The 2008 Annual Conference in Saratoga Springs was a resounding success with a record number of attendees and a sold out Trade Show. The Conference offered 90 workshops and drew a total of 1,530 attendees and exhibitors. The Conference was reconfigured this year to offer professional development workshops in the morning on Thursday, followed by the opening of the Trade Show and a General Opening Session Luncheon with Keynote Speaker Lee Rainie, Director of the Pew Internet and American Life Project.

This reconfiguration of the schedule resulted in a larger turnout for the Keynote Speaker than in previous years when the General Opening Session was held early on Thursday morning. The Vitality Event Fundraiser was a success on Thursday night with over 300 attendees showing up to see their brave colleagues participate in a Fashion Show that offered a glimpse of the more glamorous side of librarians. In addition, 86 prizes were raffled off for a variety of gifts ranging from watches and jewelry to hotel stays and household items.

Friday started off with a sold out NYLA Network Breakfast where many newcomers to NYLA and the Annual Conference mingled with NYLA leaders and learned more about the association and each other over breakfast. Bernie Margolis, the new State Librarian, NYS Education Commissioner Richard Mills and Jeff Cannel, Deputy Commissioner for Cultural Education took part in a Friday morning workshop on library funding and legislative priorities that also drew Regent James Dawson, Mark Leinung, Assistant Secretary for Education and Assemblymembers Bob Reilly and Amy Paulin.

Amy Paulin, Chair of the Assembly Libraries and Education Technology Committee at the workshop received...
I decided to do something different for this feature in the Fall Bulletin by interviewing our new NYLA President Josh Cohen after hearing him speak at length and so eloquently during the Inaugural Celebration at the Annual Conference. Here is the interview with Josh in his own words.

What prompted you to become a librarian?

I was working as the Director of Training and Staff development for a not for profit human service agency that went under and needed to find another job. After getting rejected many times for various positions, I saw an ad to work at the Mid-Hudson Library System. I had no idea what that was, but got the job. I only intended to stay for a year or two, but when the person who hired me retired, I was offered her position of Outreach Coordinator. I took the job, but was then told I needed an MLS for that position. So I went to library school. I was amazed to find out all the resources that were available in libraries and if I had known about Job Information Services before being hired at Mid-Hudson, I might have been able to find a different job. This was about the time that the internet was becoming more available, I am talking Gophers, but it was clearly the start of something major and libraries were in it very early. I also became committed to the ideals of librarianship like equal access and intellectual freedom and saw the potential for libraries to bring minority and disenfranchised populations into the community. I think libraries are a key player in improving people lives and strengthening our communities.

What new initiatives or changes will you be working on at your library system?

We have been working on strengthening libraries. That means getting the budget voted on by the public, improving the functioning of library boards and insuring staff can keep up with the ongoing changes. We have recently developed quality service survey to set benchmarks for the level of service libraries can provide to the community and then we will target system services to areas that need improvement. I believe every community deserves the highest level of quality service and continuous improvement. We have also been working on micro marketing. This means targeting a very specific segment of the community, for example firefighters, gardeners, golfers. By focusing on a group we can then identify services we already have, but many of these groups have their own network. We can tap into those networks for programming ideas, and even get presenters, use their network for publicity and bring them into the library. You can check out the toolkit the Mid-Hudson developed at www.midhudson.org/byb/.

continued on page 10
Games in Libraries: Myths and Realities
by Scott Nicholson, Associate Professor, Syracuse University School of Information Studies

Over the last few years, the Library Game Lab of Syracuse has been exploring how libraries have been using games in their services. As we have worked with librarians, we have realized there are a few commonly-held misconceptions about games in a library setting. Here are some of the common myths and the realities of gaming in libraries:

Myth #1: Games are new in Libraries.
Libraries have been using games as part of their services for decades. In fact, our research traces gaming in libraries back to 1855 at the Mechanic’s Institute Library in San Francisco, which had a chess room. The chess club that met there still meets today and is the oldest chess club still running in the U.S. Many libraries have had games like checkers and chess for years, and many summer reading programs are centered on some type of a reading-achievement game. The format of popular games has changed, but the concept of games in libraries is not a new one.

Myth #2: Gaming is for teens.
Just as there are books for all ages, there are games for all ages. A game collection, like a book collection, needs to be developed to represent the needs of different patron groups. Well-designed gaming programs can target families with a variety of experiences that the family can enjoy together. Board games and card games can be played by people of all ages. The Nintendo Wii has also broken down traditional boundaries of console games; many senior centers and now libraries are finding success in Wii bowling matches as a way to engage a new audience with video games. A senior, a teen, an adult, and a child who did not know each other prior to the gaming session can play Wii Tennis together. After the game, they are comfortable enough with each other to have a conversation, which aids the library in the role of community hub.

Myth #3: Recreational gaming is just for public libraries.
Recreational games have a place in other types of libraries. Gaming improves the social connections among patrons and helps them feel the library is relevant to their lives. School libraries find that after-school gaming clubs allow students to connect and build social relationships with similar students. Students who typically would sit alone on the playground can find a connection with others through a gaming program. Academic libraries find that gaming allows students to relax from studying and develop connections with each other. Savvy academic libraries combine games with information literacy activities to engage students in other library services while motivated by games.

Myth #4: Libraries are turning into arcades.
Gaming in libraries is a relevant service for many. While storytime is an important service in public libraries, having storytime programs doesn’t make the library into a daycare center. Coffee is a relevant service for many, but a library with a café is not a coffee shop. Gaming services are offered alongside other library programs as another relevant service.

Myth #5: Gaming programs are expensive.
Gaming programs are about the facilitation of an experience. It is expensive to keep up with the newest electronic games, but board, card, or role playing games or older game consoles can offer similar social experiences at a much lower cost. Libraries will be financially challenged to keep up with all of the new games, so those planning gaming programs should focus on the gaming experience rather than the games themselves. Another model for an inexpensive gaming program is encouraging patrons to bring and teach their favorite games. Many communities have board game clubs where members can bring and teach a variety of games. Engaging patrons in the planning and leadership of gaming programs can aid considerably in the library resources and time needed to run a gaming program.

Gaming programs are a way of providing a relevant service that can attract those who are not typical library users. About three-fourths of surveyed librarians report that patrons who participate in gaming services return for non-gaming activities. Once patrons are in the library and perceive the library as having relevant services for them, librarians can use this as a marketing opportunity to expose patrons to other library services. While games are a form of play, it is important for librarians developing gaming programs to treat them as seriously as any other library service.

If you would like to learn more about gaming in libraries, you can visit the Library Game Lab of Syracuse’s website at http://gamelab.syr.edu where you will find updates to our projects and all of our publications. In addition, you can listen to the monthly Games in Libraries podcast at http://gamesinlibraries.org. The American Library Association has a gaming resources wiki at http://gaming.ala.org/resources.
Executive Director’s Report

NYLA wraps up 2008 with a very successful Annual Conference in Saratoga Springs that saw a record number of attendees and a sold out Trade Show. Ten days after wrapping up the Annual Conference, NYLA organized a Rally at the State Capitol that brought 450 library advocates to Albany to protest a proposed $20 million cut in Library Aid.

NYLA was able to pull off these events (as well as Library Lobby Day in March which also had a record turnout of more than 1,000 advocates), despite a changeover in staff that included the departure of Jeremy Johannesen, the promotion of Johanna Geiger to Deputy Director and the addition of Amanda Wing as Marketing Coordinator.

NYLA also reached some important milestones in its history by reaching 4,300 members and $1 million in its bank accounts. This growth in membership and the financial resources of the Association has led the NYLA Council to approve the purchase of a larger building (4,400 sq. ft.) for NYLA’s offices that also includes 40 parking spaces which provides the opportunity for NYLA to expand its services to its growing membership.

I want to thank all of NYLA’s members for their continued support and active participation in the Association and especially the NYLA staff for carrying out its responsibilities in a professional and effective manner during a year of transition.

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Legislative Update

On November 18th, the Governor called back the State Legislature for a Special Session to deal with an estimated $1.5 billion deficit in the current 2008-09 State Budget. Included in the NYS Division of Budget’s recommendations to the Governor to address this shortfall was a proposed $20 million cut in Library Aid. This 20% cut in funding would have been on top of the 2% cut imposed in April and the 6% cut approved at another Special Session in August. If the $20 million cut had been approved, it would have brought Library Aid to a level not seen since 1993.

In response to these proposed draconian cuts, NYLA organized a Rally at the State Capitol which drew approximately 450 library advocates to Albany to protest these cuts.

Our efforts and those of other statewide groups, was effective in discouraging the Legislature from taking action on the Governor’s proposed deficit reduction plan.

Our position has been and will continue to be that libraries have done their fair share in contributing to the reduction of the state’s budget deficit and now it is time for others to do their part and for other alternatives to be pursued, before asking libraries again to take another cut.

The Governor will release his 2009-2010 Executive Budget on December 16th and we are bracing for more cuts in Library Aid to be proposed by the Division of Budget. The library community needs to be prepared to be mobilized once again to fight off or reduce any more cuts in funding. We will need many more library advocates – Library Minuteman so to speak, to be ready at a moment’s notice to take up arms or in our case pen, email, phone, etc to make our case to our elected officials.

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2008 Highlights

continued from page 1

NYLA’s Outstanding Advocate for Libraries Award for her efforts on behalf of libraries since she became Chair in March 2007. Friday night concluded with the Inaugural Celebration, which featured former state Librarian Janet Welch receiving the President’s Lifetime Achievement Award, Tom Alrutz from New York Public Library receiving the Outstanding Service to Libraries Award and Colette Titkin receiving the NYLA/ProQuest Intellectual Freedom Award.

Both Rosina Alaimo, 2008 NYLA President and Josh Cohen, 2009 NYLA President gave passionate and humorous addresses that touched upon the past and future of libraries and the library profession. The Annual Conference concluded on Saturday and featured an early morning discussion with Keith Michael Fiels, ALA Executive Director and Farewell Luncheon Speaker, author Russell Banks.

Special thanks to all the Conference Programmers, Committee Chairs, room monitors, volunteers, speakers and sponsors who contributed to the success of another Annual Conference. See you in Niagara Falls on October 14-17th next year.
Congratulations to our friends at the GRINNELL LIBRARY for winning your 414 in today’s tough economic climate.

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ASLS Erin Rushton, President

I hope everyone enjoyed this year’s conference programs, events and exhibits. ASLS was pleased to sponsor many engaging and innovative speakers who presented on a variety of topics ranging from environmentally friendly libraries, digitization and Web 2.0. I also hope you had a chance to stop by our booth and say hello. Special thanks to Carol Anne Germain and Elaine Lasda Bergman who helped plan and organize the booth. The theme this year was “knowledge and products created with the help of library research from academic and special libraries in NYS.” Speaking of conference, do you know ASLS is already preparing for next year’s programs? I’d love to hear from you if you an idea for a speaker or topic.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome new ASLS Board Members. Regan Brunragen, from the Corning Museum of Glass, is the new Vice President/President-Elect. Regan will also be responsible for coordinating next year’s ASLS conference programs. The Board also welcomes Treasurer Kathryn Frederick from Skidmore College and new Directors Nancy Virgil Morgan from Utica College, Elaine Lasda Bergman from University at Albany and Sheryl Knab, Western NY Library Resources Council.

LAMS Rebecca Lubin, President

The Library Administration and Management Sections (LAMS) is happy to announce its officers for this year are President – Rebecca Lubin (Albany Public Library), President-Elect/Conference Chair - Rebekkah Smith Aldrich (Mid-Hudson Library System), Treasurer – Frank Rees (Kent Public Library) and Secretary – Pat Kaufman (Mahopac Public Library).

The entire LAMS Board would like to publically thank Phyllis Keaton for her fearless leadership for the past, not one, but two years as President. You were a joy to work with and we look forward to your continuing support of all things LAMS. We would also like to thank Bob Jaquay for his work on the LAMS Board and specifically as LAMS Treasurer. Enjoy the sunshine!

The winner of the Kindle Raffle was Julia Schult. Congratulations and enjoy!

Up-to-date LAMS news is always available on our webpage [http://www.nyla.org/index.php?page_id=62] including fun photos (Vitality fashion show anyone?) and conference materials from the 2008 NYLA Conference.

Also make sure to check out our peer-reviewed online journal, JLAMS, at [http://www.nyla.org/index.php?page_id=62]. The Spring 2008 issue includes articles about homeschoolers using public libraries and how to deal with explosive customers.

Despite the section name, LAMS isn’t just for managers, it is for anyone interested in how to handle work situations, furthering their library career and moving up to positions of leadership anywhere in the library world.

PLS Karen LaRocca-Fels, President

Conference news

The PLS-sponsored program “The Customer Centered Library,” with Karen Hyman of South Jersey Regional Library Cooperative, was attended by over 130 conference participants. Ms. Hyman presented a lively program on how to create library spaces, policies, and services to best satisfy customer needs and expectations. Handouts from the program are available on the PLS Section page of the NYLA website.

This year’s Author! Author! event took place at the beautiful Saratoga Automobile Museum and featured two authors: Julia Spencer-Fleming, and Anne White. Over 100 participants enjoyed good food and a lively presentation.

Post MLS study award.

PLS is offering $500 toward tuition of a Post MLS study program such as the NYLA Institute, NYLA Leadership and Management Academy or Palmer Institute for Public Library Organization and Management. See the PLS webpage for more info.

We would like to wish a fond farewell to Virginia Papandrea, who served as PLS First Year Director this year. Virginia valiantly managed the PLS booth this year, as well as monitored and presided over one of our conference programs, all while anticipating moving house and changing jobs the following week. Virginia, former director of Rose Memorial Library is Story Point, started her new job in Tom’s River, NJ and we wish her the best of luck. The PLS Board has appointed Susan Considine, director of Fayetteville Free Library, to fill Virginia’s position. We would like to extend a warm welcome to Susan and to thank her for agreeing to serve on the board.

SLMS Carole Kupelian, President

The School Library Media Section has been working with the staff of the State Education Department particularly members of the C&IT team. Dr. Joanne Shawhan and John Brock, with their supervisor, Anne Schiano, have helped to smooth the way to including representation from school library media specialists on several current initiatives. Among the first of these is the inclusion of SLMS members on the committee reviewing the ELA standards. We have representation on the committee revising the School Library Media Program Evaluation rubric. SLMS is accepting curriculum vitae of qualified individuals who may be able to participate in the review committees for other standards. We are taking the initiative to have candidates ready if we receive the charge to provide names.

The Board of Regents has been approached about the possibility of adding an eighth standard content area, one dealing with Information Literacy. Adding that area has not been approved at the time of publication.

As excited as SLMS members are about the prospects for the coming year, we also receive frequent reminders that we need to be vigilant in contacting our legislators and the governor. We need to remind them that libraries and library systems are already sharing services. We have the infrastructure in place to serve New York citizens of all ages and economic status, but we need government support to continue to provide this service.

YSS Annette Birdsell, President

Jen Ogrodowski and her conference planning committee deserve our thanks and commendation for an inspiring and creative conference! We also extend our thanks to the Empire State Committee, for their selection of Rafe Martin as the 2008 Empire State Award winner. Rafe’s luncheon left everyone eager to hear more of his stories and have their beautiful language and images in our libraries.

A highlight of the conference for me was sitting at the Inaugural Banquet with our Ann Gibson Scholarship winner, Sarah Wasser and our Dewey Fellow, Janet Kreason. Congratulations everyone.

We are looking forward to the YSS Spring Conference, “A Kaleidoscope of Ideas,” on Friday, April 3, 2009, at The Inn on the Lake in Canandaigua, NY. The keynote speaker will be author Linda Sue Park. The day-long conference will offer diverse topics including early literacy, using technology with teens, programming on a budget, library web pages for youth, developing collections and programs for gamers, and designing hands-on graphic novel workshops for teens. Edgar Award winning author, Vivian Vande Veide, will provide the luncheon speech. Registration includes a continental breakfast and luncheon. Early bird rates apply until February 28, 2009. Reduced registration fees will be offered for library school students and New York Library Association members in the Youth Services, and School Library Media Sections. The Youth Services Section is pleased to be partnering with the 4th Annual Grater Rochester Teen Book Festival which will be held in Rochester on Saturday, April 4 allowing attendees the opportunity to hear some outstanding young adult authors the day after the YSS Spring Conference. For further information, please contact Conference Chair Liz O’Bole at lotoole@plsls-net.org.

The brochure and registration are available now on the youth services section of the NYLA website: [http://www.nyla.org/content/user_13/YSS_Spring_Conference_2009_Brochure.pdf].
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Sheila Doherty – St. John’s University
Jennifer Chisnell – Palmer School/LIU

Inaugural Celebration Award Recipients

President’s Lifetime Achievement Award
Janet Welch

The recipient of this year’s President’s Lifetime Achievement Award was former State Librarian Janet Welch. Janet was the first woman to serve as State Librarian and retired this past June after 11 years in the position.

During her tenure as State Librarian a major renovation of the New York State Research Library was undertaken, over $20 million in funding from the Gates Foundation was obtained for public library internet access, and a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services was awarded that helped recruit young librarians from diverse backgrounds into the profession. Also under her leadership, participation in the Statewide Summer Reading Program soared to more than one million children, and local public library service was extended to more than 300,000 New Yorkers who previously had none.
Prior to serving as New York State Librarian and Assistant Commissioner for Libraries, Mrs. Welch’s career included corporate research library, school library, public library, and academic library work nationwide. She also served as Director of the Rochester Regional Library Council and had previously received NYLA’s Outstanding Service to Libraries Award and served as NYLA President in 1992.

**Outstanding Advocate for Libraries Award**

**Assemblymember Amy Paulin**

Assemblymember Amy R. Paulin, chair of the Assembly Libraries and Education Technology Committee since Spring 2007 was this year’s recipient of the Outstanding Advocate for Libraries Award.

She was recently re-elected to her fourth term in the Assembly and has already proven herself an accomplished legislator and advocate for libraries and other services important to the needs of women and families. During her first year as Chair of the Assembly Library Committee, she was instrumental in securing a $5 million increase in Library Aid in 2007 as well as the passage of two bills of importance to the library community.

We are hopeful that she will remain Chair of the Libraries and Education Technology Committee for as long as possible, so the library community can continue to have our interests represented in the Assembly by such an energetic, thoughtful and well-respected legislator.

**Outstanding Service to Libraries Award**

**Thomas J. Alrutz**

Thomas J. Alrutz was this year’s recipient of the Outstanding Service to Libraries Award.

Tom will be retiring from New York Public Library after 40 plus years as a librarian and a library advocate.

Tom’s good nature, sincerity, professionalism and insight has served both his employers and the library community very well during his long career. He has been a tremendous asset to NYLA’s Legislative Committee and the success of our advocacy efforts. His ability to grasp and articulate complicated details and funding formulas to the public, his colleagues and public officials will be sorely missed.

Tom has been an exemplary role model for the library community and has consistently gone above the call of duty to serve his profession, his colleagues and library patrons.

**ProQuest Intellectual Freedom Award**

**Colette Titkin**

This year’s recipient of the ProQuest Intellectual Freedom Award was Colette Titkin. Ms. Titkin is a music teacher at Liberty Elementary School in Valley Cottage, Rockland County. Ms. Titkin was nominated for the award because of her long-time efforts to engage elementary school students in a dialogue about censorship and information control. She does through a musical she wrote called “I Am a Book”, in which she engages students, parents and teachers in performances that delve into the issues of censorship.

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What are some of the issues impacting librarians and libraries?

We are being smothered by success. Library use and value has been increasing since 2000. Public access computing, DVDs, online catalogs, information literacy, have all contributed to the increased use and recognition of libraries. For libraries that have put their budgets up for a vote, this success has translated into increased funding, but for the system structure that supports this, we are basically at 1993 funding levels. Libraries have also become a bit of a target for censors. Most libraries have solid policies regarding not allowing people for view inappropriate sites on library computers, but some groups and the media have sensationalized the few times someone has been caught viewing pornography turning this into an attempt to control library policy. Considering the number of people who use the internet at public libraries (over 1900 per day in the sixty-six Mid-Hudson Library System libraries) the less than ten incidents of a patron viewing internet porn is trivial and in all cases was handled exceptionally well by library staff. You would never know this from reading the press.

What role do you see NYLA playing in addressing the issues confronting librarians and libraries?

NYLA is the state professional organization for libraries and librarians. Every librarian who believes in the mission and ethics of librarianship needs to be a member to insure the future of libraries. Anyone who follows the workings of government knows that the loudest voices get through. Without a strong voice in Albany, libraries will be overlooked. Libraries must unite and speak in a unified message to compete with all the other organized voices. The primary issue is funding which has fallen well behind the cost of living, not to speak of increased money. In addition NYLA monitors all legislation coming to the legislature to insure that nothing detrimental to libraries gets through. Issues such as intellectual freedom, privacy free access are all concepts that get lost in the day to day conversation and must be continually defended. The NYLA conference is also an important event. Librarians face continual challenges and having an opportunity to get together and share successes frustrations, get new ideas and new motivation and just recommit to the ideals of our profession is well worth the time. Without NYLA we would be scattered professionals rather than a unified community that fights for free, equitable access to a complete range of information.
Dejà Vu in the Town of Union:
Two Libraries Win Second Legal Battle Over Chapter 414 Library Funding

by Ellen M. Bach and Robert T. Schofield

The George F. Johnson Memorial Library and the Your Home Public Library are village libraries located in and serving the residents of the Town of Union, in the Southern Tier of New York State. Public and free association libraries throughout New York State owe a debt of gratitude to these Libraries for their successful efforts to protect the right to seek voter-directed library funding using the ballot proposition mechanism established by Chapter 414, without interference or obstruction by local municipal governments.

Four years ago, the Town of Union attempted to block a lawful, voter-initiated ballot referendum to establish Town taxpayer funding for the Libraries pursuant to Chapter 414 (also referred to as Education Law § 259(1)(b)(1)). The Town argued that the ballot proposition was not permissible, because Education Law 259(1)(b)(1) allowed a ballot proposition only to “increase” library funding. The Town’s position was that the ballot referendum would establish, not increase, Town taxpayer funding for the Libraries because the Town was not already providing funding. The New York State Appellate Division, Third Department, agreed with the Libraries that a ballot referendum seeking an increase in funding from zero to something greater than zero had been contemplated by the New York State Legislature and was permissible under the statute. The court ordered the Town to allow the funding referendum to go forward, and the voters resoundingly approved the library funding. As a result of the Court’s decision, the Legislature subsequently amended the statute to clarify that voters could vote on the question of “establishing,” as well as “increasing,” funding.

This year, for the first time since 2004, Town voters undertook the considerable project of collecting signatures in support of a ballot referendum to increase in funding for the Libraries. In a second effort to resist voter-approved increases in library funding, the Town Board directed that the general election ballot also include a proposition to eliminate all Town taxpayer funding for the Libraries. The Broome County Board of Elections believed that it was obligated to put the proposition on the ballot if directed by the Town, and it proceeded to do so.

Faced with the unlawful and potentially devastating ballot proposition, the Libraries challenged the Town’s ballot proposition in court. The New York State Supreme Court agreed with the Libraries that the proposition was not permitted under the law. Justice Ferris Lebous ordered the Board of Elections to remove the Town’s proposition from all ballots for the Town. The Town appealed Supreme Court’s decision.

On an expedited appeal, the Appellate Division unanimously affirmed the decision of Supreme Court that the Town’s proposition was unlawful. The Appellate Division recognized that the authority to submit a ballot referendum on library funding to voters in municipalities that are not served by school district libraries is found only in Education Law § 259(1)(b)(1). The court opined that it is “difficult to conceive how [Education Law § 259(1)(b)(1)] could be interpreted to permit a ballot proposition decreasing or eliminating funding.” The court also rejected the Town’s argument that its authority under Education Law § 259(1)(a) to appropriate and change library funding includes

continued on page 13

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very two years, school library media specialists from area schools come together to share new ideas and encouragement at the HFM BOCES School Library System’s Administrators’ Breakfast and Best Practices Fair. On Wednesday, Oct. 12, nearly 50 school leaders and librarians gathered in HFM’s Conference Center to see and hear fresh ideas on school activities, collaboration, the use of technology, and new resources.

For those that think the school librarian only sits behind a desk and says, “Shhhh,” think again. Library media specialists play a critical role in successful schools and contribute significantly to student success. That was the message, backed by research, conveyed by New York Library Association Executive Director Michael Borges.

In his keynote presentation, Mr. Borges shared results of a brand-new study that concluded that a direct link exists between well-funded school library programs run by certified school library media specialists and increased student test scores.

The New York study, conducted by Syracuse University’s School of Information Studies, joins 20 other state’s studies since 1992 to come to the same conclusion: Quality library services equal improved student achievement.

“That’s the bottom line for school districts - student achievement,” said Mr. Borges, pointing to statistics that show that districts with a certified library media specialist on board increased their average test scores by 10 points.

The Syracuse study found that libraries and library media specialists’ play key roles in their schools in three distinct ways.

“Collaboration is critical,” he said. “The study indicated that working together with classroom teachers to teach and integrate information skills and resources into the curriculum has a significant, positive impact on student achievement.”

Recognizing library media specialists as educators is the second key point, he said. Librarians teach students important skills necessary to use ideas and information effectively.

The third key for a successful library is to be up-to-date, relevant, and a welcoming place for students and teachers, Mr. Borges told the group.

Staying up-to-date is a big challenge. Slashed budgets and tightened belts leave school libraries struggling to find resources.

“The average age of a school library book is 20 years,” he said. “Much of the information in these books is either misleading or factually incorrect.”

Mr. Borges told the group that advocacy is extremely important. “Boards of education, administrators, and parents are often unaware of the research supporting library effectiveness,” he said.

Gov. David Paterson recently appointed Mr. Borges to co-chair an action team, along with New York State Regent Joseph Bowman, to develop information literacy standards for students across the state.

“The Board of Regents recognizes the need to revise and improve the learning standards,” said Mr. Borges. “Informational literacy is a vitally important skill set, and there are currently no standards.” NYLA was able to get school librarians appointed to the Regent Steering Committee on Learning Standards and ELA Panel that are examining NYS Learning Standards for potential changes and updates.
the authority to submit the proposition to voters, agreeing with the Libraries that the Town’s construction could lead to absurd results by leaving open the possibility that voters could approve conflicting propositions. The court found that the Town’s construction of the statute was “inconsistent with the clear legislative intent of the statute . . .” to give “local residents of a municipality direct control over the funding of their public libraries irrespective of a municipality’s allocation of its tax revenues.”

Despite the Libraries’ important victory, however, some cautionary notes are warranted. In the course of hearing oral argument in the case, both Supreme Court Justice Lebous and members of the Appellate Division panel voiced surprise that there is no mechanism in the statute to allow for a reduction in taxpayer funding for a library once funding has been approved by the voters. In addition, there was considerable interest from the Appellate Division about the Education Law requirement that ballot propositions on library funding be endorsed by the library’s board of trustees, even where the trustees are not elected by the voters. The Appellate Division was curious about the role played by a non-representative body in the taxing process.

Thus, although libraries and voters around the state have been successful in asserting their rights under Education Law § 259(1)(b)(1), use of this funding mechanism may continue to give rise to controversy and challenge. As a result, libraries should keep in mind that the law provides other methods of seeking and obtaining direct voter support of libraries. In considering opportunities for strengthening and expanding library funding and services, libraries across New York State should give serious consideration to the possibility of rechartering as school district public libraries or special district libraries. The governance and funding structures of such libraries provide many advantages in the effort to improve library services to a community. They are also free of some of the controversy and questions that have arisen with respect to Education Law § 259(1)(b)(1).

1 The authors are attorneys with Whitman Osterman & Hanna LLP in Albany, New York. They successfully represented the George F. Johnson Memorial Library and the Your Home Public Library in this dispute, and they have represented a number of other libraries in litigation and with regard to general legal matters. Ms. Bach is also a trustee of the Albany Public Library. The firm is a member of NYLA. •
WordPress makes sense for a library’s main website

Chances are, you have heard of WordPress, the popular blogging software. WordPress is the behind-the-scenes software that runs literally millions of blogs – and it’s Open Source (FREE!). Its easy setup and word processor-like editing allows people who may not be tech geeks to have beautiful websites and to focus on producing content without having to worry about using complicated web design software.

Is WordPress new to you? You can create a blog and begin writing in under an hour. Check out WordPress.com to get started and sign up for the NYLA Introduction to WordPress Workshop in your area.

Stretching WordPress functionality

Because of its ease of use, many small businesses and organizations have begun using WordPress for their main websites. It was the solution we chose at Troy Public Library (theTroyLibrary.org) when we wanted to make website improvements on a very limited budget. We now use WordPress to easily manage and edit our 100+ page website.

The look of a WordPress site is controlled by a “theme” which can be altered at any time without affecting the content of the site. There are thousands of free themes available and also a wide selection of commercial themes. We realized that an initial investment of time in customizing a theme would provide a consistent and professional look across our entire site and ease of use for the library staff. Theme modifications included customizing graphics and changing elements so that the site looked more like a website than a blog.

Below are some theme customization steps that you may want to try if you are an adventurous WordPress user or an ambitious tech person. If you are not ready to edit a Wordpress theme yet, you may want to attend the NYLA Customizing WordPress Themes Workshop or hire a web designer to customize a theme for use at your library. Theme design could be significantly less expensive than paying for a full website package.

WARNING: You may need a geek friend to proceed further in this article

- Use an FTP client program to browse the files of your WordPress theme (see the person who set up your WordPress site for FTP settings, username and password). Themes are located in “your_site/wp_content/themes.”

Note: your WordPress site must be privately hosted (not on WordPress.com) in order to edit themes.

- Would you like to change a certain font or color? Should a line be thicker or spacing different? The look of the theme is controlled by a file called “style.css.” Simply find the corresponding entry in the CSS and change it. Firebug (a plug-in for Firefox) is a tool we used to identify which line of the CSS to modify to achieve a desired effect.

- Customize the top area of the site (header.php). You could remove the normal text title and tagline of the site and put a custom graphic logo in its place. If desired, modify the bottom area (footer.php) also.

- Remove text that is “blog-like.” Do you want to omit “Posted by: Mary” in the posts? Delete the tag “<?php the_author() ?>” in index.php. You don’t need to know PHP to find and eliminate key elements from the theme. Don’t be afraid to make mistakes – just always keep a copy of the original file before making any changes.

- In minimalist fashion, we chose to eliminate popular widgets such as “top posts” and other items that seemed to add more clutter than functionality.

- Plug-ins that we used:
  - PhotoXhibit: inserts Flickr mini-galleries into posts.
  - WP-Email: allows people to recommend a post to a friend. We used this plug-in to create the “Email this event to a friend” link.
  - WP-Table: creates clean looking tables that can be modified to fit with the look of your theme.
And the special events were super. As usual, the YSS luncheon featuring Rafe Martin was a sell-out. But the star of the special events was the Vitality Event on Thursday night. This year this event featured a fashion show. The fashions were provided by Saratoga Trunk and the models were provided by NYLA. Eleven extremely brave NYLA members, including me, volunteered to sashay down the runway wearing one-of-a-kind, high couture fashions that we could only dream of ever wearing. My gown was priced at $995.00! Zahra Baird looked so stunning in her gown that she actually bought it, at a discounted price, and wore it to the inaugural celebration. And she looked stunning! Check out all the pictures on the NYLA website. We all looked great even if I do say so myself!

The conference ended on a high note with noted author Russell Banks who spoke at the closing lunch.

Now let’s move on to the future. NYLA has taken a bold step. NYLA has purchased a new office building. Now I know some of you are thinking, didn’t we just buy our current office space? Yes we did. But the space is limited and NYLA is growing out of it. Additionally, the parking around our current office is abysmal. It was not adequate for the staff and it was definitely not adequate for visitors to the office. Members of the NYLA Council found it very difficult to find a parking space within decent walking distance of the office. But although these are perfectly valid reasons to move, there were other issues, too many to list here, that made the move necessary.

So, ever mindful of our financial situation, Michael Borges has been looking at properties that would both meet our space requirements and our budget. And he found the perfect place in Guilderland. Everything about this place on State Farm Road is perfect. After a conference call with members of the Executive Board, permission was granted to Michael to place a bid on the property. The bid was accepted. The NYLA Council visited the site on September 26th and after much discussion, weighing all the pros and cons, moved to allow Michael to take the steps necessary to purchase the building. And so it was done. And we plan to close on the property by the end of the year. It is hoped that the move to the new location can be completed by January. I know that we will be celebrating our new office space with an open house at some point in time and we hope to see many of you there.

And so my year as president of NYLA comes to an end. I look forward to joining the august group of NYLA past-presidents and I will continue to serve and support NYLA for many years to come. I sincerely thank you for your support this year and for your patience with my miscues. Be assured that I am saying farewell—not goodbye!

Luke Charde is a volunteer at Troy Public Library (theTroyLibrary.org). He can be reached by email at mail@lukecharde.com.
Thank you all for a very gratifying year as NYLA President. I began this journey last October with mixed feelings. I questioned my qualifications for the role; I questioned my leadership skills and I questioned my knowledge of the many different aspects of librarianship in this organization we call NYLA. But now that the year is over I look back with satisfaction that, even though I did make a few mistakes along the way, it was all good. And I learned an amazing amount about what you all do as librarians in your own areas—much more than you will ever know.

For my last NYLA Bulletin article as NYLA president I am going to honor the immediate past by discussing the 2008 NYLA Conference and Trade Show and then talking about the changes in NYLA’s future.

If you were at the conference, you would know that it was a great conference. And if you weren’t, plan on a trip to Niagara Falls next year. If you’ve never seen the Falls, mixing a trip to the Falls and taking part in the NYLA Conference is a great plan. This year we had a record attendance. Saratoga is a wonderful location for a conference and lent its charm to the general feeling of well-being. The mild weather made it possible to take walking breaks and window shop up and down Broadway at the many interesting stores.

The conference itself wasn’t too shabby either. Let me tell you about some of the highlights of the conference. Let’s start at the beginning. This year the conference began with workshops starting at 8 am on Thursday morning followed by the grand opening of the exhibits. The official opening session was a luncheon featuring the keynote speaker. The jury is still out on whether the participants liked this change or not. But the keynote speaker was a huge success. Lee Rainie, Director of the Pew Internet and Life Project, talks so fast I was getting dizzy following him. But his presentation was full of statistics and information and humor. Many people were honored during this conference. Janet Welch received the NYLA President’s Lifetime Achievement Award, Assemblymember Amy Paulin received the Outstanding Advocate for Libraries Award and Tom Alrutz received the Outstanding Service to Libraries Award. We were pleased to have Keith Michael Fiels, the Executive Director of ALA in attendance and we welcomed the new State Librarian, Bernie Margolis. Also with us was Commissioner Richard Mills and Regent Dawson.

Your colleagues presided at many informational and interesting workshops. Some of these workshops were so well attended that they exceeded the space limitations of the room! I heard nothing but positive comments from all the participants as they walked and chatted in the hallways.

As usual, the Trade Show was excellent. The trade show was sold out! There were many opportunities for librarians and library trustees to confer with the many company representatives who attended this year’s conference. There was something for everyone regardless of your type of librarianship.

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