**TO:** PLA Board of Directors

**FROM:** Melissa Faubel Johnson, Conference Manager

Angela Maycock, Manager, Continuing Education

**RE:** PLA 2022 Conference Report

**DATE:** October 14, 2022

With the hard work and support of the Conference Committee, Program and Local subcommittees, along with the PLA Board of Directors and staff, the PLA 2022 Conference was a success.

**REGISTRATION**

A total of 6,005 librarians, exhibitors, speakers, guests and others registered for PLA 2022, compared to 8,694 registered for the 2020 conference in Nashville. Attendee registration was 3,794, compared to 6,598 in 2020. The number of exhibitor representatives was 1,025, compared to 2,096 in 2020. Virtual conference participation was at an all-time high, with 1,186 registrants. In 2020, 103 individuals and 68 groups registered for the virtual conference.

**PLA CONFERENCE SURVEY TAKEAWAYS**

PLA invited all 6,005 in-person and virtual conference participants to complete the post-conference survey and received 1,143 responses, a 19% response rate. 1,065 of respondents said they attended the conference in person, and 97 confirmed they attended virtually. The evaluation had 41 questions total, covering both the in-person and virtual conferences. However, use of skip logic meant most respondents did not see all the questions, and only a few were required.

**In-person Conference**

According to the survey, the top two most important reasons participants chose to attend the PLA conference were for the educational content of the programs and for professional development. Overall, 93.2% of respondents said the educational content was very or extremely important, and 90.5% said professional development was very or extremely important. 63% of respondents were identified as “promoters,” meaning that they were likely to recommend the PLA conference to a friend or colleague.

As for the overall conference experience and the usefulness of each type of activity or program, participants rated the opening session, big ideas sessions, and closing session most highly. 98.7% of respondents said they visited the exhibit floor and of those, 82.3% said they visited 3 or more times.

*In-person conference comments regarding the overall conference:*

* “I was really inspired by the keynote speakers, and overall experienced a renewed love for my library and all that we do to serve our community. I plan to share my notes with staff on the sessions that I attended at this conference and an upcoming meeting and look forward to changes that will better serve our patrons.”
* “Utilizing the ideas and resources from several sessions focused on adult services to help continue to strengthen our adult programming. I also want to help implement a EDI committee at our library partly thanks to some of the fantastic sessions focused on those important concepts.”
* “Honestly, hard to just select one... I think the biggest impact or takeaway I had were ideas and tools shared to better integrate DEI in our programming, operational and collection development policies. I'm really excited to get to work in start making these changes.”
* “I am already applying ideas about reclassifying items in Dewey as a result of the program about removing barriers in the library catalog!”
* “I attend[ed] one session called How to Build a Better Board and the speakers suggested providing a training on Intellectual Freedom and censorship and our collection development policy. I had my Library Board of Trustee meeting last night and staff and I came up with a training and explained our CDP. We have so many great questions and our board thanked us for providing this training.”
* “It was the professional boost I needed after heading toward burnout. The change I'll make is looking at my work with fresh eyes and a renewed passion for what I do every day.”

**Virtual Conference**

97 respondents affirmed that they attended the virtual conference, and, like the in-person participants, rated the educational content of the programs and professional development as the two most important reasons they attended.

Asked about the length of the virtual conference, 81.6% of respondents said it was just right. 13.8% found it too short and only 4.6% said it was too long.

On a scale from 1-10, the respondents rated the online platform 8 for ease of use. Suggestions for improvement include a wider selection of virtual programs and more online networking opportunities.

*Virtual conference comments regarding the overall conference:*

* I am hoping to make some inroads on welcoming the trans and nonbinary communities, and I got a couple of good ideas for programs on local history and other topics. Since several of us were able to attend from my library, I hope that we might have some momentum on other diversity issues that were covered and need attention, too.
* I plan to explore how we can work with local Indigenous patrons to create more inclusive gathering spaces. I also plan to explore how we can serve incarcerated or recently incarcerated patrons and make them feel welcome!
* Going to push my director to fill the vacant bilingual services librarian job. It's been empty for years, but Luvvie Ajayi Jones really made me realize that I can't just let it go without making some trouble.

**Educational Sessions**

In total, 95 educational sessions were delivered in-person in Portland – 89 programs and 6 preconferences – and an additional 22 programs were delivered as part of the Virtual Conference. The HOW TO Stage offered another 29 bite-sized learning opportunities and the Intellectual Freedom Forum offered 3 learning and networking sessions as well.

Evaluation data from educational sessions indicate that programs and preconferences met PLA 2022 attendees’ expectations. PLA considers a score of 4.0 (on a 5.0 scale) to be a baseline for the quality of our conference programming. Across all preconferences, attendees rated overall value for the investment at 4.3 and overall quality at 4.5. Across all programs, attendees' rating that they learned something new to help in their work was strong for both Virtual Conference programs (4.43) and in-person programs (4.16).

*In-person conference comments regarding educational content:*

* “It gave big picture ideas, while also providing practical solutions to implement at my home library. The presenters were amazing, knowledgeable, and helpful.”
* “This was by far the most useful and impactful workshop I’ve done at a conference in the last 10 years.”
* “The presenters were knowledgeable, engaging, dedicated, and interesting people. The tools they gave were ready to go to make impact without needing to hire extra staff to dedicate to the effort.”
* “Hearing the challenges this team faced will help us not make the same mistakes, and will help us use their successes to succeed.”
* “Fantastic engaging responsive organized and FUN conference. I will always attend PLA.”

*Virtual conference attendee comments regarding educational content:*

* “Thank you for showing us how to do this with a variety of budget options and to apply your lessons learned to our programs.”
* “Jam-packed with resources and up-to-date information directly related to work I perform at my library. Excellent delivery!”
* “I am galvanized to take what I learned today and implement the details daily.”
* “I super appreciate that this program was all about tangible things we could take back to our libraries and implement in our own spaces. Thank you!

**Membership**

A total of 1,548 members (new, renew and reinstated) joined and registered for PLA 2022 (in person and virtual). Out of the 6,005 total registrants (participants, exhibitors, speakers, guests) to the 2022 PLA National Conference (in-person and virtual), 2,445 were PLA members.

Asked about their membership status, 72.9% (741) of those who responded to the participant survey said they are a PLA member, 23.3% are not, and 3.7% were unsure. The majority of attendees work in administration (50.1%) and/or public services (48.6%).

Among members, 59.8% said the primary purpose of joining or renewing this year was to access discounted conference registration rates. 53.5% said they would be willing to sign up for a 2-year PLA/ALA membership in a conference year, if that were an option.

59.6% of current members reported they intend to renew next year, 32.9% are unsure, and 7.5% do not intend to renew. Among current members who are unsure or do not intend to renew, 217 responded to the question of why they would not renew: 45.2% said they can’t afford membership every year and 32.3% said they don’t see the value in non-conference years. Only 5.5% said they would join another association or attend a different conference next year.

**Impact of COVID-19**

44.9% of respondents said COVID-19 had little or no impact on their participation. 7% of respondents said they were more cautious or nervous about participating and 3.1% said they engaged less, including skipping receptions or events that were crowded. 6.7% mentioned they didn’t like having to wear masks at the conference or thought the requirement should’ve been dropped when local/state requirements changed. However, this is outweighed by the 17.7% of respondents who said they appreciated the masking and vaccination requirements, and many said those precautions were central to their decision to attend in person.

**PLA 2024**

29% of respondents plan to attend PLA 2024 in Columbus in person, and 1.9% say they will attend virtually. 56.4% are not sure yet. Only 12.7% say they would not attend.

# **EXHIBITS**

Exhibit sales were down from previous years due to the pandemic – 205 companies exhibited from 441 booths and 1 table top, compared to 312 companies from 683 booths in 2020.

The hall was noticeably busy during coffee breaks and the lunch hour due to food options available within the hall and no conflicting programming scheduled. 83% of exhibitor survey respondents thought that the scheduled hours were “just right”. When asked if the Conference met their expectations, 76% of the respondents said yes.

The exhibit hall continued to be a key destination at Conference. A number of programming elements and networking areas helped make the area a dynamic draw for attendees and ensure regular traffic flow, including the How-To Festival, Book Buzz Stage, and activities in and around the PLA Member Lounge. Concession availability in the exhibit hall also kept attendees in the space and interacting with exhibitors during key, unopposed, lunch hours.

**PLA STRATEGIC GOAL LINK (check all that apply)**

TRANSFORMATION  LEADERSHIP  ADV. & AWARENESS  E.D.I.S.J.  ORG. EXCELLENCE