



Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 12, 2026

The Maryland State Library Agency Board met in regular session on Thursday, March 12, at 10:00 AM. The meeting was held in hybrid format via Zoom and in-person at the University of Maryland, College of Information.

The following members were in attendance:

Dr. Mychelle Farmer, Vice Chair

Wilson Parran

Stephen Schutte

Nichelle Stephens

Melissa Riccobono, Patron of the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBPD)

Dr. Mega Subramaniam, Professor, College of Information (INFO)

Dr. Douglas Oard, Interim Dean, College of Information (INFO)

Suzette Spencer, President of Congress of Academic Library Directors (CALD)

Brittany Tignor, Treasurer, Maryland Association of School Librarians (MASL)

David Dahl, President of the Maryland Library Association (MLA)

Chad Helton, CEO and President of the Enoch Pratt Free Library (EPFL)

Also in attendance were:

Morgan Lehr Miller, State Librarian

John Owen, Director of the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBPD)

Dr. Tamar Sarnoff, Chief of the Public Libraries and State Networking Branch (PLSNB)

Donna Liberto, Chief Financial and Operating Officer, MSLA

Timothy Pratt, Communications Manager and Legislative Liaison, MSLA

Mandy Addison, Assistant to the State Librarian, MSLA

Lynae Polk, Assistant Attorney General for MSLA

Andrew Pace, Executive Director, Association of Research Libraries (ARL)

Absent were:

Kristen Pironis, Chair

Nicholas Brown-Cáceres, Member at Large

Renee Croft, Capital Projects Manager, MSLA

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:04 A.M.

Welcome and Introductions

The Vice Chair commenced the meeting by introducing guest Dr. Douglas Oard, Interim Dean, for the College of Information at the University of Maryland. Subsequently, the board members introduced themselves.

After introductions, Dr. Douglas Oard introduced several faculty members at the University of Maryland and gave an overview of the history of the College of Information.

Following his presentation, the board moved to approval of the December 3rd minutes.

Approval of December 3rd Minutes

The Vice Chair inquired whether there were any corrections or amendments required before the minutes could be approved. Dr. Subramaniam asked for her title to be amended in the December minutes from Associate Dean to Professor. The Vice Chair then requested a motion to approve the minutes, as revised. Wilson Parran made the motion, which was seconded by David Dahl. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the approval, with no opposing votes. Consequently, the minutes from December 3, 2025, were approved at 10:20 AM. The meeting then proceeded to discuss the State Librarian's Report.

Reports

State Librarian's Report

The State Librarian commenced her report by highlighting the collaboration between MSLA and various libraries, including school, public, and academic institutions. MSLA is eager to strengthen these collaborations to promote libraries throughout the state. As an example of this, MSLA has partnered with faculty from the College of Information program to review and assess early literacy initiatives, as well as to collaborate on the Hatchlings program. This program aims to educate parents about their baby's brain development both before and after birth.

The State Librarian emphasized the legislative session, starting with her visit to D.C. to engage with lawmakers for Voices for Libraries. She successfully met with every representative from the state. Accompanying her were Andrea Lewis, the President of Citizens for Maryland Libraries (CML), and Stacey Nunn, a school librarian from Baltimore County and the former president of the Maryland Association of School Librarians (MASL). The group garnered a positive reception from state legislators. Voices for Libraries prioritized advocating for federal funding for IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services), especially the grants to states program that supports county library systems in Maryland. Although federal funding for this program faced threats, it has seen bipartisan support.

Additional legislative priorities include support for the federal right to read bill. This bill emphasizes the importance of school libraries and aligns with the state Freedom to Read legislation to safeguard collections, school boards, and intellectual freedom. Furthermore, it ensures the protection of librarians by mandating the presence of a certified school library specialist in each school.

Further discussions with lawmakers took place regarding funding for capital and infrastructure..

Regarding MSLA's Capital Grants Program, there are currently \$22.5 million in project requests. The program is authorized for \$7.5 million. This year, MSLA secured just over \$5 million in additional funding. The house capital budget subcommittee highlighted that 27 letters of testimony were submitted, many of which were from the public and regional libraries in the state that have benefited from the program. The State Librarian expressed gratitude to the entire Maryland library community for their support.

Pertaining to the rest of legislative session, MSLA has completed all budget hearings and received strong support for the agency. The agency was able to bring some additional funding from the Governor's budget into the Young Readers Program, which is desperately needed. There are 55,000 children participating statewide and costs continue to rise. The lack of funding reduces the amount of matching funds that the agency can make available to the counties. MSLA will continue to prioritize and try to obtain additional funding for the program in the future.

MSLA is collaborating with the Maryland public library community to advance to key measures. The first bill aims to secure funding for the State Library Resource Center (SLRC). The second bill seeks to renew the state per capita allocation for county and regional library systems.

The State Librarian updated the board on the vacant Ex-officio position on the board for the Maryland State Department of Education. Tracy Jeffcott is set to occupy this vacancy during the upcoming board meeting. The State Librarian has already held meetings with both Tracy Jeffcott and Dr. Chelsea Brewer, who oversees literacy programs for the state. MSLA is collaborating with them to establish partnerships.

In her report, the State Librarian noted that the agency is currently in the process of engaging a consultant to conduct a feasibility study aimed at consolidating the agency's headquarters offices within the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled building. This represents a major cost savings for the state and the agency, as well as a way to increase overall effectiveness.

The State Librarian asked the Maryland Association of School Librarians representative Brittany Tignor to share an update regarding concerns around amended COMAR language and its effect on school libraries. Recently, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) issued a request for public comments regarding revised language of a provision that mandates a full time school librarian/media specialist in every school library. The response from the public was significant, with an outpouring of support for the critical role of school librarians, especially in rural communities. Currently, the draft language and its interpretation have caused some confusion. MSDE has clarified that the intent of the legislation is not to minimize or eliminate school librarians. Both MASL and the State Librarian have engaged with MSDE leadership around this issue to foster stronger partnership and communication. Additional discussions are planned and the board will be updated.

The meeting then transitioned to agency finance updates.

Executive Team Reports

Finance Updates

Chief Financial and Operating Officer Donna Liberto shared updates regarding the agency's financial condition. The agency successfully passed the Office of Legislative Audits (OLA) audit without any findings. The next audit is scheduled for four years from now.

MSLA is currently in the ninth month of fiscal year 2026. The general fund appropriation for this fiscal year amounts to approximately \$105.7 million, with MSLA having utilized around 62.5% of that total. The appropriation for federal funds stands at \$3.3 million, and the agency has expended about 72.8% of this amount. The agency is on track to fully utilize all general and federal funds appropriations by the

year-end on June 30th.

All budget hearings were completed by the agency in January and February, with the legislatively appropriated budget expected to be released in May or June. MSLA is currently preparing for fiscal year 2028. The budget submission period will commence in late July or early August, with a deadline set for September.

The meeting then proceeded with presentations.

Presentations

The presentations for this board meeting are centered on academic libraries. Andrew Pace, the Executive Director of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), commenced his presentation by defining ARL as a non-profit trade association. Established in 1932, ARL currently comprises 123 libraries across the U.S. and Canada. Among these, four are in Maryland: the University of Maryland, Johns Hopkins University, the National Library of Medicine, and the National Agriculture Library. Additionally, two federal libraries are involved: the Smithsonian Libraries and the Library of Congress. There are also two prominent public library members: the New York Public Library and the Boston Public Library.

In 2025, ARL encountered numerous challenges, particularly due to the federal government's modifications to IMLS. This change significantly impacted ARL and its members, as IMLS grants constituted 11% of its budget. Consequently, the organization was compelled to downsize its staff. Furthermore, members faced a \$2 million deficit since academic and research libraries do not receive the same level of support from LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) and IMLS grants as public and school libraries do. At that time, ARL had four IMLS grants that were terminated, with only one being reinstated.

As stated by Mr. Pace, the objectives of ARL are to convene, inform, shape, and influence. In its advocacy and policy initiatives, the organization engages in lobbying up to the limits permitted for a 501c3. ARL prioritizes national policy work and lacks the personnel to concentrate on state advocacy initiatives. Instead, it depends on the American Library Association for advocacy at the state level. ARL publishes "The Daily Intelligence Report," which features a dozen links and updates related to academic libraries. This weekly summary is released every Friday.

A subsequent presentation was delivered by Suzette Spencer, the President of the Congress of Academic Library Directors (CALD). Ms. Spencer shared that her experience is mainly in community colleges, although she has collaborated with four-year universities, state colleges, and public library systems. She stated that CALD is a membership organization that welcomes all library directors from post-secondary institutions throughout the state. Its primary mission is to promote collaboration among academic libraries and to facilitate connections between academic libraries, state agencies, and other organizations. Their objective is to keep members updated on pertinent state and federal legislative matters while offering a platform for examining and discussing the issues that members consider significant.

At present, a significant concern is the incorporation of AI in academic libraries and higher education institutions. There are apprehensions that students might be depending on AI for their research and writing assignments. Additionally, the function of libraries concerning AI is being examined. Some academic libraries are leading AI initiatives within their institutions, while in others, faculty members are requesting guidance on policy decisions and the terminology they need to include in their syllabi. Throughout colleges, a task force that encompasses representatives from various departments to unify the efforts of academic libraries regarding AI is being called for. Another concern is that library vendors are incorporating AI into their products without transparency. At Montgomery College, they implement a legend system that indicates which products utilize AI.

There are additional challenges in post-secondary institutions at present. There are enrollment challenges due to the increasing costs of higher education, the diminishing availability of financial aid and scholarships, and students' capacity to secure employment that does not necessitate post-secondary education. Staffing levels in academic libraries are also on the decline. Numerous staff members are retiring, and the prevailing economic uncertainty is leading to changes in how academic libraries can support their services and operations. Discussion ensued around ways in which the State Library Board and Agency can support academic libraries around these challenges, as well as opportunities for greater partnership.

The board recessed at 12:01 P.M. and resumed at 12:10 P.M.

Board Discussion

Advocacy Committee

Upon reconvening the meeting, Vice Chair Mychelle Farmer initiated a discussion regarding the advocacy committee. She expressed her gratitude to the committee members and highlighted their optimism in securing funding for the State Library Resource Center (SLRC). She also mentioned Library Legislative Day, which occurred on February 10th, noting that the advocacy committee has effectively garnered support from advocates at the state level.

Nominating Committee

Vice Chair, Mychelle Farmer announced that board member Wilson Parran will be retiring, creating a vacancy. Ideally, the nominating committee aims to keep its previous five members, but she has also welcomed the possibility of current members stepping down and new members joining. The goal is for the committee is to identify and encourage candidates throughout Maryland to apply.

State Librarian Review Committee

The board has proposed the formation of a new committee to undergo a performance assessment of the State Librarian, which has not previously been done. The Chair wishes to lead this committee and is looking for two volunteers from the board. The committee members will be responsible for developing the evaluation method and conducting the performance assessment.

Member Updates

The initial board update comes from Dr. Subramaniam. The College of Information at the University of Maryland is in the process of interviewing candidates for the dean position, with the aim of appointing a new dean by July. At present, there are 353 students enrolled for the spring semester and 302 students registered for Fall 2026, marking a record high. The College of Information is set to launch a new doctoral program named the "Information Leader Doctorate" in Fall 2026. This program is tailored for working professionals in information organizations. Finally, Amelia Gibson, the MLIS Director at the College of Information, was cited in the "Nature" journal article titled "Why Every Scientist Needs a Librarian". She emphasized the significance and benefits of holding an MLIS degree.

The following board update comes from Brittany Tignor. The Maryland Association of School Librarians (MASL) is currently conducting their election, and a new president will be chosen soon. The MASL conference scheduled for Fall 2026 will take place at Ms. Tignor's institution, Stephen Decatur High School.

Ms. Spencer mentioned that CALD is preparing for their annual spring meeting, themed "Flourishing with Information," which delves into how libraries enhance students' feelings of belonging, confidence, and connection. They are currently seeking proposals for lightning talks. CALD is facing challenges in attracting applicants for the

five scholarships available for attending ALA and MLA conferences. David Dahl, the President of MLA, has offered MLA's assistance in promoting these scholarships.

Mr. Dahl provided a brief update, indicating that MLA's elections are underway and a new president will be appointed soon. The MLA conference is scheduled to take place from May 6th to May 8th, with 316 individuals already registered. Additionally, MLA is launching a campaign aimed at supporting Maryland libraries, which focuses on funding and advocacy, providing the community with an opportunity to support their local libraries.

Public Comment

None

Executive (Closed) Session

There was no executive session at this meeting.

Adjournment

The Vice Chair requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:29 P.M. Brittany Tignor initiated the motion with Mega Subramaniam seconding. The meeting adjourned at 12:30 P.

