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Public Library Association unveils 2019 award winners

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CHICAGO — Today, the Public Library Association (PLA) announced the winners of its 2019 awards and grants (<http://www.ala.org/pla/awards>), honoring the best in public library service, innovation and outreach. Award and grant recipients are chosen by member volunteers who serve on PLA's Award Juries. PLA President Monique le Conge Ziesenhenné, PhD, along with the award sponsors and PLA members, will recognize the award winners as part of the PLA Member Welcome Breakfast (<https://2019.alaannual.org/registration/ticketed-events#PLA>) at the 2019 ALA Annual Conference (<https://2019.alaannual.org/>) this June in Washington, D.C. Here are the winners:

The Allie Beth Martin Award (<http://www.ala.org/pla/awards/alliebethmartinaward>), sponsored by Baker & Taylor, recognizes a public librarian for demonstrating a range and depth of knowledge about books and other library materials as well as the distinguished ability to share that knowledge. The 2019 Allie Beth Martin Award recipient is **Sondra Eklund**, Youth Services Manager, City of Fairfax (Va.) Regional Library. Eklund maintains a book review blog and has personally reviewed more than 3,000 titles. After serving on the 2019 Newbery Award Selection Committee, she also started a Newbery Book Club for young readers at her library.

The Baker & Taylor Entertainment Audio Music/Video Product Award (<http://www.ala.org/pla/awards/btaudiomusicvideoproductaward>) provides \$2,500 in funding for audio music and video products for the circulating collection of the selected recipient. The award goes to the **Ivan O. Davis - Liberty Library**, a rural library serving the approximately 2,000 residents of Liberty and Montville, Maine. The library plans to use the award funds to quadruple its DVD and video collection.

The Charlie Robinson Award (<http://www.ala.org/pla/awards/charlierobinsonaward>), sponsored by Baker & Taylor, honors a public library director who has been a risk-taker, innovator, and change agent. The 2019 Charlie Robinson Award is presented posthumously to **Clyde Scoles**, who served as Director of Toledo Lucas County (Ohio) Public Library from 1985 until his death in early 2019. Jason Kucsma, the library's Acting Director, cited Mr. Scoles' responsiveness to the changing role of public libraries and the changing needs of the community as reasons for his nomination.

The Demco New Leaders Travel Grant (<http://www.ala.org/pla/awards/demconewleadersgrant%20>) is designed to enhance the professional development of public librarians new to the field by making their attendance possible at critical professional development events. This year's grant recipients are **Leah**

Dudak, Reference Librarian, Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County (Ohio) and **Jessica Robertson**, Cataloging Librarian - Collection Services, Central Rappahannock Regional Library (Fredericksburg, Va.). Each will receive a \$1,500 grant to attend a PLA continuing education event.

The EBSCO Excellence in Rural Library Service Award

(<http://www.ala.org/pla/awards/ebscoexcellencesmallruralaward>) honors a public library for exemplary service to a community of 10,000 or fewer people whose top per-capita income is less than the 75 percent of the national average. This year's \$1,000 award goes to the **Copper Queen Library** located in Bisbee, Ariz., a low-income, rural community along the U.S./Mexico border. During the past three years, the library has introduced a wide variety of new programs and services focused on outreach to underserved populations.

The Gordon M. Conable Award (<http://www.ala.org/pla/awards/gordonmconableaward>) honors a public library staff member, a library trustee, or a public library that has demonstrated a commitment to intellectual freedom and the Library Bill of Rights. The 2019 award of \$1,500 is presented to **Fairfax County (Va.) Public Library**. The library partnered with the School for Conflict Analysis & Resolution at nearby George Mason University to develop and present a series of public workshops around media literacy and civil communication aimed at decreasing political polarization.

The John Iliff Award (<http://www.ala.org/pla/awards/johniliffaward>) honors the life and accomplishments of John Iliff, early adopter and champion of technology in public libraries. This award provides a \$1,000 honorarium to a library professional or library that has used technology and innovation as a tool to improve services to public library users. The 2019 John Iliff Award winner is **Mark Williams**, Chief Librarian & CEO, Milton (Ont., Canada) Public Library. Under Williams' guidance, the library launched an open-source mobile gaming application that encourages patron interaction with community programs and services.

The Romance Writers of America Library Grant (<http://www.ala.org/pla/awards/romancewritersgrant>) is designed to provide a public library the opportunity to build or expand its romance fiction collection and/or host romance fiction programming. The 2019 recipient, **Suffolk (Va.) Public Library**, intends to use the \$4,500 grant to update its romance collection by adding books featuring diverse protagonists like people of color, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ individuals.

Launched in 2018, The Singer Group Helping Communities Come Together Award

(<http://www.ala.org/pla/awards/helpingcommunitiesaward>) recognizes a public library's ability to identify community needs specifically in times of crisis and division, and respond in creative and exemplary ways. The 2019 recipient of this \$1,000 award is **Sonoma County (Calif.) Library** for its Together at the Table project. Through this project, the library hosted community discussions around the topics of climate change, immigration, Blackness in America, LGBTQI life and income inequality.

The Upstart Library Innovation Award (<http://www.ala.org/pla/awards/upstartaward>) honors a public library's innovative or creative community service program. The 2019 award and \$2,000 honorarium will go to the **Southern Adirondack Library System** (SALS), headquartered in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. SALS teamed up with a local food pantry to launch the Fresh Food Collective Library Distribution initiative, which sourced produce from local farms and distributed it through three small, rural libraries.

PLA deeply appreciates the generous financial support of the companies that sponsor its awards, many of which have graciously committed to do so for many consecutive years. Our 2019 award sponsors in 2019 include Baker & Taylor; Demco, Inc., EBSCO Information Services, Romance Writers of America and The Singer Group. Thanks also to the PLA Board of Directors, which sponsors the Gordon M. Conable and John Iliff Awards.

For more information on PLA Awards and opportunities to volunteer on our award juries, visit www.pla.org (<http://www.pla.org/>) or contact the PLA office at (800) 545-2433, ext. 5PLA.

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About the Public Library Association

The Public Library Association (PLA) is the largest association dedicated to supporting the unique and evolving needs of public library professionals. Founded in 1944, PLA serves nearly 10,000 members in public libraries large and small in communities across the United States and Canada, with a growing presence around the world. PLA strives to help its members shape the essential institution of public libraries by serving as an indispensable ally for public library leaders. For more information about PLA, contact the PLA office at 1 (800) 545-2433, ext.5PLA, or pla@ala.org (<mailto:pla@ala.org>).



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