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

**Date** : Thursday, September 7, 2023

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

**Place** : Massachusetts Library System

Northampton, MA

**Board**

**Present** : Debby Conrad, Chair; Vicky Biancolo, Vice Chair; Karen Traub, Secretary; Mary Ann Cluggish

**Board**

**Present** : Barbara Barros; Stacy DeBole; Joyce Linehan; Jessica Vilas Novas

**Zoom**

**Absent** : George Comeau, Esq.

**Staff Present:**

James Lonergan, Director; Celeste Bruno, Communications Director; Jen Inglis, State Aid Coordinator; Rachel Masse, Assistant to the Director; Mary Rose Quinn, Head of State Programs; Lauren Stara, Library Building Specialist; June Thammasnong, Communications Specialist

**Staff Zoom:**

Andrea Bono-Bunker, Library Building Specialist; Kate Butler, Electric Services Specialist; Maura Deedy, Library Advisory Specialist; Tracey Dimant, Head of Operations & Budget; Lyndsay Forbes, Project Manager & Grants Specialist; Uechi Ng, Administrative Assistant; Lillian Sutton, Administrative Assistant

**Observers Present:**

Courtney Andree, Executive Director, Mass Center for the Book; Ryan Donovan, CMLA President, CMLA; Lisa Downing, Past President, WMLA; Jason Homer, Executive Director, Worcester Public Library; Becky Plimpton, Director Sturbridge Library/ CMLA/ MLS; Sarah Sogigian, Executive Director, Massachusetts Library System (MLS)

**Observers Zoom:**

Will Adamczyk, Director, Milton Public Library/ MLA Legislative Committee; Eileen Chandler, Network Administrator, CLAMS; Jessica Chapel, Chief of Digital & Online Services, Boston Public Library; Patty DiTullio, Network Administrator, Merrimack Valley Library Consortium (MVLC); Anna Fahey-Flynn, Central Library Manager, Boston Public Library; Barb Fecteau, Mass School Library Association; Michelle Filleul, MLA President/ Reading Public Library; Debbie Froggatt, Outreach Director, Mass School Library Association; Bill Hoag, MCCLPHEI; Lee Ann Hooley, Talking Book Library/ Worcester Public Library; Sarah Jackson, MBLN; Laurie Lessner, Network Administrator, SAILS Network; Jeanette Lundgren, Network Administrator, C/W MARS; Kathy Lussier, Network Administrator, NOBLE; Krista McLeod, Board Member, Mass Center for the Book; Timothy Rivard, MCCLPHEI; David Slater, Network Administrator, Old Colony Library Network (OCLN)

**Meeting called to order by Chair Conrad**

Chair Conrad called the meeting to order at 10:05 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- Didn’t arrive at time of vote | Commissioner Comeau- Absent | Commissioner Linehan- Present Zoom |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Present | Commissioner Conrad- Present | Commissioner Traub- Present |
| Commissioner Cluggish- Present | Commissioner DeBole- Present Zoom | Commissioner Vilas Novas- Present Zoom |

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 and #14 Adjournment.

Commissioner Cluggish seconded.

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

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Commissioner Barros- Didn’t arrive at time of vote | Commissioner Comeau- Absent | Commissioner Linehan- Yes |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Yes | Commissioner Conrad- Yes | Commissioner Traub- Yes |
| Commissioner Cluggish- Yes | Commissioner DeBole- Yes | Commissioner Vilas Novas- Yes |

**The motion passed.**

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

**AUGUST 3, 2023**

Chair Conrad asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the August 3, 2023 Monthly Meeting.

Commissioner Cluggish moved and Commissioner Biancolo seconded to approve the minutes from the August 3, 2023, Regular Monthly Meeting.

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

**Chair’s Report**

Chair Conrad presented the following report:

Before I begin my report of activities, I would like to say thank you to Deb Abraham for her hard work and dedication to the Board and its priorities. Deb’s term ended earlier this year, but her replacement was just announced. Deb’s tenure as a Commissioner took place during the Covid pandemic, a very difficult time for libraries. She was an active and committed member of the Board as everyone tried to pivot and adjust to the new requirements of the time. I was privileged to serve on the Executive Committee with her for two years. Her insight and experience were always valuable.

Welcome to Barbara Barros, our newest Commissioner. She was just appointed and had a prior commitment that prevented her from attending all the meeting, but she hopes to join us at some point.

Also, I am appointing Joyce Linehan to the Construction Committee. She has a great deal of experience planning library projects when she worked for Mayor Walsh in Boston, and it is a topic of great interest to her. I will be sending out an updated list via email later this week.

As most of you know by now, on August 9th Governor Healey signed the state budget with full funding for all but two of the MBLC line-item requests. Line item 7000-9401 which funds the Massachusetts Library System and Library for the Commonwealth received $750,000 more than our request. The Center for the Book line item received an increase but not the full 10% which we requested. During our meeting in August, we discussed the FY2025 budget priorities and today we will be receiving testimony from our affiliates about their concerns. During the past few weeks, I have sent handwritten thank you notes to legislators thanking them for our support of our FY2024 line items.

August was also the time for summer reading to wind down and I attended the last Massachusetts Boston Bruins summer reading event with Blades, the mascot. This was held on August 22 at the Scituate Public Library and their meeting room was packed! As always, the Bruins created a fun event for all in attendance and June has some terrific pictures of the children. Not only did I have a fun time, but former Commissioner Les Ball attended so I was able to find out what he has been doing since stepping down. He is continuing to be a strong advocate for his local library as a member of the Scituate Library Foundation and is still very interested in library construction projects.

On August 24 I took a trip to the South Coast and met with the directors of the New Bedford Free Public Library and Dartmouth Public Libraries during which time I received a tour of the new North Dartmouth branch. Commissioner Cluggish attended the groundbreaking for that building but the opening was muted because of Covid. I remember the old branch and I know that planning a replacement took almost twenty years. This new facility is amazing and well worth a trip. It is open, airy, and welcoming. The building includes many green features and was built in a lovely woodland. It is a shame that the ribbon cutting didn’t take place and that we weren’t able to celebrate this remarkable achievement. It is close to Interstate 195 just off Route 6 but if feels like it is in the country.

On August 29 I attended the meeting of the Board Executive Committee at which time we began discussing the process for the Director’s search. We will be bringing that discussion to the full board later this fall. James also submitted his FY2024 Goals as part of the MassPerform process. They are thoughtful and aligned with the Board priorities which should come as no surprise to anyone.

**Commissioner Activities**

**Commissioner Biancolo**

* August 29: Attended meeting of Executive Board, virtual
* September 5: Got a tour of the lovely Ayer Public Library from Director Luke Kirkland

**Commissioner Cluggish**

* August 2: Summer Reading Visit at the Hudson Public Library
* United for Libraries Program

**Commissioner Traub**

* August 16: WMLA Board Meeting
* August 29: Executive Board Meeting

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Director Lonergan presented the following report:

Meetings/activities highlights since the last monthly Board meeting:

* August 3—Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) & American Library Association (ALA) Webinar: Challenging the Challenges: ALA's Policy Corps and Unite Against Book Bans
* August 11—Mass. Library Association (MLA) Executive Board meeting, virtual
* August 11 & 16—Mass. Broadband Institute Education Subgroup meetings, virtual
* August 14—Mass. Library System (MLS) Executive Board meeting, virtual
* August 16—Virtual meeting with Mass. Center for the Book Executive Director Courtney Andree to discuss preparation for proposed FY2025 legislative agenda discussion
* August 24—COSLA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group meeting, virtual
* August 24—Update phone call with Jon Torcia, Deputy Director, Office of Boards and Commissions
* August 29—Executive Committee meeting, virtual

Equity Audit: As I mentioned in my February report, Governor Healey announced in her inauguration speech that she would direct each agency under her administration to conduct a full equity audit. The Healey/Driscoll Administration released [Executive Order No. 612 Instituting the Practice of Equity Assessment Government-Wide and Creating the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee on Increasing Equity Through Data](https://www.mass.gov/executive-orders/no-612-instituting-the-practice-of-equity-assessment-government-wide-and-creating-the-inter-agency-coordinating-committee-on-increasing-equity-through-data) in May. Please note the following section:

**Section 3:  Extending Equity Assessment to Additional Governmental Offices.**

Independent agencies and authorities, public institutions of higher education, other constitutional offices, the judiciary, and other public entities are encouraged to work with the Coordinating Committee to participate in equity assessment initiatives and otherwise to adopt practices consistent with those advanced by the Coordinating Committee.

We had been preparing an RFP to contract with a consultant to assist the agency with both an equity audit and additional work, but we want “to adopt practices consistent with those advanced by the Coordinating Committee” so we will wait to proceed until we are able to obtain further guidance from the Committee.

On a related note, Tracey, who serves as our agency’s Diversity Officer, has worked to establish a relationship with the Human Resources Division’s Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) to develop our agency’s Strategic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan (due to ODEO later this month) and to provide quarterly and annual progress reports to ODEO.

Paul Kissman, Kate Butler, and Rob Favini continue to work with MBLC’s E-Rate consultant Aleck Johnson to educate, promote, and facilitate libraries’ access to federal E-Rate funds.  An intro to E-Rate funding webinar is in the planning stages. This event (date TBD) will assist the Massachusetts library community in gaining a better understanding of the E-Rate program and the assistance that will be available from our E-Rate consultant.

I was a guest facilitator for a virtual session of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute’s (MBI) Digital Equity Working Group: Education Subgroup on August 16. The group met to discuss themes and priorities surrounding the outcome area of education and to define and prioritize measurable objectives for the Massachusetts Digital Equity Plan. Paul Kissman participated in this group as well.

MBI “Internet for All” Listening Tour: MBI announced a series of regional meetings and focus groups happening this fall across the Commonwealth that will inform the development of federal funding plans that will help Massachusetts access broadband and digital equity funding from the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This funding would go toward identifying digital equity gaps, growing the availability of internet-connected devices, boosting digital literacy, and increasing access to affordable broadband service, according to MBI. MBLC staff assisted MBI in identifying satellite locations for these meetings to increase participation. Paul Kissman provided data to identify libraries that might serve as satellite meeting locations and Rachel Masse has been reaching out to potential satellite library locations to make reservations and meeting arrangements in partnership with MBI staff.

The following libraries (so far) will serve as satellite locations: North Adams, Lenox Library, Monson Free Library, Dartmouth Public Library, Forbes Library (Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum) and the Plymouth Public Library. The Greater Boston Region listening session main event will be held at the Boston Public Library’s East Boston Branch on Saturday, September 30 at 10:30 a.m. For more information including event dates and registration links visit the MBI Internet for All page: <https://broadband.masstech.org/internetforall>

Legal Kiosks: Paul Kissman and Rob Favini met with Ariel Clemmer, Director of the Center for Social Justice at the Western New England University School of Law to learn more about their Legal Kiosk program. Legal Kiosks are free computers located in community agencies that provide legal help access points. They are embedded directly within the communities they serve through organizations people are already acquainted with and offer a safe and secure way of engaging with the legal system.

Currently kiosks are available at five Springfield library branches. WNE School of Law is looking to expand the program to more locations across the state. The MBLC hopes to assist in the expansion by identifying possible locations. For more information visit the program web site: <https://www.legalkiosks.com/projects/western-new-england>

Maura Deedy was a panelist at the Academy of Management annual conference in Boston on August 7th. The panel was called “Navigating Censorship: Workers on the Front Line” and featured a group of academic researchers and practitioners working in the field to explore how censorship and restrictions on intellectual freedom manifest in organizations and what this means for public and nonprofit workers.

Maura also visited West Stockbridge and Tyringham in support of the collection development compliance project. Both visits to one room libraries in the Berkshires were well received and productive. We are still working with 34 libraries to ensure they have collection development plans as required by statute.

Maura has announced this Fall’s Friends Coffee Hours:

Tuesday, September 26, 2023 at  2pm   
[https://mblc.libcal.com/event/11071681](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/mblc.libcal.com/event/11071681__;!!CUhgQOZqV7M!iC6rtp-aCjxSDMPfoSuqGRraXH_3uCnNTl6MXt6ti3QNKlRpx7rUKlAUVLZaroKXmVnMCn1ylQecEaOpUPbiHcGEolleEOQ$)

Wednesday, October 18, 2023 at  6pm   
[https://mblc.libcal.com/event/11071683](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/mblc.libcal.com/event/11071683__;!!CUhgQOZqV7M!iC6rtp-aCjxSDMPfoSuqGRraXH_3uCnNTl6MXt6ti3QNKlRpx7rUKlAUVLZaroKXmVnMCn1ylQecEaOpUPbiHcGEqZgPVCk$)

Thursday, November 9, 2023 at 10am    
[https://mblc.libcal.com/event/11071685](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/mblc.libcal.com/event/11071685__;!!CUhgQOZqV7M!iC6rtp-aCjxSDMPfoSuqGRraXH_3uCnNTl6MXt6ti3QNKlRpx7rUKlAUVLZaroKXmVnMCn1ylQecEaOpUPbiHcGEJMl7Rxo$)

Wednesday, December 6, 2023 at 10am  
[https://mblc.libcal.com/event/11071688](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/mblc.libcal.com/event/11071688__;!!CUhgQOZqV7M!iC6rtp-aCjxSDMPfoSuqGRraXH_3uCnNTl6MXt6ti3QNKlRpx7rUKlAUVLZaroKXmVnMCn1ylQecEaOpUPbiHcGEDowlzsk$)

Trustee Orientations: In addition to online orientations, two in-person sessions have been announced. As in past sessions, attendees will learn about their roles and responsibilities as trustees, best practices for relationship building with library directors and communities, and their advocacy roles. Sessions will be interactive, with ample time for discussion and questions. Trustees of all tenures are invited to attend, along with library directors and prospective trustees.

In what will hopefully be a boost in attendance, trustee orientations will take place as a part of larger meetings. The first follows the MBLC Commissioners Board meeting on October 5th at the Eastham Public Library. The second will follow the Massachusetts Library Trustee Association Annual Meeting on October 21st at the Shrewsbury Public Library.

Eastham Public Library   
Thursday, October 5, 2023  
Time: 1:30pm - 3:30pm  
<https://mblc.libcal.com/event/11045138>

Massachusetts Library Trustee Association (MLTA) Annual Meeting  
Shrewsbury Public Library  
The Massachusetts Library Trustees Association (MLTA) Annual Conference will be held on October 21, 2023 at the Shrewsbury Public Library from 9:30AM –1:00PM. This year’s theme is Finding Joy in Tumultuous Times. Trustee orientation follows the Conference.   
Date: Saturday, October 21, 2023  
Time: 1:00pm - 3:00pm  
<https://mblc.libcal.com/event/11031624>

Solar Eclipse Program Kit Update: Shelley Quezada has been managing the distribution of solar eclipse programming kits through libraries across the state. There are four kits out in distribution. Kits were used in August by three libraries and they will be used eight times in September and eight times in October in the lead up to the big Annular Solar Eclipse on October 23.

Manga Collections to Incarcerated Populations: Shelley made the first delivery of LSTA-funded Manga Collections to the Souza Baranowski Correctional Center. This ongoing program will fund Manga collections to jail and prison populations in facilities across the state.

Building Equity-Based Summers (BEBS): Massachusetts was invited to participate in the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant funded project [Building Equity-Based Summer (BEBS).](https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/re-252358-ols-22) BEBS is a national initiative focused on assisting public library staff in gaining the skills necessary to work with systematically marginalized communities. Lyndsay Forbes (MBLC) and Christi Farrar (MLS) have received facilitation training for the project and will conduct the sessions for Massachusetts participants later this year.

Eleven libraries applied for the five spots in this year’s cohort. Participating libraries include Chicopee Public Library, Marlborough Public Library, Milford Town Library, Berkshire Athenaeum (Pittsfield), and Yarmouth Town Libraries. Following the initial training, each library will receive a $500 stipend to be used for activities associated with Building Equity-Based Summers in their community. A second $500 stipend will be made in 2025. This is the second year of the three-year project. Massachusetts will offer another cohort next fall.

Touchpoints in Libraries: Two cohorts for Touchpoints in Libraries will be offered this fall. This training supports more effective family and caregiver engagement in libraries. Staff from Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire comprise the New England Libraries training team. Trained facilitators from Massachusetts include Lyndsay Forbes (MBLC), Christi Farrar (MLS), Kelly Linehan (Director of Waltham Public Library), and Seana Rabbito (Children’s Department Head at Waltham Public Library).

Libraries submitted teams of 1-3 staffers for consideration. The 20 spots for Massachusetts library staff had 33 applicants. Participating Massachusetts libraries in the fall cohort include Memorial Hall Library (Andover), Cotuit Library (Barnstable), Hyannis Public Library (Barnstable), Porter Memorial Library (Blandford), Chelmsford Public Library, Framingham Public Library, Thayer Memorial Library (Lancaster), Medway Public Library, Morrill Memorial Library (Norwood), Waltham Public Library, and Worcester Public Library.

During the month of August, the Communications Team held Bruins visits at libraries in Hudson, Sandwich, and Scituate. Commissioners Cluggish and Comeau and Board Chair Conrad participated in the visits, awarding trivia prizes and joining in the activities. Former Commissioner Les Ball also attended the event at his home library in Scituate.

Rounding out the summer partnership with the Bruins, libraries have [awarded Bruins prizes](https://mblc.state.ma.us/news/news-releases/2023/nr230726.php) to 35 summer participants. The MBLC has been sharing photos of the happy winners on social media. The partnership is in its 14th year and summer 2023 was one the best in recent years, thanks in large part to June Thammasnong, who ran the visits. The events were well attended with an average of 70 people at each of the five visits.

The MBLC will receive more feedback on the summer program from the MLS Summer Library Survey, conducted by Christi Farrar at MLS. The MBLC partners with MLS for the statewide library program. Christi works directly with the libraries on implementing the iREAD summer program and the MBLC runs the partnership with the Bruins and develops a statewide paid promotional campaign with Buyer.

Summer Success, the website where patrons can share images and stories of how they spent the summer at the library, has also wrapped up. While summer participation numbers are important, the stories and images shared on the summer success website help the MBLC explain the full impact that summer programs have on residents. In its second year, participation has not grown as much as anticipated, but many of the stories and pictures are heart-warming.

June Thammasnong also represented the MBLC at the National Book Festival in Washington, D.C. on Saturday, August 12. The Festival is attended by people from all over the country. The MBLC coordinated with the Massachusetts Center for the Book on the booth as part of the Pavilion of the States in which each state demonstrates unique local ways that they’re celebrating literacy. The MBLC shared Bruins reading lists, stickers, and posters. Families go from booth to booth to get their literacy passports stamped by each state.

With input from the statewide PR Committee, the Communications Team worked with Andrea Fiorillo, Maura Deedy, Andrea Bono-Bunker, and Colleen Kelly from Buyer to create materials for a statewide Read-In called “Let Freedom Read,” like the national ALA initiative. Libraries can choose any date during Banned Book Week, register their event so that it appears on the consumer portal, and use MBLC-created materials including posters, stickers, and a template press release to promote their event. Digital participation is also encouraged: #LetFreedomRead. The Read-In is also an opportunity to promote eBooks and audiobooks with focused, ready-made social media. [Twenty-one libraries have already signed up](https://libraries.state.ma.us/pages/let_freedom_read-) since the email was sent last week.

Staff News: Maura Deedy was nominated for and has received a Citation for Outstanding Performance signed by Governor Healey and Lt. Governor Driscoll. Citation awards are based on one or more of the following achievements:

* Attainment of high priority agency objective(s);
* Exceptional managerial, organizational and/or communications achievements;
* Exemplary leadership; and
* Achievement of significant improvements in productivity and/or savings in agency operations.

Maura’s nomination highlighted her efforts to provide information and workshops for library trustees as well as her work helping libraries create collection development policies. As stated on her nomination form: “Maura creates an atmosphere where trustees know they have a trusted contact for questions and concerns in the library world.” Congratulation, Maura, and thank you for all you do to help improve library services for all the Commonwealth’s residents!

**Legislative Report**

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

The Legislature has not returned to formal sessions after the summer recess. There has been no movement on whether they will vote to override the budget items vetoed by Governor Healey. The MBLC budget lines were approved in the Governor’s signed budget. Although the MBLC budget has been decided and is all set, until the Legislature determines whether they will vote on veto overrides, the General Appropriations Act figures for the rest of the budget will remain incomplete.



The budget process to date:

Annual Budget Process

1. [Governor's Budget](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/GovernorsBudget)  House 1 (1 represents the first budget year in the Legislative session) budget due out before the end of January, usually in conjunction with the governor’s State of the Commonwealth speech. With a new Governor, the budget is released later, usually at the beginning of March.
2. [House Ways & Means Budget](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2024/HouseWaysMeansBudget) The House Committee on Ways and Means examines the [Governor's Proposal](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/GovernorsBudget) and releases its own recommendations for the annual budget for deliberation by the House of Representatives. Prior to release of the House Ways and Means Budget, Joint Ways and Means Committee budget hearings are held across the state.
3. [House Debate](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2024/HouseDebate) The full body of the House of Representatives considers amendments to the [House Ways and Means recommendations](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2024/HouseWaysMeansBudget), and debates their inclusion in the bill. This is a very busy time for the House of Representatives, as the Representatives and their staffs are constantly working to make sure the concerns and needs of their constituents are addressed in the final budget.
4. [House Budget](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2024/HouseBudget) After debate on amendments to the [House Ways and Means recommendations](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2024/HouseWaysMeansBudget), the House of Representatives then approves a final, amended version of the bill which is then sent to the Senate for consideration.

1. [Senate Ways & Means Budget](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2024/SenateWaysMeansBudget) The Senate Committee on Ways and Means examines both the [Governor's proposal](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/GovernorsBudget) and the [House proposal](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2024/HouseBudget) and releases its own recommendations for the annual budget for deliberation by the Senate.
2. [Senate Debate](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2024/SenateDebate) The full body of the Senate considers amendments to the [Senate Ways and Means recommendations](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2024/SenateWaysMeansBudget), and debates their inclusion in the bill. This is a very busy time for the Senate, as the Senators and their staffs are constantly working to make sure the concerns and needs of their constituents are addressed in the final budget.
3. [Senate Budget](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2024/SenateBudget) After debate on amendments to [Senate Ways and Means recommendations](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2023/SenateWaysMeansBudget/Ways_Means_Final_Budget), the Senate then approves a final, amended version of the bill which is then sent to a Conference Committee, along with the House final budget, for review and reconciliation.
4. [Conference Committee](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2024/ConferenceCommittee) The House and Senate appoint three members each to a "Conference Committee" to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate proposals. One member of the minority party must be appointed by each branch. The Conference Committee reports a final compromise bill to the House and Senate for a final vote of acceptance in each branch.
5. [Final Budget](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2024/FinalBudget) 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" (GAA) for the upcoming fiscal year. (FY 2024)   
   [Acts (2023)](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2021) **Chapter 28 The General Appropriations Act (GAA)  
   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. (e.g.,** [**https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FinalBudget**](https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FinalBudget) **)**

**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

This document is still being worked on to include the Governor's actions and any subsequent legislative action.

Revenue figures for June and the FY 2023 budget year are finally available. The Department of Revenue posted preliminary revenue collections for June totaling $4.137 billion. June 2023 collections are $9 million or 0.2% less than actual collections in June 2022, but $274 million or 7.5% above the June 2023 benchmark.

Revenue collections for fiscal year 2023 totaled approximately $39.164 billion; fiscal year 2023 revenue collections are $112 million or 0.3% less than actual collections in fiscal year 2022, and $335 million or 0.8% below the updated fiscal year 2023 benchmark.

With the FY 2024 budget nearing completion, the MBLC is moving on to the Legislative Agenda for the next fiscal year, FY 2025. In addition to the budget requests for the seven budget lines, the Agenda will continue to focus on, among other topics, two pieces of legislation of critical importance to all types of libraries: Book Challenges and eBook legislation. As a reminder, the four bills filed against book bans are:

* Senator Jullian Cyr (<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/SD2673>)
* Senator Jacob Oliveira (<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/SD2679>)
* Representative James Hawkins (<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H4005>)
* Representative Aaron Saunders (<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/HD4443>)

and the eBook bill

* Representative Ruth Balser: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H3239>

The draft budget figures for FY 2025 were presented and discussed at last month’s meeting and form the basis for the budget discussion with Affiliates, Partners, and members of the library community today.



**Discussion of the FY2025 LegisLATIVE AGENDA**

**Courtney Andree, Massachusetts Center for the Book**

FY25 Legislative Funding Increase Background Factsheet

Line Item 7000-9508 (Northampton)

An increase in funding for the Massachusetts Center for the Book (Line Item 7000-9508) will support the development and deployment of new statewide programs to bolster lifelong literacy, family learning, and increased access to literary programming for children and youth.

This factsheet outlines demonstrated areas of need in the Commonwealth that the Massachusetts Center for the Book is well-positioned to address, as well as opportunities for expanded services in line with our mission. You’ll find a summary of the financial resources needed to build infrastructure and support programs that will benefit and engage public and school libraries across the Commonwealth.

The Massachusetts Center for the Book (7000-9508) is an identified priority area for the MBLC for transformational funding in FY25. This funding request represents just over a 19% increase in the MCB line item of $420,000. An investment in MCB in FY25 will position us as one of the most robust state Centers for the Book in the Library of Congress network and better equip us to engage with broader swaths of readers—reaching across lines of income, race and ethnicity, disability, and educational attainment.

The additional funding we would receive under line item 7000-9508 would be focused on a couple of key areas: family literacy and statewide programming for children and youth. You’ll find identified funding amounts in these areas, with more details in the following section.

Family Literacy: $45,000

Programming for Children & Youth: $35,000

Total: $80,000

Full Appropriation Amount: $500,000

Background on Massachusetts Center for the Book:

Founded in 2000, the Massachusetts Center for the Book is charged with developing, supporting, and promoting cultural programming to advance the cause of books, libraries, and reading in Massachusetts. MCB is the designated Commonwealth affiliate of the Library of Congress. As a public-private partnership, we have been supported by a line item in the state budget since July 1, 2014. The Center runs youth and family literacy programs, like “Gateways to Reading” and Letters About Literature; represents Massachusetts at the National Book Festival; operates the Massachusetts Book Awards; and partners with community organizations on literary initiatives and events, big and small, across the Commonwealth. In 2023, the Massachusetts Center for the Book launched its Adult and Student Reading Challenge initiatives, in cooperation with over 100 school and public libraries across the Commonwealth. We engage readers at all stages of life with relevant, diverse, and vibrant programming, reaching thousands of Massachusetts residents each year.

Funding Focus Area: Family Literacy

Goal: Building off of the momentum of the Gateways to Reading program (developed in collaboration with eight Gateway City public libraries with IMLS American Rescue Plan funds from the MBLC), this expanded family literacy initiative would serve all twenty-six Gateway Libraries across the Commonwealth. Access to family literacy programming is particularly crucial in communities with high numbers of ESL families—when parents’ reading capacities are strengthened, they are better able to support children’s learning. In turn, children’s early exposure to reading and language in the household leads to better academic outcomes and reading successes later on.

Budget: $45,000 – To support ongoing program and curriculum development (including contract work with an early education specialist), annual training sessions with program participants, staff support, the creation and maintenance of a program toolkit, and the purchase and distribution of program materials.

Funding Focus Area: Expanded programming for children and youth

Goal: Develop and support the creation of a Commonwealth-wide festival geared towards children and youth, timed to Children’s Book Week each spring. Recognizing that young people’s access to literary programming is inequitably distributed across Massachusetts (especially for those living in rural areas and Gateway Cities) and how transformational author events can be in the lives of young people, MCB seeks to launch a new statewide festival that would engage young readers across the divides of geography and socioeconomic status.

As rates of pleasure reading among children and teens continue to drop (reaching their lowest levels since at least the 1980s), it has become necessary to thoughtfully and deliberately invest in programming that will help turn the tide and create excitement around reading.1

1 Schaeffer, Katherine. “Among many U.S. children, reading for fun has become less common, federal data shows.” Pew Research Center. November 12, 2021.

2 Clark, Christina and Fay Lant. “Writer visits and children and young people’s reading and writing engagement.” National Literacy Trust, 2019. 1.

3 Naslund, Jo-Anne and Ronald Jobe. “Not Just an Author Visit—It’s a Literacy Event.” School Libraries in Canada, 2004. N.P.

4 Clark and Lant, 3.

Researchers have consistently seen that author events and visits lead to improvement in the “enjoyment, attitudes, and confidence” of young people.2 Author events also serve to heighten personal connections to the reading process and “increase reading frequency, fluency, and comprehension.”3 A 2019 study undertaken by the National Literacy Trust shows that author visits bolstered reading enjoyment levels, led to increased rates of daily reading and higher reading confidence, which in turn correlated to higher reading scores.4

Working in partnership with public and school libraries and cultural organizations across Massachusetts, and drawing upon a combination of increased funding from the state and private support, MCB will:

* Provide a select number of microgrants to public and school libraries to support author visits that are free and open to all (\*expenses covered may include speaker fees and the purchase of books and materials). Applications from underserved and under-resourced communities will be prioritized.
* Facilitate event bookings and create and maintain a database of Massachusetts-based children’s and YA authors who are interested in participating in festival events.
* Develop a festival toolkit for partners and host informational sessions and trainings.
* Build and maintain a festival website to showcase and track events.
* Publicize, promote, and advertise the festival statewide and in participating markets.

Budget: $35,000—To support the addition of a part-time festival coordinator position; the design and maintenance of a standalone festival website; microgrants to libraries; and festival promotion and advertising.

Total Initiative Budget Request:

Family Literacy: $45,000

Programming for Children & Youth: $35,000

Total: $80,000

Full Appropriation Amount: $500,000

**Kathy Lussier, Networks**

Speaking on behalf of the network administrators, I would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for last year’s advocacy for the 30% increase to line 9506. This additional funding will allow us to further expand our digital e-content collections, provide faster Internet connections to libraries, continue to bolster our cybersecurity efforts, and keep assessments low for our member libraries. Library users across the Commonwealth will ultimately see improved library service as a result of this additional funding.

The network administrators support the recommended Legislative Agenda for FY25. The 5% increase in line 9506 will help the networks keep up with anticipated cost increases and the larger increase proposed for line 9501 to provide greater funding to state aid for public libraries will be of great assistance to many of our member libraries.

Thank you again for your support.

**Lisa Downing**

My name is Lisa Downing and I am the director of the Forbes Library right here in Northampton. It is an honor to be with you today in a city I love. I am the past president of the Western MA Library Advocates (WMLA) and on behalf of our board and the many dozen libraries we represent, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the commissioners, the amazing MBLC

staff, and all of our partner organizations including MLS, MSLA, MLA, CMLA, and CWMARS for our successful efforts to increase state funding for libraries again this year. Delivering a clear and unified message has proven to be really powerful and we are so grateful to be in partnership with you.

At the urging of Commissioner Traub who regularly attends WMLA board meetings, I will take a moment to brag about our little organization. We were formed a decade ago upon the merging of the Friends of WMLS and the Western MA Library Club which was around for over 100 years. Our region is large with lots of small libraries. Building relationships with our members and building understanding and engagement with the legislative process and other advocacy opportunities are top priorities for us. We are proud to be speaking up on behalf of libraries and empowering libraries to successfully advocate for themselves. We are a membership organization and dues are very affordable. Members receive advocacy related information through email, Facebook, and now a printed and digital newsletter.

As you know, every library line in the state budget is vitally important. There are three budget lines that we would like to call attention to. We request fully funding the Mass Center for the Book, now with a home base here in Northampton! Their mission supports literacy, celebrating the rich literary culture of Massachusetts, and ensuring that we continue to foster a society

of readers. Something I am sure everyone here understands the inherent value and importance of to our society and our democracy.

We would also like to speak up on behalf of state aid for public libraries. I asked our board to share how the recent increase in state aid has impacted their communities. Katya Schapiro from the Easthampton Public Library said, “We dedicate the entirety of our State Aid funds to our materials budget, and the increases have meant that even as we feel the pinch in other areas, we are able to order freely and widely to provide our patrons with the resources of a much larger library than our population might indicate, and to be more forgiving of losses and to go fine free, increasing our accessibility and attractiveness to the community as a whole.”

Sharon Sharry from Amherst says, “Because the Town of Amherst does not pay 100% of Library staff salaries, we rely VERY heavily on our annual State Aid award in order to pay staff. We would be lost without it! And because State Aid has increased, we were able to fill 2 of our 4 unfilled positions (which we have been unable to afford for the past 4 years) this fiscal year!!!!!” and Wendy Pearson from the Stockbridge Library said, “Our state aid funds were used this year to support our youth summer reading program. Young readers received prizes throughout the summer for completing a weekly reading log and grand prizes at the end of the program.

State aid funds also supported youth programs, including a whale conservation education program held inside a 40-foot inflatable whale at the library and a summer community dog show on the library lawn.”

Every library receiving state aid uses that funding wisely to support library services in their communities and as we think about the next legislative agenda, increases to state aid will help counteract the inflationary pressures that each of our budgets face.

Lastly, we support increased funding for the MBLC administrative line. The MBLC is a vital resource for libraries. Their work levels the playing field for even our smallest libraries out here in Western MA to have access to professional support for trustees and directors and provides access to participate in programs designed with libraries with limited capacity like the upcoming statewide “Read In” against book banning. Please increase funding for the MBLC so that they have the resources they need to successfully support the library community at large.

I’ll close by inviting you to the Western MA Library Tour in partnership with the MBLC coming up this fall thanks to Celeste Bruno and June Thammasnong. Come back and enjoy the beautiful foliage and tour some of the amazing libraries in western MA.

Commissioner Biancolo moved and Commissioner Traub seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners adopts the FY2025 Legislative Agenda total amounts as presented. The Statewide PR Committee which includes members of the Board will design the look of the legislative agenda.

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

**Discussion/review of policies for the fy2026 state aid to public librareis program**

Jen Inglis, State Aid Specialist presented the Board policies related to the FY2026 State Aid to Public Libraries program: a) Extending a Grace Period for Increased Population-based Minimum Standards; b) Minimum Standards of Hours of Service for Public Libraries; c) Minimum Materials Expenditure Standard Calculation; d) Materials Expenditure and Hours Open Accommodation Policy; e) Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) Calculation; f) Determining Eligibility for a Waiver of the FY2025 Municipal Appropriation Requirement; g) The Closure of a Public Library; h) Five Year Waiver Plan Policy.

She stated that the proposed policies will be voted by the Board at the October 5, 2023 meeting.

**Review of Board Policy on Budget Revisions for Budget Line Item Program**

James Lonergan, Director presented the Board with the Budget Revisions Policy that expired in 2021. There are no changes to the policy. The Board will vote in October.

**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.* |  |

**Report from Library for the Commonwealth**

Jessica Chapel, Chief of Digital & Online Services gave the following report:

**Digital & Online Services**

Looking ahead – strategic planning is underway. BPL/DC/LFC is an example of a successful collaborative digital library program that’s expanded access to information, online resources, and cultural heritage to the public; for more than decade, DC has been a leader in defining what a digital library can be and making collections accessible. Our goal is to build on what's been achieved and to position the program to continue to lead in an increasingly digital future. Strategic planning is coalescing around three areas:

* Discovery and engagement
* Digitization services
* Digital preservation and repository services

*Hiring*

Interviews for the Statewide Digitization Assistant position are underway. From a pool of more than 70 applications, three candidates have reached the final round. The last interview with a candidate is scheduled for September 13. The hiring committee hopes to make an offer this month and have the selected candidate start by November. The person in this role will take the lead on outreach to repositories for Digital Commonwealth (we expect outreach and repository visits to pick up in 2024).

*MBLC Educational Fellowship*

Lara DeRose is continuing to meet with stakeholders and potential partners. Her interviews with museums and educational institutions, including DESE, literature reviews, discussions with educators have illuminated the scope of the challenges involved with outreach. Building connections with DESE could provide teachers with direct access to DC developed content and encourage use of the DC site. MA is currently developing a 3-7 Primary Source Curriculum, part of which is designed around local history units. It looks like there’s an opportunity to extend DC outreach and build new contacts.

*Newspaper Digitization*

We’re gearing up for the next round of newspaper digitization by preparing a multi-year RFP for vendors (three years with option to renew for two more years). The selection committee organized by Jake Sadow is reviewing titles for inclusion. More than 700,00 pages were digitized in FY23. We’re aiming for 1M pages in FY24 and the following years. Titles from the BPL’s microfilm collection, as well as those nominated/held by other libraries, will be included.

*Digital Commonwealth*

Nearing 500 applicants! As of last week, 493 applications have come from cultural heritage institutions across the state. We’re planning celebratory announcements via BPL and DC communication/social channels in honor of the 500th applicant.

**Collections**

*Browse, Borrow, Board*

Next week — Wednesday, September 13 — libraries are invited to attend a webinar with MLS/MassDot and BPL on the expansion of “Browse, Borrow, Board.”

**Expanding “Browse, Borrow, Board” across Massachusetts: Bringing multilingual digital library content to transit riders near you**

Join this one-hour session to learn about the “Browse, Borrow, Board” program, initially launched in Boston with the MBTA and the Boston Public Library, and now available to transit riders and library patrons statewide. The Massachusetts Library System is pleased to have joined the Boston Public library (in their role as Library for the Commonwealth) and MassDOT in expanding this program. We’ll discuss how the Browse, Borrow, Board program works, and how you can coordinate with your Regional Transit Authority to bring the service to your patrons.

**Presenters**:

* Melissa Andrews, Chief of Collection Management, Boston Public Library
* Kris Carter, Chief of Possibility, MassDOT
* Jaclyn Youngblood, Deputy Chief of Possibility, MassDOT

**Date**: September 13, 2023 (Wednesday)

**Time**: 10 – 11 am

**Location**: Zoom Webinar

**Register**: <https://calendar.masslibsystem.org/event/11217777>

This webinar will be recorded and made available on [the MLS Vimeo channel](https://vimeo.com/masslibsystem) after the event.

*Biblio+*

We have a new unlimited streaming resource, [Biblio+](https://biblioplus.com/landing), that is available statewide to all eCard holders (it is not LFC funded). Biblio+ went live on the BPL website on September 5. The service offers a curated selection of award-winning films, documentaries, and television shows for streaming.

**Library Services**

*Excel Online High School*

Now up to 11 graduates and 86 active enrollments. The program has recently added students from Framingham, Revere, and Shrewsbury. We are continuing to push the program out to libraries and community organizations across the state.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 1:06 P.M.

Karen Traub



Karen Traub

Secretary