

# PLA Conference

*Philadelphia, PA*

*March 14th – March 17th*

## Conference Overview

The conference was filled with a wonderful group of workshops. I attended the Opening Session with guest speaker, Robert Kennedy, Jr. who stated that one of the biggest challenges we face in America is dominated by energy sources, that we are moving from carbon based energy to renewable resources. He further stated we must find ways to extract energy so that America will still have adequate energy for future generations. He also spoke about the importance of educating our children making sure they get the help they need to succeed in school.

I attended a series of workshops/programs designed and recommended for trustees. ***“Advocacy is #1 in Times of Shrinking Funding.”*** Some pointers shared was the use of Frontline Advocacy encouraging managers and key leaders to train frontline staff on how to dialogue with customers the libraries’ needs, and how they can help through donations, serving as volunteers/support staff, etc. We were encouraged to develop public voices to serve as advocates.

With shrinking budget cuts, many libraries are doing more with less. Some cost effective measures shared were eliminating/combining positions, combining Service Desk operations, combining Adult/Kids Desk services, and managers cross training staff to perform programs, circulation duties, etc.

Key pointers shared - let staff know specific budget needs, they are the best voice to sharing the information; find ways for customers/patrons to contribute, gather stories of how libraries impact lives, tell our story, and measure outcomes.

***“Why Libraries Matter: Empowering Community Voices.”*** Libraries serve the public at large, they impact the whole community, they serve as an outreach to disadvantage or struggling students, libraries serve as a gathering place for afterschool kids, etc. Libraries should empower community voices to serve as strong advocates by providing the facts and opportunities for citizens to contribute financially as well as to serve as support staff, and to volunteer, etc.

**The Future of Libraries: Trends in Building Designs, User Experience, and Community Partnerships.** One case study shared – Renovating and building new libraries should be designed to put people on display, creating room space with an outside terrace, creating seating in a variety of spaces, provide quiet study/intimate areas with outside access, create teen and children areas with bright color schemes and technology. Encourage discovery – allow people to locate, explore, and connect by helping themselves.

ALTAFF workshop entitled "With Friends like these..." The panel presented a Powerpoint discussion highlighting the benefits of Friends, and how to build strong relationships between Library Board/Friends, and helping Friends flourish.

**"Other Benefits of Friends to libraries"** – it was stated that Friends help with Fundraising and advocacy have amazing side benefits. There were four shared in the discussion. 1) Library supporters increase, 2) Community spirit flourishes, 3) Positive press for libraries increases, and 4) local the economy benefits.

**Keep Communication Open and Informative**, the following was the following are recommended:

- Friends should be represented (non-voting) on board of Trustees
- Board of Trustees should have a (non-voting) representative at Friends Board Meeting
- Library Executive Director should attend Friends Board meetings
- All of the above should be on the Agenda, give a *brief* report and be a participant in the meeting. Just being PRESENT is not enough!

**Help your Friends flourish!**

- Praise and support their efforts and let them know they are a vital part of the library team
- Keep open and respectful communication and interaction between Board of Trustees, staff, and Friends
- Remove roadblocks and distractions, when feasible, that impede the Friends forward progress
- Encourage Trustees and Administration to support Friends events.



Dora U. Sims, Trustee