

State Librarian's Update

August 2025

NJSL is pleased to offer [a new grant opportunity for public libraries](#) – Expanding Digital Literacy. While our work in this area is not as robust as we had hoped, we maintain a commitment to helping libraries be key resources for digital inclusion in communities. We are also maintaining our commitment to providing libraries with access [to Northstar](#), which is a terrific tool for digital literacy assessment and teaching. If your library is not currently a Northstar library and would like to join, now is a good time to let us know.

The [proposed changes to the New Jersey Administrative Code](#), 15:21 (State Library Aid and Grants) and 15:22 (Library Network Services) were published in the NJ register on August 4. Two working groups met throughout 2024 to read, revise, and update both sets of regulations. The collaborative effort is reflected in the resulting proposals. If you'd like to submit comments, please do so by October 3.

As described elsewhere in this update, NJSL just released the results of our RFP for online databases. We are maintaining access to the same suite of resources and have entered into one-year contracts through September 2026, with options for two one-year renewals. We made this decision out of an abundance of caution with the federal 2026 budget as yet undecided; the databases are paid for primarily with IMLS funds.

Finally, thank you for your feedback on the [Freedom to Read Act policies and forms](#). Another collaborative working group, members selected in part by NJLA, worked from January – May 2025 developing these. NJSL will hold technical assistance sessions in October for trustees and directors to review the new requirements and answer questions.

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State Librarian



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Stay Informed:

BARD 2 Offers New Features for TBBC Patrons

BARD, the Braille and Audio Reading Download website of the Library of Congress's National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, now offers expanded functionality and will serve as a gateway to exciting new services in the future. We are pleased to announce that [if you use BARD on the web](#), you now have access to BARD 2. If you're not a BARD user, this is your chance to sign up for the service and get instant access to hundreds of thousands of audio and braille books and magazines for reading with an NLS digital talking-book machine, a personal smart device with BARD Mobile, a Braille eReader, or your PC with the BARD Express player. Contact us at TBBC@njstatelib.org or 800-792-8322 to sign up for BARD. Access to the new and improved BARD website requires a change in your login procedures. BARD web users have been contacted and provided with instructions for the new login procedures. If you have any questions, need assistance, or just want to tell us about your experience with BARD 2, contact us at TBBC@njstatelib.org or 800-792-8322. [To learn more, check out our TBBC Blog post about BARD 2 new features.](#)

Digital Collections Highlight

During summer vacations, some people discover the relaxing and fascinating hobby of birding. The NJ Department of Environmental Protection issues annual reports on various types of birds in New Jersey, including:

- [New Jersey Bald Eagle Management Project Reports](#)
- [The Osprey Project in New Jersey](#)
- [Piping Plover Management Reports](#)
- [New Jersey Beach-Nesting Bird Project Reports](#)
- [Peregrine Falcon Research and Management Program Reports](#)

Helping Patrons Understand the Reconciliation Bill (One Big Beautiful Bill Act)

The Reconciliation Bill (PL119-21), passed on July 4, 2025, makes significant changes to a number of things impacting American consumers. The complex legislation runs 330 pages and impacts healthcare (including ACA, Medicare, and Medicaid), food benefits (SNAP), energy efficient appliances, home, car, and student loans, and more. Understanding this bill is challenging. The National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) has published a guide outlining the changes and impact of the One Big Beautiful Bill. [A Consumer Practitioner's Guide to the Reconciliation Bill](#)—available free on the NCLC website—details the impact of the law's provisions for consumers and consumer law practitioners, and advocates. This guide provides librarians and library patrons with a powerful tool to better understand the One Big Beautiful Bill and how it will impact their lives. The State Library subscribes to several titles published by NCLC that can assist anyone with consumer-related questions and concerns in areas such as bankruptcy, foreclosure, credit discrimination, and much more. Contact our Law Library if you have questions, reflaw@njstatelib.org.

You're Invited:

Upcoming NJSL Presents Events

The following upcoming webinars are free to anyone. Advance registration is required:

- [Introduction to Proposal Writing](#) - August 7, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
- [Getting Fiscally Fit](#) - August 11, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
- [Pinelands Road Trip](#) - August 19, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
- [Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia](#) - August 20, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
- [Before the IEP](#) - September 9, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Get Involved:

Announcing the Expanding Digital Literacy Grant Program

Applications are now being accepted for the New Jersey State Library's Expanding Digital Literacy grant program. Public libraries can apply for up to \$25,000 to develop and implement digital skills programs in their communities. Selected projects will increase confidence and technology skills in participants, with a focus on underserved populations, including seniors, English language learners, low-income households, individuals with disabilities, and others as identified by the applicant. NJSL estimates that \$100,000 is available for approximately 4-6 grants. The deadline to apply is September 12, 2025 at 11:59pm ET.

[Guidelines and application instructions are available on the NJSL website.](#)

[An informational webinar will be held on August 7, 2025, at 10:00 am.](#)

JerseyClicks Intent Announcement

Based on a thorough review of the bids submitted in response to the Request for Quotations for JerseyClicks Databases issued on November 27, 2024, it is the intent of the New Jersey State Library to make awards to the following vendors, for the services referenced therein, in accordance with their bid proposals: EBSCO Information Services, Gale, Data Axle, and Proquest. These awards are contingent upon the execution of written agreements between the above referenced vendors and the New Jersey State Library. Pending the execution of these agreements, all selected resources will be available through Federal Fiscal Year 2026 (ending September 30, 2026), with options for one-year renewals through Federal Fiscal Years 2027 and 2028. JerseyClicks.org is funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and the New Jersey Library Network. [Click here for more information about this JerseyClicks update.](#)

Interlibrary Loan Focus Groups

The New Jersey State Library currently seeks volunteers from New Jersey libraries to participate in a series of Interlibrary Loan Focus Groups in 2025 and 2026. The purpose of the Interlibrary Loan Focus Groups is to discuss, share, and evaluate ideas related to [JerseyCat, the statewide interlibrary loan program](#) provided by the New Jersey State Library. This request is open to all New Jersey libraries; participation is limited to staff members most directly involved in Interlibrary Loan services. These groups will meet between September 2025 and June 2026. Attendance at up to four virtual meetings, as well as one in-person workshop, will be expected. Please fill out the survey below by Friday, August 22, 2025, to let us know if you're interested. [Click here to take the survey.](#)

2025 Summer Reading Program Survey Open

Attention all public library staff who played an active role in administering 2025 summer library programming! Please fill out the Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP) [summer reading survey](#). This survey was created so CSLP can better assess the usefulness of the materials offered by the program on a national level to better serve you, CSLP public library members! Please wait until your summer program has ended to complete the survey. The deadline for completing the survey is September 12, 2025. If you need to see the questions beforehand, [a PDF is available](#). Questions? Contact Sharon Rawlins, Youth Services Specialist, srawlins@njstatelib.org.

Second National Cohort for Building Community-Based Summers Coming this Fall

The Collaborative Summer Library Program is excited to launch a second national cohort for Building Community-Based Summers (BCBS) this Fall. Traditionally, public libraries plan summer library programming from the inside out, with staff hoping for community participation. BCBS flips this script by starting with community input first. BCBS is designed to help CSLP member public libraries build strategies to engage community voices and provide summer services for all members of their communities. The discussions and activities will focus on how to connect with communities experiencing marginalization to design and implement summer library services. Selected participants will have the opportunity to engage with a nationwide cohort of library staff to dig deeply into inclusive summer services. CSLP member public libraries are invited to [learn more about the upcoming CSLP/BCBS cohort](#) and [apply by the end of business](#) on Monday, August 25, 2025, to be considered for the Fall cohort. Accepted participants will be notified in the first week of September. Questions? Contact bcbs@cslpreads.org.