 Michigan counties.

Uniquely positioned to be an “umbrella” service and advocacy organization, we support the growth and professional development of library personnel; provide consulting and assistance; and advocate to our local and state legislators about the value of libraries.

Headquartered in Lansing, the MLA staff is led by an executive director with four additional full-time and one part-time positions. MLA's 15-member Board of Directors is comprised of a geographically diverse group of library professionals who oversee strategic planning and policymaking.

As a service and advocacy organization, we derive and define the quality of our programs and services by a) meeting specific member and community needs; b) designing systems to meet those needs; and c) developing measurement systems to evaluate quality. The board and staff pride themselves in gaining diverse member and community feedback through an inclusive planning process. A new strategic plan developed in 2020 will guide and bring clarity to the quality of the programming and services – ultimately playing a key role in assessing success and impact – allowing learning experiences, assistance, educational sessions and community impact to be rich and complex.

Additionally, we form strong inclusive work groups and standing committees representing diverse community partners who guide and contribute their expertise to a collective vision. We mold and shape their ideas, so the quality of the final product and/or service incorporates many perspectives and matches our constituent's needs.

MLA plays an important role in supporting the work of librarians and other personnel in developing the sector's cohesion and ability to meet its collective needs. Through our research and analysis of survey findings over the past five years, we've documented through the voices of our members a significant increase in activity, better-managed libraries and impactful advocacy results due in large part to the services we provide.

We are deeply committed to the statewide agenda to leverage the library profession in Michigan to spur economic growth and build community prosperity. By continuing our work in education, advocacy and direct assistance in rural, suburban and urban areas, we will continue to build services around the special and unique needs of all libraries in every region of our state.

OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW OF PLANNING

With the hiring of a new Executive Director in June 2019, the Board of Directors began the process to develop a new, three-year strategic plan for the Michigan Library Association. The desired goal of the planning process is to clarify and guide MLA over the course of the next three years in how best to utilize our time and resources in advancing the library community and meeting the future needs of all of our key stakeholders. From June 2019 through March 2020, the following input was collected:

- Mission and vision development sessions were held at the June 2019 board retreat and the September 2019 board meeting for MLA board and were led by NEW Center in Ann Arbor. Discussion took place around mission and vision development and the challenges facing the library community and the trends we must be aware of in advancing the library profession.
- A survey of MLA members was sent out in September 2019 with 480 responses within a 10-day period which equates to an 18% response rate.
- NEW conducted five strategic interviews with leaders of key library service organizations including the Library of Michigan, Michigan Academic Library Association (MiALA), Michigan Association of Media in Education (MAME), Michigan Cooperative Directors, and Midwest Collaborative Library Services (MCLS).
- Between June 2019 and November 2019, the MLA Executive Director arranged 12 site visits with board members to ask them individually their feelings of success and concern. In addition, 15 additional site visits/listening tours were held at libraries throughout the state to gather input.
- A small sub-committee of the board was selected to help the MLA Executive Director analyze the findings and help guide the writing of the plan from December 2019 to March 2020.
- Adoption of the revised strategic plan by the MLA Board of Directors took place at the March 13, 2020 board meeting and affirms the intent and direction articulated by the mission, vision and goals.
- The board also affirmed that this is a “rolling” plan and will be assessed and updated annually to make sure we remain relevant, continue to address the needs of the field, and address achievements of MLA.
- This strategic plan is not intended to be a “to-do” list nor is it a comprehensive description of the MLA portfolio of activities. This is a directional document and statement of priorities for the near future.
- Accomplishing these initiatives will move the association closer to its envisioned future. The goals are deliberately broad to enable our association the flexibility to be nimble in response to rapid change and new opportunities that support the foundational goals.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

We can't do this alone. It is only by shared influence and learning that the Michigan Library Association can affect greater change and build the value and importance of all libraries through the entire state. While we work with many decision makers and influencers, our primary stakeholders include:

- Library staff working at public libraries, school and academic libraries, special collections, consortia and co-ops.
- Governing bodies at public, school and academic institutions.
- Students at University of Michigan and Wayne State University School of Information Science.
- Retired library staff and trustees.
- Leaders of other statewide and national library service organizations.
- Private sector leaders from businesses, vendors and foundations.
- Public sector leaders/elected officials including mayors, city/county managers, city/county council members, commission members, legislators, and others at the federal, state and local levels.
- Influencers including philanthropists and patrons, civic leaders, and Friends of Library volunteers.

MLA MISSION & VISION

VISION

The Michigan Library Association is an indispensable resource and valued leader, partner and advocate for Michigan libraries.

MISSION

The Michigan Library Association leads the advancement of all Michigan libraries through advocacy, education and engagement.

BELIEFS & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We believe that all libraries are central to the intellectual and creative lives of the people they serve.
- We believe that across all library types, we share a deep commitment to the enduring value and role of libraries in our communities, in our schools and campuses, and within our businesses.
- We believe in equal and free access to information and knowledge, while protecting an individual's right to privacy.
- We believe in the spirit of collaboration and building strong alliances, and that greater impact is made when we work together toward a common goal.
- We believe in life-long learning – being well-informed and well-trained to address and cultivate cutting-edge ideas.
- We believe in a member focused environment – where members opinions are gathered, vetted and analyzed to establish the direction and priorities of MLA.
- We believe that by investing in equity, diversity and inclusion that the library community will be energized and empowered to embrace best practices in the 21st century.

TAGLINE: “STRONGER TOGETHER”

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Strategic planning and setting priorities assume that we will be quick to respond to a dynamic, changing environment, which may require changes in the future. Following an internal assessment of our programming and resources, as well as an assessment of community and stakeholder needs, we determined the following strategic priorities:

1. **EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION:** Advance, advocate and support a more diverse and inclusive environment within MLA amongst our board, staff, volunteers, and members. We are committed to ensuring that all individuals who apply to, work with or otherwise interact with us are treated with fairness and respect and accorded equal opportunity. We must be vigilant that our programs and services are inclusive of all library personnel in all cities, townships, and villages, in rural, suburban and urban areas in both the Upper and Lower Peninsula.
2. **COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS:** We share a deep commitment to strengthening all libraries in the ecosystem – libraries serving residents from cradle to grave – and valuing/promoting how they intersect and contribute to each other's success. It is our work to build bridges and advance critical conversations with other service partners including the Library of Michigan, MAME, MiALA, FOML, MCLS, regional Co-Ops and consortia, and other cultural organizations. We recognize that by working collaboratively amongst ourselves, and in partnership with those outside, we will be successful in creating a strong, united library field.
3. **TRANSPARENCY:** As a membership organization, the work of MLA should be transparent, fair and ethical. When we are transparent, we invite trust by revealing we have nothing to hide and establish ourselves as an honest, credible and valued organization in the eyes of our members.
4. **ENGAGEMENT AND NEW IDEAS:** We are ready to let go of outdated or restrictive practices, we are open to innovation from inside and outside of the library field, and ready to engage those newer to the field who are shaping it for the future.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2022

GOAL I: ADVOCACY

MLA will form a collaborative statewide advocacy network, amplifying the importance and value of libraries throughout Michigan.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Position MLA as the collective voice for all Michigan libraries and the authoritative source of information on issues impacting Michigan's libraries.

- Proactively identify and analyze current issues and emerging trends that impact libraries.
 - Actively engage more members, library personnel and supporters to serve as advocates at the local, state and national levels to increase elected official's knowledge of and support for library services.
 - Develop training and messaging to increase engagement.
 - Effectively use technology to communicate quickly and efficiently issues of concern/importance to the library field.
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OBJECTIVE 2:

Advocate the interests of Michigan's libraries, with a focused commitment to ensure state and federal funding.

- Promote the interests of Michigan's libraries and the essential services they provide to citizens throughout the state.
 - Protect and increase state funding during state budget deliberations.
 - Ensure that the Governor and legislature understand the value of libraries, the role they play in their local communities, and the importance of funding.
 - Research alternative funding options for Michigan libraries.
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OBJECTIVE 3:

MLA will communicate the value and importance of libraries to the general public.

- Increase public awareness of the value of libraries and position them as an essential public service.
- Establish a sustained and meaningful discourse on the value of libraries to Michigan residents – through public relations campaigns and other marketing initiatives – resulting in stakeholder ambassadorship and engagement.
- Increase outreach to the main-stream media about the importance and value of libraries and achievements through op-eds, letters to the editor, articles, etc.
- MLA will celebrate and share stories of success and challenge. Debunk the myth that libraries are not relevant in the 21st Century.
- Explore ways to produce a statewide event for residents to come together to appreciate what libraries offer (like the National Book Festival in Washington DC – sharing a love of books and reading).

GOAL II: KNOWLEDGE

MLA will inspire and inform all library personnel through high-quality professional development, educational workshops and leadership opportunities.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Develop high-quality, unsurpassed education and training for library administrators, staff members, trustees, and friends.

- Deliver knowledge-based information that is essential to the effective governance, administration, and operations for Michigan's libraries.
 - Identify and support the evolving skill sets needed to operate and lead dynamic and vibrant library services.
 - Create and deliver a comprehensive array of value-added, high quality educational content and programs that address members' needs, develop outstanding library staffs, and enhance the services of their libraries.
 - Utilize technology and alternative formats to deliver education content – webinars, online, self-guided, webcasts, etc. Continually monitor how other associations are using technology in their professional development activities.
 - Create cost-effective educational programming that meets the needs of Michigan's libraries and respects their geographic location, size, and limited economic resources.
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OBJECTIVE 2:

Position the Annual Conference as the premier statewide education event that meets the needs of all library types.

- Create and deliver a comprehensive array of value-added, high quality educational content and programs that address and highlight all members' needs.
 - Create and promote content development that aligns to the strategic priorities of MLA.
 - Explore opportunities to partner with other statewide library service organizations to not duplicate effort.
 - Explore ways to promote environmental sustainability concepts throughout the Annual Conference.
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OBJECTIVE 3:

Position MLA as a clearinghouse for assistance, consulting, mentorship and resources to library personnel on challenges faced in their daily work.

- Develop and produce a comprehensive multi-year salary and benefits survey.
- Utilize the MLA website to categorize research and resources for MLA Members.
- Strengthen and continue to identify and engage a network of mentors that can help strengthen the field.
- Create opportunities for informal connections/relationships to flourish – member-to-member.

GOAL III: COMMUNITY

MLA will be a welcoming and inclusive professional community of key stakeholders.

OBJECTIVE 1:

MLA will be a forum for collaboration, cooperation and partnerships.

- Identify, define and prioritize shared opportunities with other library service organizations including Library of Michigan, Regional Co-ops, Consortia, MAME, MiALA and MCLS.
 - Identify, define and prioritize shared opportunities with other statewide and regional professional and cultural service organizations.
 - Work in partnership with faculty at schools of library and information science to advance the profession.
 - Develop a stronger more robust relationship with our national library service organizations including American Library Association (ALA).
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OBJECTIVE 2:

Establish a diversity action plan to increase cross-cultural competencies among MLA staff, directors and members.

- Review the committee and volunteer system for functionality, diversity, inclusivity.
 - Explore best practices from inside and outside of the library community.
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OBJECTIVE 3:

Increase opportunities for networking and informal professional development.

- Create opportunities for informal site visits and listening tours throughout Michigan.
 - Create opportunities for informal gatherings when attending national and regional conferences for Michigan members.
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OBJECTIVE 4:

Establish a MLA Ambassadorship Program.

- Facilitate membership engagement through member-to-member interactions.

GOAL IV: ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

MLA will be an innovative and creative association that maintains the highest professional standards in its internal operations to advance its mission.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Sustain an organizational structure that is flexible and responsive to members' needs, inspires member engagement, and reinforces organizational success.

- Seek and adapt to new trends and models in association and membership organizations. Maintain an MLA organizational structure that supports the mission of the organization while being flexible, sustainable and inclusive.
- Promote organizational and operational decision-making that is data-driven.
- Cultivate leaders within MLA who aspire to guide the organization and actively engage in the important work of their professional association.
- Establish an organizational culture that recognizes and promotes an equitable, diversified and inclusive board and staff.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Sustainability

- Increase opportunities for non-dues revenue, grant funding and legacy gifts.
 - Promote organizational and operational decision-making that is financially sound.
 - Assure that the appropriate resources are in place to retain a competent staff to accomplish organizational goals and objectives.
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OBJECTIVE 3:

Strategic focus on an alliance to create a unique umbrella organization that supports all library types and personnel.

- Explore the possibilities of building a statewide alliance with other library service organizations.
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OBJECTIVE 4:

Increase focus on the use of new technology.

- Effectively use new and unexplored technologies to meet members' needs for fast and efficient access to valuable information and resources.
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OBJECTIVE 5:

Improve image of MLA.

- Re-brand MLA.
 - Support consistency in marketing and communications.
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OBJECTIVE 6:

Staff will be knowledgeable, efficient, professional, friendly and helpful.

- Support and increase staff interactions with the library community.
 - Invest in increased professional development training for MLA staff to strengthen their capacity to meet member and library field needs.
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OBJECTIVE 7:

Demonstrate our commitment to member services, engagement and retention.

- Create multiple opportunities and pathways for member involvement.
- Create an MLA Ambassador program – member to member recruitment.
- Explore and implement ways to increase membership satisfaction to retain and recruit new members.
- Increase membership at all levels.

MLA LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Stephen Bowers, Past-President

Wayne State University Libraries

Julia Eisenstein, President-Elect

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Michigan Library Association

Kelly Richards

Muskegon Area District Library

Randy Riley

Library of Michigan

Cathleen Russ

Troy Public Library

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Kalamazoo Public Library

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Julia Eisenstein | Karen Knox | Deborah E. Mikula | Kristin Shelley | Ryan Wieber

MICHIGAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION STAFF



Deborah E. Mikula
Executive Director



Rachel Ash
Membership &
Communications Director



Lisa Buttegieg
Administrative Assistant



Amber Sheerin
Program & Event Director



Ryan Logan
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