



## NEW JERSEY STATE LIBRARY 2021 YEAR END WRAP-UP

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[WWW.NJSTATELIB.ORG](http://WWW.NJSTATELIB.ORG)

# WHO WE ARE

The New Jersey State Library (NJSL), an affiliate of Thomas Edison State University (TESU), serves a variety of functions. These include delivering direct services to state government, state employees, and the public, as well as providing support for New Jersey's network of libraries (academic, school, public and special). The State Library provides a law library, a research library, and a library for the visually impaired.

We foster library development and innovation throughout the state, delivering statewide services that promote equity of access.

We lead initiatives that respond to current and timely issues, and build alliances that position NJSL to develop local partnerships and collaborations.

We serve many diverse communities in New Jersey with an overarching mission to connect people with information through libraries.

## The New Jersey State Library provides services that fall into one or more of four primary areas:

- » **The State Library Information Center (SLIC)** is NJSL's operating library that serves the state legislature, state employees, and TESU students, faculty, and mentors.
- » The **Talking Book and Braille Center (TBBC)** provides free library services for New Jersey residents who cannot read regular printed books due to a visual or physical impairment or reading disability.
- » **NJSL's library development bureaus** provide support for library development across the New Jersey library community. Services range from providing statewide resources and continuing education activities for library directors, staff and trustees, to offering leadership models and opportunities for innovation.
- » **Statewide services and network support**, which includes support for summer reading and other programming, technological infrastructure and outreach, statewide electronic resources, and professional development.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, New Jersey's libraries deserve many accolades for services delivered, for commitment to communities, for work accomplished, and for projects reinvented. All NJSL services have transitioned to an online environment, and while remote work has its challenges, staff members rose to those challenges, providing essential services and programming for all branches of New Jersey state government, New Jersey libraries, and TESU. As they navigated the issues presented by COVID-19, staff provided exceptional library service to our patrons, created new and strengthened existing partnerships.

**What follows here is an overview of some of the many accomplishments at the New Jersey State Library during the 2021 calendar year.**



# STATE LIBRARY MANAGEMENT TEAM



## TOP ROW FROM LEFT

**JENNIFER R. NELSON**  
STATE LIBRARIAN  
New Jersey

**MARGARET NIZOLEK**  
CHIEF DEPUTY STATE LIBRARIAN  
State Library Information  
Center (SLIC)

**ADAM SZCZEPANIAK**  
DEPUTY STATE LIBRARIAN  
Talking Book & Braille  
Center (TBBC)

**SHERI SHAFER**  
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER  
State Library

## BOTTOM ROW FROM LEFT

**KATHLEEN  
MOELLER-PEIFFER**  
DEPUTY STATE LIBRARIAN  
Library Support  
Services (LSS)

**MICHELE STRICKER**  
DEPUTY STATE LIBRARIAN  
Lifelong Learning (LLL)

**PEGGY CADIGAN**  
DEPUTY STATE LIBRARIAN  
Innovation &  
Strategic Partnerships  
*Retired September 2021*

**TIFFANY McCLARY**  
DIRECTOR  
Communications,  
Marketing & Outreach

**NOT PICTURED** **MIKE RASIMOWICZ**, DIRECTOR, Information Technology

The Office of the State Librarian promotes exemplary service in accordance with New Jersey Library Law. The administration of the Office includes the State Library Business Office and the Office of Communications, Marketing & Outreach. The State Librarian supports professional development for New Jersey librarians through LibraryLinkNJ, the New Jersey Library Cooperative. Information Technology support is offered through JerseyConnect, the statewide library technology infrastructure backbone which provides internet services throughout New Jersey. The Office of the State Librarian is also responsible for library development through the Lifelong Learning, Library Support Services, and Innovation & Strategic Partnerships business units.

# I. STATEWIDE & NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

## New Jersey State Library (NJSL) Celebrates its 225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The inception of the State Library took place on March 11th, 1796 when the New Jersey General Assembly directed Assembly Clerk Maxwell Ewing to purchase a specific list of books and a bookcase. In the first year as the state's library, there were 33 titles in the collection. By 1822 the library collection had grown to the point where a full-time librarian was needed to manage it. In 1873, the collection consisted of over 18,000 volumes and the library was well on its way to becoming the great research institution that it is today.



Despite humble beginnings, NJSL continues to deliver direct services to state government, state employees, Thomas Edison State University staff and students, and the public, as well as provide support for New Jersey's network of multi-type libraries (academic, school, public and special). Through its law library, research library, and library for the visually and physically impaired, NJSL helps ensure that all New Jersey residents have equal access to the information they need to achieve their personal, educational, and professional goals.

## Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) Mini-Grants



The State Library's CARES Act mini-grants for public libraries fulfills the intent of the federal CARES Act. The grants support public libraries in responding to the coronavirus pandemic by improving access to technology for library patrons. Through this competitive grant program, NJSL funded 27 projects that foster digital inclusion for library users and the community.

New Jersey's public libraries are strengthened as they close the digital divide and ensure equity of access to

technology for all. These mini-grants were made possible through an allotment of funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services' CARES Act budget.

To see the full list of projects, visit: <https://www.njstatelib.org/news/cares-mini-grants/>.

## American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding

The New Jersey State Library received an allotment of \$3,935,345 from the IMLS' ARPA budget. A portion of these funds was used to provide the following resources for New Jersey libraries.

- » Statewide electronic resources, including: Brainfuse, an online homework assistance product; Zoom Enterprise licensing for up to 500 public libraries; SimplyE, an online platform that allows libraries to manage their e-book and audiobook collections; and Remote Assist, a tool that helps libraries reach remote patrons or provide services in the library while maintaining social distance. [Continued on next page.](#)

### American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding (Continued)

- » Access for all NJ library staff to the Homeless Training Institute, an online training program designed to equip library staff with the tools that they need to serve their community's homeless population with compassion and confidence.
- » Through the NJSL + Partners Literacy Project, NJSL is piloting two models for providing literacy services in public libraries.
- » NJSL awarded \$1.7 million for competitive grants to public libraries.
- » NJSL is funding TBBC's participation in the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) Braille eReader Pilot Project.
- » A statewide Telehealth program, which will address barriers to health equity for New Jersey residents, is set to launch early 2022.



### ARPA Grant Awards for NJ Public Libraries

NJSL made \$1.7 million in ARPA funding available to New Jersey public libraries. The purpose of these grants was to help communities respond directly and immediately to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as address related economic and community needs through equitable approaches. Sixty-four public libraries were awarded ARPA grants. Spending priorities included supporting digital inclusion efforts to enable libraries to reach residents, and supporting library services that meet the needs of communities.

To see the full list of projects, visit: <https://www.njstatelib.org/news/arpa-grants/>.

### Conclusion of IMLS National Leadership Grant

NJSL and its partners—the New Jersey State Parole Board, New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Long Branch Public Library, and five additional New Jersey libraries—concluded the two-year Fresh Start @ Your Library project.

The successes of the program have developed into a national model of process and a toolkit of best practices for libraries to actively assist in the reentry process and meet the needs of this sizeable target population in their communities across the United States.

The New Jersey State Library has received funding to extend the program and will continue to provide re-entry services at select libraries through June 2022.



## II. PROMOTING EQUITY OF ACCESS

### Information Technology (IT)

The NJSL IT department expanded remote work resources with feedback from staff. These included a web-based dialer for phone calls, automatic optical character recognition (OCR) for PDF files, and remote access to TBBC's WebREADS circulation system.

To further support remote work, NJSL IT staff also:

- » Replaced all staff desktops with laptops
- » Replaced the phone system with Teams for calling
- » Rolled out Microsoft Teams
- » Added disk space to the server environment
- » Rolled out Nulia, a training platform for Teams
- » Replaced all the Wi-Fi equipment at the State Street building.

### Talking Book & Braille Center (TBBC)

In 2021, TBBC patrons had access to over 130,000 books and 60 current magazines, as well as back issues. Because of an international treaty, books in over thirty languages were also available. At the close of the year, there were over 4,100 patron and library accounts. Many of these patrons are using the BARD Mobile App, which allows users to listen to our books on smartphones and tablets. In addition, TBBC circulated over 300,000 titles to patrons this past year.

TBBC is one of six libraries participating in the nationwide program piloting an electronic Braille reader. Our patrons now have the ability to read Braille books in the palm of their hand. TBBC is making it easier to sign-up, sign-in and read.



### Digital Public Library of America



With the support and assistance from our many partners, the NJ/DE Digital Collective became the newest member of the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) in June of 2021. The collective is currently contributing more than 124,000 items to DPLA. Highlights of the hubs' collection include the Dutch Immigration Experience Collection from the Jersey City Free Public Library, the Howard Pyle manuscript collection from the Delaware Art Museum, the 1944 Great Atlantic Hurricane Collection and the Alcoholic Beverage Control Bulletins from the New Jersey State Library, Newark and Rutgers in the 1960s and 1970s, and the Agnes P. Medill Boys' and Girls' Liberty Clubs of Delaware Scrapbook.



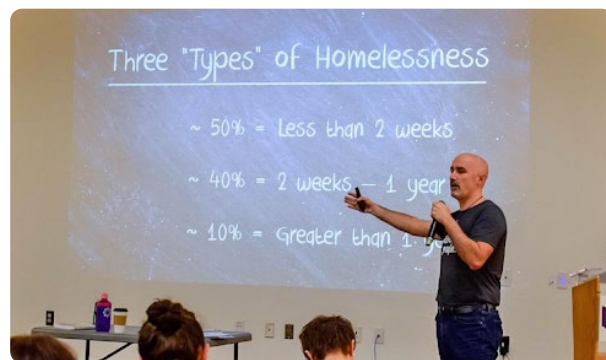
## Library Construction

The first round of the Library Construction Bond Act (LCBA) allocated \$87.5 million in grants to thirty-eight projects in spring 2021. Funded projects run the gamut from HVAC repairs to brand new facilities and renovation of historic buildings. The second round of grant solicitations for the LCBA allocates \$37.5 million in grants. This round began in March 2021; a list of recommended projects will be announced early 2022.

## Homeless Training Institute

NJSL launched the Homeless Training Institute, an online training program designed to equip library staff with the tools that they need to serve their community's homeless population with compassion and confidence. Created by Ryan Dowd, author of the American Library Association (ALA) book, *Librarian's Guide to Homelessness*, the series teaches practical skills to navigate a wide range of issues facing homeless individuals, including mental health awareness.

The course guides library staff on how to ensure the safety and comfort of all library visitors. With the help of funding through the American Rescue Plan Act, the State Library has been able to offer the online Homeless Training Institute curriculum to libraries statewide. The training program is available through Niche Academy, and offered at no cost to participants.



**HOMELESS TRAINING INSTITUTE**

## Office of New Americans (ONA) Information Session for NJ Libraries



New Jersey is among the most diverse states in the nation, and immigrant communities are an integral part of our economy and social fabric. In efforts to advance integration and welcoming new Americans in New Jersey, the Office of New Americans (ONA) was established in early 2020 and has been working to build trust, improve access to social services, employment services, and legal assistance for immigrants.

In 2021, the State Library invited all New Jersey library staff members to an information session, facilitated by Johanna Calle, Director, ONA, and Patrick Barry, Community Engagement Coordinator, ONA. Attendees were introduced to ONA and its programs and initiatives targeting new American populations, including those who speak languages other than English. The session included information on legal services, the Excluded New Jerseyans Fund (ENJF), refugee resettlement, and an update on Afghan evacuees to the U.S. and in NJ.



# III. DELIVERY OF DIRECT SERVICE

## State Library Information Center (SLIC)

At the beginning of 2021, reference and research services for state government, Thomas Edison State University (TESU) staff and students, and the public was conducted via telephone and email by the law, reference, and special collections staff. By May, circulation of print materials to state and TESU employees resumed. In early August, the State Library reopened to state government employees – at first only Tuesday through Friday by advance appointment. Later in the month, onsite access was expanded to Monday through Friday and included public researchers. SLIC staff resumed a 5-day onsite work week schedule in October.

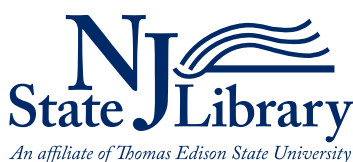
The Library's website became even more critical this year as a way to make information available to those who needed it. Subject and collection specialists developed tutorial videos to facilitate use of the library's website and resources by our customers. The SLIC monthly spotlight features focused on current and historical resources and topics of interest, and were included in SLIC's bi-weekly newsletter. Several research guides were created or expanded to cover additional topics.

Our ongoing digitization of New Jersey state government publications, legislative histories, and superseded New Jersey administrative code pages remained critical to our ability to provide historical



background on key issues. As part of another large project, SLIC received, prepared and archived interviews, focus groups, and creative works from the *New Jersey COVID Storytelling Project, Community Conversations: Pandemic Perspectives*, a collaboration between the NJ YMCA State Alliance, the NJ Department of Health and Healthy NJ 2030, to capture the accounts of New Jersey residents during COVID-19. Adding them to our digital repository will ensure continued accessibility when people research and study the impact of COVID on New Jersey in the future.

NJSL Presents classes and author talks have an enthusiastic following among state employees and the public. Fifty-five classes, twelve author programs, and twenty-one outreach sessions were held with a total of 2,438 participants. Additionally, services and resources tailored to the TESU nursing or business administration programs were presented at their orientation sessions in 2021.





## IV. LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT

### Librarian's Disaster Preparedness & Community Resiliency Toolkit

NJSL worked with Emergency Management on an Appendix to our original Disaster Preparedness & Recovery Toolkit that was developed back in 2016, to gather additional resources and guidance. The 2021 NJSL Pandemic Appendix does not duplicate the efforts recommended in the original toolkit. Rather, it augments the information covered earlier. The Appendix lists a short summary of major illnesses over the past century that reached the pandemic level.

Many of these diseases persist and have the potential to reemerge and grow to be pandemics. This tool can be used to guide librarians as they apply the concepts of risk management emergency response, disaster recovery, and business continuity to the work demands of their institution given the demands and restrictions imposed by a widescale disease outbreak.

### Conclusion of the Cross Cultural Communicators in Libraries Program

Funded by the IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program, this two-year project (2018-2020, extended to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic) developed and delivered online modules and in-person training for 250 Spanish speaking bilingual library professionals in New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and California. Participants were trained in cultural competence, translation and interpretation skills.

Through a series of online modules and in-person workshops, bilingual front-line library staff were trained to communicate more effectively with patrons from multicultural backgrounds. The program now serves as a model for libraries across the nation.

All CCCiL training materials and project resources are now freely available on the project website: [www.njstatelib.org/cccil](http://www.njstatelib.org/cccil).



The Los Angeles Public Library Mark Twain Branch, Los Angeles California at the September 26, 2019 CCCiL workshop.

## Build a Better Library Website Boot Camp

The Build a Better Library Website Boot Camp, a self-guided online course hosted by WebJunction and made possible in part by a 2020 award from the Catalyst Fund at LYRASIS, was launched in May 2021. The goal of the course is to increase knowledge and understanding around user experience and visual design principles, especially among individuals who may not have received formal training in these areas but are responsible for their library's website or a website project.

The principles and techniques learned in the Boot Camp will help them significantly reduce the cost (but not necessarily time!) of building a new website, redesigning an existing site, or improving an aspect of a current site. As of December 2021, there have been over 500 enrollees from across the country. The Build a Better Library Website Boot Camp is available through WebJunction's course catalog for free to enrollees, including librarians and library workers, as well as museum and archive staff.

## BUILD A BETTER LIBRARY WEBSITE BOOT CAMP



The Hub & Spoke Libraries team.

## NJSL+ Partners Literacy Grant

The State Library launched two models for providing literacy services in public libraries, with the overarching idea of showcasing libraries as literacy destinations in communities across the state.



**Pilot One, Hub & Spoke Libraries**, is an initiative with the Plainfield Public Library that provides uniform digital literacy training and credentialing for adult residents across the state. Through a competitive grant process, the State Library selected three hub libraries to serve as regionally-based training labs, and 11 spoke libraries to provide additional digital literacy support.





The Access Navigators Program team.



**Pilot Two, the Access Navigators Program**, provides a cohort of skilled trainers (Navigators) to 12 participating libraries in collaboration with the New Jersey Library Association. The Navigators rotate through each participating library, to provide individualized assistance to persons seeking employment, job training, or digital competence.

Both pilot programs will begin enrolling participants in 2022.

## Leap into Science Initiative

Representatives from the New Jersey State Library, NJ Makers Day, and the Newark Museum are in the last year of a three-year Cohort to collaboratively offer STEM workshops in community settings like libraries, museums, and out-of-school time programs to engage under-served audiences in accessible and familiar settings. The trainings integrate open-ended science activities with children's books, designed for children ages 3-10 and their families.

The training, developed by the Franklin Institute, covers three different workshop models: preschool (ages 3-5), elementary (ages 6-10), and families focusing on various science/literacy curriculum topics such as balance (Year 1), wind (Year 2) and light and shadow (Year 3). More than 256 programs have been held around the state by those trained in the LEAP program and over 3,400 children and adults have participated in them.

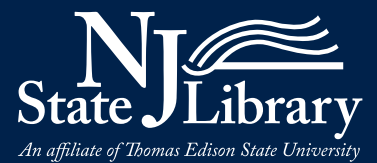
In May 2021, the State Library was awarded funds to train staff from 15 additional organizations in the program.







These services were made possible in part by the  
**Institute of Museum and Library Services.**  
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