

Small group share (20 min)

- Each person has 5 min to summarize assigned trends for others in the group.

Discuss and Innovate (20 min)

- Small groups work through the Trends worksheets together. Please use the flipchart to capture your "INNOVATE" discussion!

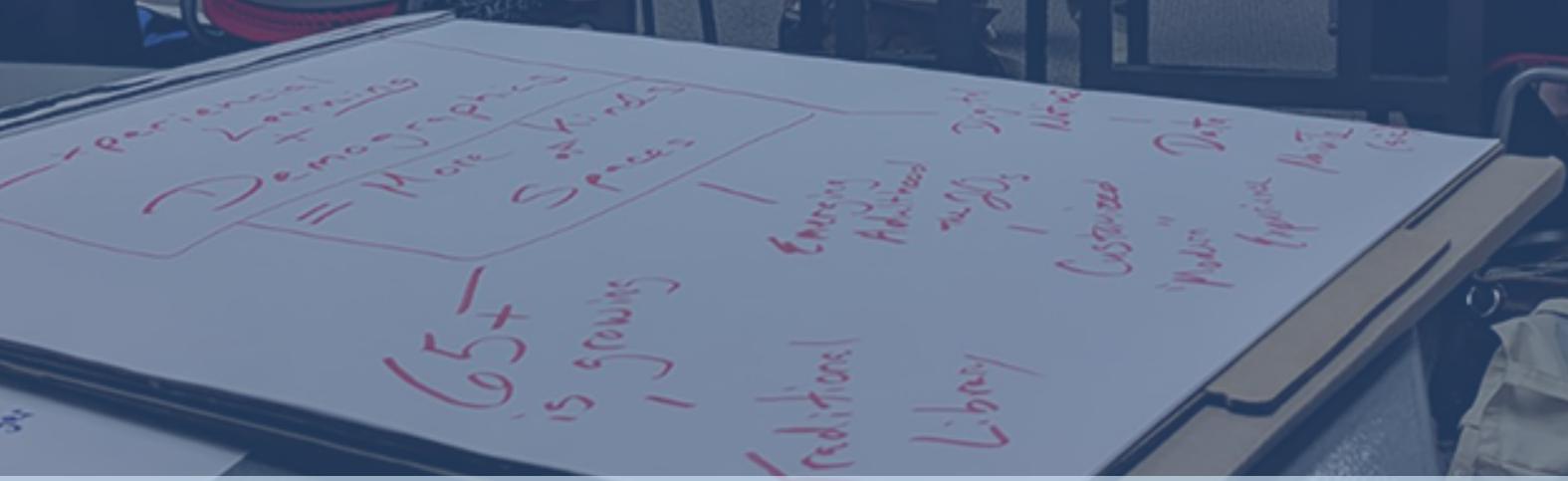
Full group share (8 min)

- Each group has 1 minute to present their INNOVATE idea, 1 minute for questions.

MASSACHUSETTS LIBRARY SYSTEM

# projectset

SKILLS - EMPOWERMENT - TALENT



# Our Story

The Massachusetts Library System was formed in 2010 out of the consolidation of the State's six regional Library offices. In 2014, a task force was formed by members of the organization's Consulting team to investigate the development of a program that would address a major concern emerging at the time in the Massachusetts Library community: the career skills gap. The results of those planning meetings led to the design and implementation of a new cohort-based education model for MLS called Project SET: Skills, Empowerment, and Talent. The task force designed the Project SET model as a means to strengthen the Massachusetts Library community as a whole as well as its members individually. This would be accomplished by focusing the team's strengths and skills to increase the skills of our members, by building strong trusting relationships, by initiating a dialogue of important library topics, and by providing strong mentoring and team building.

## Year One.

In 2015, its first year, Project SET began as a full year program rotating between in person and online meetings. The first year of the program was considered a pilot and an opportunity for the task force to test new learning models and initiatives. The first cohort contained 10 participants. The cohort members were chosen from applications submitted by the staff of member libraries. The group size is limited in an effort to create and foster a positive and supportive environment. During the program, SET uses a capstone project (a five minute presentation at Annual Meeting) as a vehicle that guides the participants through skill building in topic areas like communication, leadership, and presentation skills.





## What we learned.

The task force learned some very valuable lessons from the first year of the program. As a result, the team redesigned the program condensing the cohort into six months of the year beginning in June and ending in December. They also elected to make the meetings exclusively in person as a result of the feedback received from the first cohort. Additional modes of evaluation beyond surveys like Plus/Delta and observational notes were incorporated, allowing the task force to adjust the program more quickly depending on the skill set of the current cohort. After the first pilot year the task force also decided to incorporate the trends identified by the ALA Center for the Future of Libraries as a key starting point for program participants. The program has also transitioned from lecture type learning sessions to primarily hands-on and discussion based activities. The cohort continues to be limited in size with no more than 12 participants each year.

## Evolving task-force.

The task force itself has also changed over the years. The original team included MLS Consultant team members Sarah Sogigian, Kelly Jo Woodside, April Mazza, Kristi Chadwick, and Amanda Fauver. The task force is now referred to as the SET Crew. Our Project SET Alumni play an important role in the future of this program. In a 2018 pilot program, two SET Alumni - Erica Street, Gordon College (2015) and Miki Wolfe, Sharon Public Library (2016) - joined the SET Crew in order to strengthen the future of the program. After a successful one year trial it was decided that the SET Crew would shift from a primarily staff run program to a primarily volunteer run program. In 2019, the SET Crew will consist of two to three MLS staff members and four Alumni volunteers. With this new SET Crew, Alumni will contribute to the organization's goal of developing opportunities to engage in Co-Creation with our members.



**The SET Program is about so much more than the final presentation. MLS and SET Team provide a structured professional and personal opportunity to build an intimate supportive library community. Through formal and informal training, collaboration, and research, participants develop new skills and a strong bond. The final presentation is the vehicle for this journey of self-discovery and network-building support system.**



**- Eva, Project SET '18**



# Project SET's Main Goal

CULTIVATE AND SUPPORT EMERGING  
TALENT WITHIN THE MASSACHUSETTS  
LIBRARY COMMUNITY.

**Project SET is a professional learning cohort that supports the development of individual career goals and the exploration of other aspects of the library community. Every session provides the chance for participants to build knowledge, communication skills, connections, awareness, and confidence as an information professional. Project SET is a way to interact with other librarians by stepping out of the day-to-day routine and thinking about the bigger picture.**

## **SET goals:**

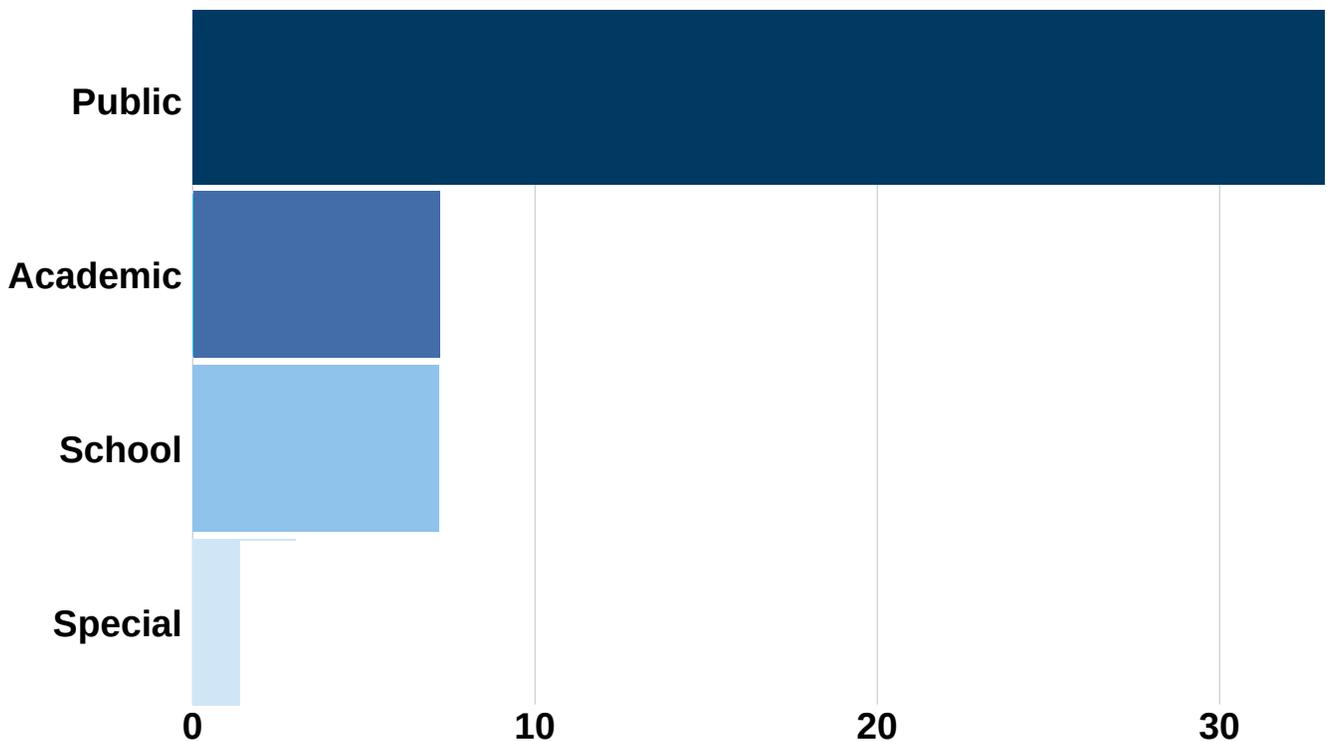
- To improve the quality of member presentations at professional development events.
- To improve the quality of our (MLS) relationships with members throughout the state.
- To strengthen the career paths of participants.
- To increase member engagement across library and network lines.
- To encourage discussion about the future of the library profession.
- To empower participants to become leaders.

# WHO ARE OUR PARTICIPANTS?

## BY REGION



## BY LIBRARY TYPE



# WHAT DO PARTICIPANTS DO?

## SIX MONTHS, SIX THEMES



**Trends and emerging topics**  
(30%)



**Instructional learning theory**  
(10%)



**Presentation skills & design**  
(30%)



**Communication**  
(10%)



**Leadership**  
(10%)



**Career development**  
(10%)

## A TYPICAL DAY...



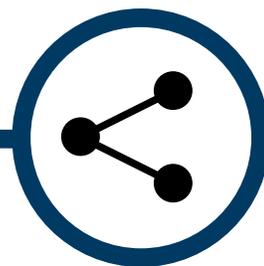
### CONCEPT

Learn about new concepts, ideas, and skills.



### COLLAB

Put knowledge into practice by collaborating with participants.



### SHARE

Learn from each other by sharing experiences & expertise.

# WHAT HAVE OUR ALUMNI DONE?

## 22

Conference presentations given

## 5

Online/Webinar Instruction presented

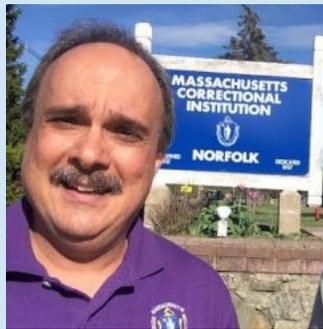
## 10

Committee work undertaken

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



**Kirsten Underwood** (Nevins Memorial Library in Methuen) was a participant in our 2015 SET Cohort. Since completing SET, Kirsten has been an active member of our library community. Kirsten has continued the work she did on her 2015 Project SET program by joining the Massachusetts Library System's Tressa Santillo as a co-chair for the "Institute for Database Engagement and Leadership" (IDEAL). Kirsten is also currently serving on the MBLC's Public Relations Advisory Committee.



**Bill Mongelli** (MCI Norfolk) was a participant in our 2016 SET Cohort. Since completing SET Bill has continued to update his prison library blog- [www.jailfire.net](http://www.jailfire.net). Bill presented "*I need a good laugh:*" *How to Give a Laughter-as-Therapy Program in Your Library* at the 2017 NELA Conference. In the winter of 2018 Bill instructed a 6 week moodle course for ASCLA (Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies) called "The Prison Library as an Agent of Rehabilitative Change". In June 2018 he presented an InfoPeople webinar called "HT Give a Laughter-as-Therapy Program in Your Library".



**Rob Lorino** (Robbins Library, Arlington) was a participant in our 2016 SET Cohort. Since the conclusion of SET Rob has presented at several library conferences. Those presentations include:

- Don't Forget the T: Improving Library Services for Transgender Patrons.
- NELA 2016
- It's Time For Libraries To Level Up!
- NELA 2017
- On Display: Creating Library Displays that Pop!
- MLA 2017
- Queering The Library: How to Better Serve LGBTQIA+ Patrons At Your Library
- NELA 2018

# Meet the Team



## ENTHUSIASTIC STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Project SET is led by MLS Staff, Consultants, and volunteers from the growing pool of SET alumni. The program is managed by two dedicated MLS staff employees. One MLS consultant serves on a rotating basis. Four SET alumni volunteers serve on a rotation for two year terms.

# MLS Staff



## **Amanda Fauver** Project SET Manager

Amanda Fauver manages the Project SET program. She is also the Project Manager for the Massachusetts Library System. Amanda is one of the original members of the Project SET planning team. She has proudly served in this role since 2014. Amanda is a passionate supporter of Project SET and continues to help grow the program. She originally joined MLS in May 2011.

Previously, Amanda had worked at the Topsfield Town Library. She recently completed her Masters of Business Administration with a concentration in Nonprofit Management at Suffolk University. She also has a BA in English from the University of New Hampshire.



## **Sarah Donnelly** MLS Event Coordinator

Sarah Donnelly is the Event Coordinator for the Massachusetts Library System and a proud member of the SET Crew. Sarah has spent her entire professional career in the nonprofit sector, working at first in direct care roles and later in organizational development. Previous roles have found her in the fields of social services, education, and health care. As a development professional, Sarah discovered her love for event planning, and the rest is history. She is delighted to bring her experience to MLS.

In her spare time, Sarah is the Head Coach for the Natick High School Speech & Debate Team. She enjoys mentoring youth and helping them to develop strong communication skills. An active volunteer for the activity of Speech & Debate, Sarah serves on many boards and committees. She is also the Event Coordinator for the National Speech & Debate Championship and a Speaker Coach for TEDxNatick, among other appointments. Sarah graduated from Boston College with a major in Speech Communications & Theater.

# MLS Consultant



## **April Mazza** MLS Consultant

April Mazza is a Consultant at the Massachusetts Library System. She loves working with librarians across the state on issues that affect the young people they serve. Previously, she worked with Massachusetts libraries at the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners on grant projects, supporting library stakeholders, and providing reference services regarding various library issues. She has also taught Children's Literature and Media at Simmons College, SLIS, and have reviewed youth materials for Booklist, Kirkus, School Library Journal, and the Horn Book Guide. April is one of the original members of the Project SET planning team formed in 2014. As the 2019 MLS consultant representative on the team she continues to proudly support Project SET.

## **MLS Consultants Role**

MLS Consultants are a vital part of the Project SET program. With Project SET reaching its fifth year, MLS Consultants participate on a rotating basis. April Mazza will serve for the 2019 cohort of Project SET.

# Alumni Volunteers 2018-2020



**Miki Wolfe '16**  
Alumni Crew Member

Miki Wolfe is the Assistant Director at the Sharon Public Library. She has been working in libraries for over a decade, first in Florida and then back in her home region of New England. Miki received her MLIS, as well as an advanced degree studying the intersection of social media and libraries, from Florida State University. She is passionate about using technology to connect with the community and improve library services. A Project SET 2016 alumna, Miki is delighted to be working with the SET Crew for the second year. Along with Project SET, she also serves on the MLS Continuing Education Advisory Committee, and the OCLN Marketing Committee.

When not busy reading, Miki tends to communicate entirely in meme. She also has a propensity to overindulge in her love of crafts. She collects mystery books by the stack, and relives her glory days on the softball field in a local league.



**Erica Street '15**  
Alumni Crew Member

Erica Street is the Instruction/Serials Librarian at the Jenks Library at Gordon College. She received her MLIS from Simmons College. She also has an advanced degree in Education Leadership from her home institution, Gordon College.

While Erica loves her hybrid role of teaching librarian and managing serials and electronic resources, her real passion is for design. She takes any opportunity she can to create flyers, handouts, brochures, social media posts, etc. that help to tell the visual story of her library. Her interest in design translates to her free time where she enjoys crafting, reading, and spending as much time as possible in her home state, Maine!.

# Alumni Volunteers 2019-2021



**Allison Keaney '17**  
Alumni Crew Member

Allison Keaney is the Open Access Systems and Services Librarian at Stonehill College. She has worked in several libraries over the years, including public, academic and special libraries. She received her MLIS from Clarion University of Pennsylvania in 2018, after working as a paraprofessional for over 12 years. She is passionate about making libraries accessible and welcoming, and also has an interest in providing unusual and engaging library programming.

In her spare time Allison is working on a certificate in Genealogical Studies, fixes things in her very old house, and spends time with her young family (including four cats!).



**Kim Butler '16**  
Alumni Crew Member

Kim Butler is the Assistant Director at the Amesbury Public Library where she manages the adult fiction and non-fiction collection, implements and plans all adult programming, and coordinates all staff scheduling. She has also worked as a Children's Librarian and Technical Services Librarian at the Newburyport Public Library.

She lives in Amesbury with her husband, daughter, and dog where they enjoy watching New England sports, traveling to new places, and eating out.

# Case Studies



## DON'T TAKE IT FROM US!

We believe in the program's value of giving participants time and permission to reflect deeply on their place in the library world, but recognize the commitment it takes from both the participant and their library. Participation in Project SET involves both a sacrifice of time and talent on the part of the library. Learn from the following Case Studies of how real participants and supervisors worked together to manage time, tasks, and talent in order to get the most gain for their library.

### CASE STUDIES

#### Public Libraries

Worcester Public Library, Worcester, MA  
Seekonk Public Library, Seekonk, MA  
Robbins Library, Arlington, MA  
Amesbury Public Library, Amesbury, MA

#### Academic Libraries

Regis College Library, Weston, MA  
Jenks Library at Gordon College, Wenham, MA



# WORCESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY

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## BACKGROUND

The city of Worcester is located in central Massachusetts, 40 miles west of Boston and 50 miles east of Springfield. The Worcester Public Library (“WPL”) is a large municipal library consisting of one main library located in downtown Worcester, six branches (4 School Branches and 2 neighborhood branches) and two mobile libraries with total holdings of 830,143 items. As part of an initiative called One City One Library “OCOL” four of the WPL branches are located inside public schools located in each quadrant of the city. The Main Library also houses the Worcester Talking Books Library. The Library serves a population of 184,211 while also attracting patrons from other CWMARS member libraries. In the city of Worcester, the median income for 2013 - 2017 was \$45,869. Of the city's population, 21.8% are persons living in poverty. In 2017, 55% of students in Worcester Public Schools spoke a language other than English as their first language.

WPL offers a variety of collections and resources for its patrons and community members, including print, audiovisual, and digital materials for all ages and interests; local history and genealogy materials; small business resources; and world language, English learning, and citizenship materials. It is also the largest selective Federal depository library in Central Massachusetts. Furthermore, WPL circulates Wi-Fi hotspots, e-readers, telescopes, tablets for kids and teens, and more. WPL provides programs and services for all ages, such as access to social services with its community partnerships. WPL also provides spaces to encourage community collaboration and foster lifelong learning for its diverse population. Collections, programs, and services designed specifically for kids, teens and families contribute to the education and literacy efforts in the city.

The most popular services offered by WPL include material lending, especially DVDs, books, and Wi-Fi hotspots. WPL offers holds pick up at any branch including the mobile libraries. Also popular are the library's resume and employment services; social services; services for New Americans; early literacy and other youth and family programming; and summer reading initiatives for all ages. WPL also provides regular library service to all elementary schools in the city through either its mobile services arm, or through its unique OCOL initiative.

Since Project SET began in 2015 the Worcester Public Library has had four staff members participate in the program - Rebecca Folb (2015), Rachel Moir (2016), Amy Klein (2016), and Alex London (2017).

## ISSUES FACED

Worcester Public Library saw an opportunity for their staff's participation in Project SET. From the beginning, the program sounded like a great learning opportunity for young professionals to participate in. Project SET provided participants with skills and practice in presentation and training. The project format allowed the Worcester staff to research areas of interest to them and the library, and the "real life" experience provided a professional development opportunity for the participants that was also useful for the sponsoring library.

Prior to their participation in the program, WPL recognized a need for training in public speaking skills for their staff. Communication and public speaking had become an essential skill for all librarians, especially for staff who just entered the profession and had not had time to develop those skills. For example, while a Children's Librarian is typically comfortable presenting a program to children or teens, confidence in presenting information to a group of peers had been a different challenge. WPL is a large library, and it is often important that the one or two people who attended a workshop or conference be able to share something from the experience with their colleagues. The WPL values the opportunity to support its staff in the pursuit of professional development and is always looking for ways to help staff build their professional skills, particularly in ways that are meaningful to them. This culture of support benefits the library by developing staff who are comfortable presenting, training, or advocating for the library. When teen librarian Rachel Moir was part of the Project SET cohort, she was able to look into online privacy attitudes among teens, a timely topic that was of interest to her. That effort then informed her work with the teens at WPL. Another example is when their reference librarian Amy Klein participated in Project SET, her project focused on the hot topic of lending non-traditional materials; this research has been helpful to the WPL as they look at what materials they might add to their own collections.

Over the course of their participation in this program the WPL has gone through many staff and administrative changes, but support for professional development has remained a constant value for Worcester.



## ACTIONS

Accommodating a staff member's participation in Project SET can be a challenge. For the Worcester Public Library, that challenge was scheduling. The WPL supported staff participation in the program by accommodating the time needed to attend required meetings at the MLS office. These changes impacted other staff at the library who were called on to change their schedules and to assist in covering additional branch locations. In some cases, the WPL had to go without. For example to accommodate another staff member's participation at Project SET meetings, the library had to run their bookmobile without a degreed librarian onboard. Even the library's usual programming schedule had to be adjusted for the day of the annual meeting.

During the program, supervisors at WPL took an interest in what their staff was learning and engaged them in discussion. In one example, a supervisor agreed to be interviewed for one of the assignments. In another example, one participant was able to share the research on their project topic with their supervisor and passed on their knowledge of the subject.

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

For the staff who have participated in Project SET and their supervisors, the experience in this program has been a positive one. Worcester has seen their staff members grow both during and after participation in the program. They have demonstrated more confidence when giving a presentation or speaking to a group. Participating in Project SET also gave them a better perspective on what was trending in Massachusetts libraries as well as the challenges other libraries and librarians were facing. They gained professional confidence from the experience and connected with librarians from across the state.

Being able to attend the Annual Meeting and to see their staff members present their project to a room full of professionals was a deeply satisfying moment for WPL supervisors. The confidence and poise each participant demonstrated was a showcase of the skills they had developed over the course of the program.

After Project SET, several of the WPL participants have used their public speaking skills and knowledge of library trends. Since their participation, they have represented the library by advocating for libraries at the state house, conducting effective community outreach, and running successful library programs and classes.

## NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

In the first couple of years during Project SET, last minute schedule changes added additional challenges for the Worcester Library. The staff at the Massachusetts Library System acknowledges the extra challenges these changes caused in the first year or two of the program and has since selected all meeting dates in advance of accepting applicants to allow time for schedule planning. For some, presenting was a challenge that proved nerve-wracking, but the fact that they were able to do so successfully is a testament to the program goals.

## LESSONS LEARNED

As a result of this program Worcester has learned that despite the challenges presented by having to readjust the library's staffing schedule, participation in the program reinforced the value delivered by investing in staff members' professional development.

*The information from this case study was collected from several sources including interviews with staff members at the Worcester Public Library Cynthia Bermudez, Paula Korstvedt, Pingsheng Chen, the 2017 ARIS report, and the US Census.*



Seekonk Library

# SEEKONK PUBLIC LIBRARY

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## BACKGROUND

The Seekonk Public Library is a small public library located in Seekonk, MA, which serves a town-wide population of 13,800 residents. Its unique location, situated on the Massachusetts/Rhode Island border, means that patrons hail from both states. The median age of Seekonk residents is slightly higher than the state average, and like most of the state, the community is aging as a whole.

The Seekonk Public Library has both traditional print collections and a growing digital collection of items. Fourteen public computers are available for patron use. Video games are a favorite option for many patrons, but the two most popular collections at the library are the children's books and the adult DVD collection. When compared to other SAILS libraries of similar population size, the Seekonk library has both a larger collection and a higher circulation. Seekonk library patrons definitely appreciate what their public library has to offer!

## ISSUES FACED

The decision to send Ben Phinney to Project SET wasn't a difficult one to make, especially since another staff member (Michelle Gario) had already been through the program. Ben showed an interest in leadership skills and professional development opportunities, and so Project SET was a natural next step. When the 2018 application went live, Seekonk Director Peter Fuller passed the information along to Ben.

As a first-year Project SET graduate, Michelle's experience in the program was slightly different, but equally valuable. She was excited to read about Project SET when she received the brochure, and knew it would be a great opportunity to meet and network with colleagues statewide. A chance to develop public speaking skills and work on her leadership and professional skills was also exciting. She felt encouraged to apply, as her library maintains a budget for professional development and is proactive about ensuring staff participation in professional conferences and activities.



The Seekonk Public Library is always looking for new ideas and new approaches to library issues. Project SET was a great resource for this type of information. Seekonk is in the midst of a major, multi-year building project, and leadership from staff members will help to ensure community buy-in.

## ACTIONS

Michelle was able to attend all the sessions of Project SET, with other library staff members covering the public service desk while she was away. Her direct supervisor checked in regularly about her progress in the program, and the Associate Director of the Seekonk Public Library attended the final session.

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Michelle enjoyed the opportunity to meet and learn about the work her colleagues at other libraries are engaged in. It was a great opportunity for her to get to know the staff of the Massachusetts Library System, and the work they do. The training sessions hosted by Project SET staff and visiting speakers were unique and informative. While preparing her talk for the 2015 MLS Annual Meeting, Michelle was also given the opportunity to speak at NELA as well. Having the public speaking and leadership training from Project SET gave Michelle added confidence to speak at the regional event.

According to Seekonk Public Library Director Peter Fuller, both Michelle and Ben are more confident in their day-to-day work, and more willing to set their own direction as self-motivated staff members. He sees both an openness to new approaches, and a willingness to experiment. Michelle and Ben have taken on leadership roles in their respective areas at the Seekonk Library, and there is a definite benefit to having strong leaders among the professional staff. The Seekonk Public Library also benefits from the ever-widening network of professional contacts that Michelle and Ben have made as a direct result of their participation in Project SET.

## NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

While their director Peter Fuller acknowledges that it was difficult at times to have staff absent, he noted that other library staff did an excellent job of covering in when needed. He has observed no other negative outcomes as far as his staff's participation in the program.

For her part, Michelle is glad that the time frame of Project SET was shortened from a year to six months. She felt that a whole year was a bit much with winter snow travel and cancellations.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Both Ben and Michelle are very grateful to have a library staff that supports professional development, and encourages participation in meetings, conferences, and programs. Library Director Peter Fuller noted while it's sometimes a challenge to balance personal and professional objectives with that of the larger organization, deriving satisfaction and fulfillment from work sometimes requires an innovative response to the organization's limitations.

Ben became more aware of his library in a professional context. While at times he feels like his library is a quiet building with not much happening, familiarizing himself with library trends on a more macro level helped to explain some of the problems they face, and put them into a clearer context. He also realized that while he might not feel very innovative at his library, getting involved with the larger library community revealed that many of the programs at his library were in fact quite forward-thinking, and might help other libraries with similar issues.

Exposure to Project SET has significantly enhanced both Michelle and Ben's ability to think creatively and thoughtfully when developing programs and library services, according to Peter Fuller. He credits their enhanced abilities as a direct result of exposure to the ideas of other library professionals as a part of Project SET.

*The information from this case study was collected from interviews with staff members at the Seekonk Public Library including Project SET participants Michelle Gario and Ben Phinney, and Library Director Peter Fuller.*



# ROBBINS LIBRARY, ARLINGTON

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## BACKGROUND

The city of Arlington is located in the eastern part of the state right outside of Cambridge and Somerville. The Robbins Library is a municipal library consisting of one main library located in downtown Arlington and one branch library (Fox Branch) serving the neighborhood of East Arlington with a total collection of 666,966 physical materials, 64,631 electronic resources. In FY17 they processed 143,729 interlibrary loans. The city of Arlington is an urban community of almost 45,000 residents and its median household income is \$98,103.

The Robbins Library offers a variety of programs of entertainment and educational value as well as interactive displays throughout the year. Their collection includes traditional materials like books, graphic novels, magazines, music, movies, and audio books. Robbins also circulates books in braille, books in Spanish, French, Russian, & Chinese, a Library of Things, and video games.

The Robbins video game collection boasts especially high circulation numbers and materials within the biography, politics, and arts collections are in high demand within the Arlington community. Programs held at Robbins are well attended, in particular their queer movie nights regularly draw a sizable crowd.

## ISSUES FACED

The Robbins Library saw an opportunity for their staff's participation in Project SET. One of the described goals of program was "to cultivate new talent among the library community of Massachusetts and provide the support and encouragement to build participants' confidence and strengthen their career paths."

Robbins had a newly-minted librarian on staff named Rob Lorino. Rob was working at Robbins as an Adult Services Librarian and to the leadership at Robbins Rob seemed to be exactly the sort of person Project SET was geared towards/for.

2016 was a busy year for this Library they were just beginning to plan for a large building renovation and they had noticed the library was suffering from a greater amount of staff turnover than usual. A major need for the library was to ensure that their staff would be well prepared to initiate and lead library programs.

## ACTIONS

Finding the flexibility to accommodate a staff members participation in Project SET can be a challenge. The Robbins library was able ensure Robs participation by making some minor schedule adjustments.

During the program, Rob's supervisor received regular updates about the program assignments, activities, and final project.

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

For Rob and the leadership at Robbins Library, the experience of participating in Project SET was a positive one. Rob benefited from the hands-on experience of putting together presentations and having opportunities to practice those presentations in front of others.

As a result of this experience Rob began presenting at other library conferences about some of the programs and services offered at the Robbins library. There have also been benefits to the library itself by presenting about some of Robbins less common initiatives such as their LGBT+ programming the library has been given more positive exposure, while inspiring other libraries to do the same.

## NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

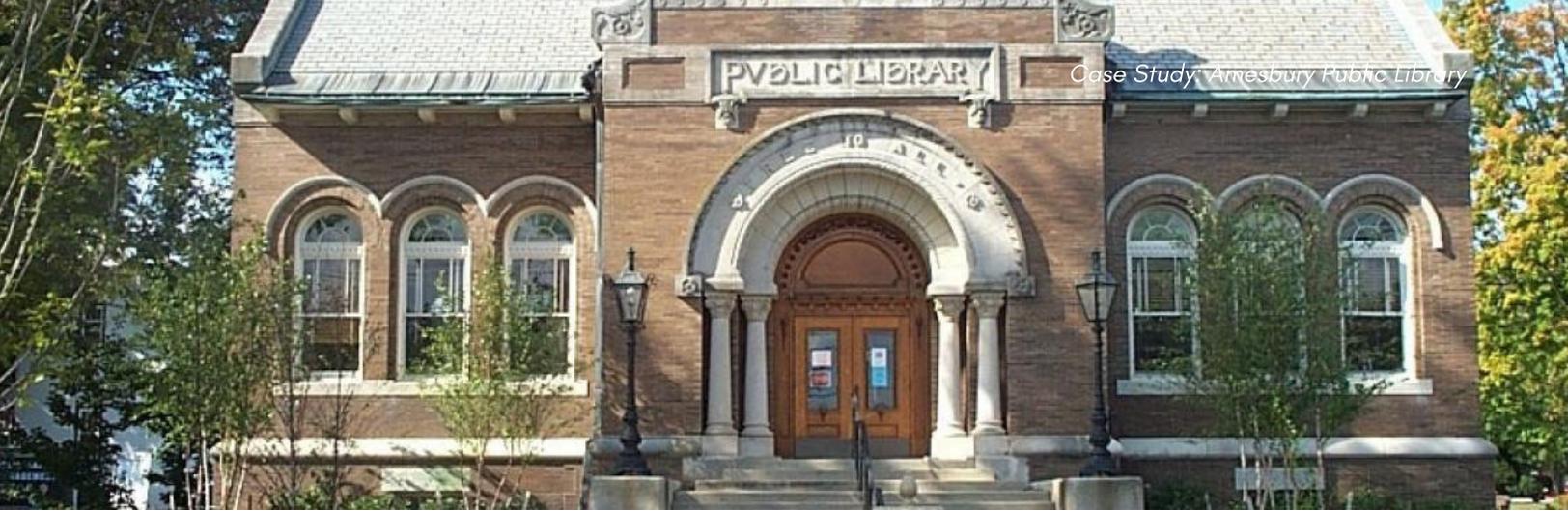
The only downside that Rob and the library faced as a result of their participation in this program was the added responsibilities to their already-full workload.

## LESSONS LEARNED

One of the key things Robbins learned about itself and their staff is that being supportive of professional development opportunities does end up benefiting the library as a whole.

*The information from this case study was collected from several sources including interviews with staff members at the Robbins Library Rob Lorino and Linda Dyndiuk, the 2017 ARIS report, and the US Census.*





# AMESBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY

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## BACKGROUND

The Amesbury Public Library is located on the north shore about three miles from the New Hampshire border. The Library serves a population of around 16,500 residents in a small 11,000 square foot building constructed in 1902. The City of Amesbury is situated along the rushing waters of the Powow River and the Merrimack River, and is home to historically significant people, events and innovations that helped shaped our region, state and country. Amesbury is home to John Greenleaf Whittier, famed poet and abolitionists, is believed to be the site of the first American factory to produce machine-made nails and held the distinction of manufacturing the finest carriages in the world.

The Library collects materials in all areas in order to enrich the lives of our patrons including print, audiovisual, electronic, and digital resources for all ages and interests. The Library has a robust and eclectic collection of local history and genealogy materials that are very popular. The Library has expanded its collection recently to include a library of things, a graphic novel collection, a video game collection and Book Club Kits. The most popular services include programming especially children's programs and story times, e-book and e-magazine resources, inter-library loan and museum passes.

## ISSUES FACED

Project SET offers librarians the chance to expand their skill set, work collaboratively with librarians from all types of libraries across the state, and the chance to develop their leadership skills. Assistant Director, Kim Butler, asked to attend Project SET when she was new to the administrator position in 2015. The former Assistant Director was recently promoted to Director and Kim had only been at the Library for about a year. The Amesbury Public Library staff had gone through a tough stretch of having a new Director every few years and needed some stability. The new Director was hoping to provide that to them in order to better serve the community and felt that Project SET would help Kim gain the confidence she needed in her leadership skills to help the staff move forward.

## ACTIONS

The Amesbury Public Library has a relatively small staff of ten full-time and three part-time librarians. The Library is open 55 hours a week including three nights a week and Saturdays. With a limited staff this requires the Assistant Director to work an evening and on occasion weekends and to fill in at any all public desks depending on vacations, meetings or staff illness often at the last minute. We were able to accommodate the once a month meeting schedule through the summer and fall. Other staff were very understanding of Kim's participation in the program and were willing to pitch in and cover some of her shifts.

Kim chatted with her Director about what she was learning and working on throughout the project and was allowed time during her work schedule to work on projects or do research. Updates about the project and highlights were also shared at staff meetings.

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Kim's participating in Project SET helped her to grow as a leader and in her confidence in her position at the Library. She has taken a more active role in staff development and helping staff to find learning opportunities and she has led trainings for our staff and presented at the Massachusetts Library Association Conference. She is working with her Director on a series of staff trainings on customer service that can be presented together at a conference using the skills she learned through Project SET.

Kim also formed professional connections with her Project SET class and has used those connections to benefit our Library. She has reached out to her colleagues for help with projects, advice on collection development, and for support and advice. Kim has also made a solid connection with the MLS consultants which has proven helpful to the library when it come to training, state-wide initiatives, and grants. Kim has volunteered to work as mentor for the incoming cohort for Project SET and is looking forward to working with new groups of librarians to help them develop their skills as library leaders.



## NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

The only small negative for the Library was desk coverage when Kim was out of the building. However, staff were very generous and stepped to up help with coverage when she was out.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The Amesbury Public Library is a challenging space to work in and requires a very flexible and forward-thinking staff. Project SET encourages librarians to think creatively and thoughtfully about issues, problems, and obstacles; any opportunity to encourage staff to develop these skills and abilities is valuable to any type of library.

*The information from this case study was collected from interviews with staff members at the Amesbury Public Library including Project SET participants Kim Butler and Library Director Erin Matlin.*



# REGIS COLLEGE LIBRARY

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## BACKGROUND

The Regis Library is a small academic library located in an affluent suburb of Boston in the town of Weston. It is the library of Regis College, a Catholic college with over 1,800 full-time students enrolled in the college's many arts, sciences, and health profession offerings. The college serves students from undergraduate to the PhD level, plus staff, outside researchers, and members of Minuteman Library Network (a consortium of 41 libraries with 62 locations.)

The Regis Library primarily supports the students, faculty, and staff with research help, assignment support, information literacy instructions, and access to resources. Popular services include information literacy classes, one-on-one consultations, and study space reservations.

## ISSUES FACED

The Regis Library is committed to professional development among its library staff. Project SET was an ideal environment for Regis Library staff to expand their knowledge of libraries and hone effective skills for communicating with patrons and other professional staff. With new staff at the library, it was a good time to encourage the type of professional growth offered at Project SET.

## ACTIONS

Weronika was able to attend the meetings at Project SET without causing a disruption at back at her library. Her supervisors had to plan for desk coverage on those days, but it wasn't an onerous task. Weronika was diligent about communicating what she learned at the program, and this feedback helped to reaffirm to her supervisors that sending her to Project SET was an excellent decision.

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Participation in Project SET was positive for Weronika, and her director was impressed by the final presentations delivered at MLS Annual. Regis College saw benefits from sending a participant to the program. These included increased confidence on the part of the staff member, as well as knowledge about presentations. General library skills were also enhanced, and her sharpened skills helped students in all subjects which required research. There was also a good deal of discussion sparked from experiences at Project SET, and these talks benefited all library staff, as these are universal library topics important to all.

## NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

Regis Library did not experience any negative outcomes with regards to their staff member's participation in Project SET. While the presentation piece was demanding, the professional success and accolades were well-deserved and well worth it. All the presentations by Project SET participants were excellent.

## LESSONS LEARNED

As a result of their staff member's participation in Project SET, the Regis Library learned that Project SET benefits both the individual staff member, and the library as a whole. Project SET participation is something that all libraries should definitely consider as an option for their staff members.

*The information from this case study was collected from interviews with staff members at the Regis Library at Regis College including Project SET participant Weronika Zawora and Library Director Jane Peck.*





# JENKS LIBRARY, GORDON COLLEGE

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## BACKGROUND

Gordon College is a small Christian College situated on 450 wooded acres north of Boston in the small town of Wenham. The Jenks Library serves the faculty, staff, and students of Gordon College. Jenks serves a total population of about 2400, faculty and staff make-up about 600 patrons and full-time equivalent (FTE) of both graduates and undergraduates students is about 1800. Jenks is also a member of the NOBLE network therefore it's collection is also open to public, providing services to the North Shore community. Gordon College is a residence-based institution serving a diverse student population both nationally and globally.

The Jenks Library has over 100,000 print books, over 50,000 journals (print and online), and provides access to 80+ databases. Additional materials are regularly gathered in support of the mission and curriculum of Gordon College.

The library offers reference services to students, integrated library instruction in course curriculum, and materials delivery through interlibrary loan both with MLS and beyond. The library also offers group study rooms available for reservation and provides an assortment of unconventional circulating material such as headphones, extension cords, and phone chargers.

Jenks has several distinct collection areas - scores, Curriculum Library material for Education students, and Career resources.

Although Jenks provides many popular and well-used resources, the diverse study space provided by open rooms, quiet areas, or group study rooms continues to be a huge draw to students who use the library. Another draw for students is Bistro 255, the coffee shop added in 2013.

## ISSUES FACED

Librarians, by their nature, are often a group of individuals that are hungry to learn. In particular, academic librarians are often encouraged to seek out opportunities for professional development to continue to define and hone skills necessary for the job. Development like the kind offered by Project SET was an excellent opportunity for the staff at Jenks Library. Project SET was a unique chance to connect with the wider MA library community in a supportive environment. The program seemed particularly beneficial to new librarians as it provided the opportunity to help connect them to libraries of all types and the work MLS does to support them.

In 2014 the Jenks Library had a new staff member named Erica Street who had been working for just under a year. While attending a NOBLE meeting the library's director Myron Schirer-Suter saw a postcard announcement for the Project SET program and immediately thought that the library's newest staff member would be a good fit for the program. Project SET's emphasis on emerging leadership and communication was the perfect fit for career interests Erica had already expressed to Myron over the course of her first year. Erica needed an outlet to hone some of her leadership desires and Myron needed a way to get her more familiar with the MA library community - Project SET was a perfect fit.

Erica had been the first hire for the library in ten years and Myron was the last hire before her. The library was about to lose a staff member who had been there for 24 years, who had much institutional knowledge and great ideas. Jenks was on the verge of a shift in staff dynamics that hadn't taken place for a very long time.

## ACTIONS

As her direct supervisor, Myron was able to approve the time she spent at Project SET without reservation. He didn't have any concerns about the time commitment, even when it was a year-long program back in 2015, as he saw nothing but value-added for both the library and Erica. The Jenks library does not have the kind of library where their staff members need to be "on the desk" at all times. Most of their professional librarians operate off-desk so it is easier for them to shuffle responsibilities around as necessary. For the Jenks Library time spent on learning is time well spent.



During 2015 while she was participating in Project SET Erica would check in with her supervisor after meetings to let them know what she was doing. At the time her supervisor saw it as a way to be more involved with the process and to make sure she was getting something positive out of the experience.

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

For the Jenks Library having a staff member present at Annual Meeting was a thrill. The experience of participating in Project SET enabled Erica to form a relationship with the state level. Now when Erica attends meetings with her Director, both MLS and other regional meetings, she is much more connected than she was before, and SET was a big contributor of that. Also being connected to the network of SET program participants has been an asset for Jenks. In general Erica grew more confident conversing with librarians of a different background than her and improved her communication both publicly and personally. The biggest outcome for the library as a whole has been the overall confidence Erica now brings to her position.

## NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

In reflection both Myron and Erica agreed that it could have been beneficial to demonstrate the impact of her participation in SET to the rest of the staff at Jenks Library. During her participation in the program Erica didn't share with anyone besides her director what she was learning. As a result, some of their staff members have wondered what was the value of this program. In retrospect if this program had a clear "immediate" use impact in the library that was visible not just to a supervisor, but at the staff level would have helped deliver this message.

Through the program Erica struggled connecting with the rest of the cohort. She had concerns about being the only academic librarian and that made her feel like she didn't have much to contribute to the group. Also being one of the newest librarians to the profession in the group made her uncomfortable fully engaging in discussions. The staff at the Massachusetts Library System acknowledges imbalance of the cohort in the first year of the program. In subsequent years the program has strived to ensure that there is balanced representation from every area, type, and experience level in every cohort.

## LESSONS LEARNED

As a result of this program the Jenks Library has learned that it was worth sending a staff member to this new program and that the relationships they forged with the the Massachusetts Library System will result in more opportunities and resources in the future.

*The information from this case study was collected from interviews with staff members at the Jenks Library at Gordon College including Project SET participant Erica Street and Library Director Dr. Myron Schirer-Suter.*

# FAQs

## Why did MLS create Project SET?

In 2014 MLS recognized a need within the Library Community for a program that provided mentoring, networking, and addressed a skills gap in the profession.

## What if I can't attend one of the scheduled meetings?

We recognize that on occasion there will be circumstances beyond the control of our participants and understand that a meeting might be missed. We can accommodate one missed meeting with the expectation that the participant will make every effort to catch up on what they have missed. If a participant misses two meetings (40% of the program content) they will be asked to withdraw from Project SET.

## If I don't have an MLS/ MLIS degree am I still eligible to participate?

Yes! This program is open to both paraprofessionals and degreed librarians. We encourage applications from all library professionals.

## Visit our LibGuide to learn more:

<http://guides.masslibsystem.org/projectset>

## Why does MLS contribute so many resources to a program that benefits so few?

Project SET has always run on a budget of \$2,500 or less a year. In our first few years of developing and refining the program, we used a higher volume of staff resources than some of our other programs. Over time we have been able to minimize the use of our staff resources and shift to a primarily volunteer run program.

Project SET not only benefits the 10-12 yearly participants but also offers trickle down benefits to the libraries, networks, and communities these participants represent. Participants bring the skills they strengthen back to their roles in the library and apply them to daily challenges. They also use the knowledge they've gained during their Project SET experience to influence positive change within our community.

## How much time do participants spend on assignments outside of meetings?

The time spent varies by participant but we expect participants to dedicate a minimum of 1-2 hours a week on reading assignments, video viewing, discussion board posts, topic research, and other assignments.

## Who is your target participant?

Project SET is meant for early to mid career librarians and paraprofessionals who are open minded and prepared to engage with a diverse group of professionals. The program is best suited for participants who are either looking for opportunities to step out of the day to day routine and think about the bigger picture or are interested in making connections with professionals outside their library. We strive to build a cohort of participants that bring a variety of perspectives and experiences to the group based on their diverse backgrounds.

## What happens at a Project SET meeting?

Our in person meetings are designed around the themes of library trends, adult learning theory, presentation skills, communication, leadership, and career development. The program's capstone project ties these themes together but it is not the sole focus of our group meetings. Sessions rely heavily on group discussion and activities to reinforce the pre work assignments. There will also be some lecture style instruction.

## How many people have participated?

As of the end of 2018, Project SET has had 44 participants.



# projectset

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## Contact the Crew

### **General questions about the program?**

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