

2023 WLA Conference

WVLS Scholarship Reports



Top, L to R: Rita Ludvigsen, Western Taylor County Public Library (Gilman); Sarah Moscatello, Marathon County Public Library; Alexander Johnson, Marathon County Public Library; Andrea Bennett, T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill); Maria Pregler, T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill)

Bottom, L to R: Maxx Handel, Frances L. Simek Memorial Library (Medford); Denise Chojnacki, Rhinelander District Library; Krista Blomberg, Rib Lake Public Library



October 24-27, 2023
Middleton, WI

WVLS (Wisconsin Valley Library Service) Post-Conference Report

Krista Blomberg – Rib Lake Public Library November 9, 2023

1. Please highlight three sessions from the conference.

What were the session topics? Who presented them? What made these presentations effective and meaningful to you?

A. Let's Get Reel: Improving Your Marketing Reach with Instagram Reels.

This program was presented by Jessica Hodges from Kenosha Public Library.

The statistics on using Instagram Reels for library promotion were significant and helped improve community connection and engagement. This was interesting to me and motivating to consider trying it in our library.

The details Jessica included helped me understand the amount of time and effort it would take and how to find ideas for the short videos. She also shared tips and "how to" information that will help in the learning process if we decide to do it. I will be sharing this information in a future staff meeting to see if we think it would be doable for our library.

B. DRA Numbers and Decodables: What Is This and Why Does It Matter?

This program was presented by WVLS's Julie Beloungy (Thorp School District Library) and Kay Heiting (Granton Community Library.) Kay and Julie helped me understand this topic so much better!

I went home and immediately asked our school administrator about the curriculum and assessments they use here in Rib Lake and how we can better help families looking for material that fits their readers. I also learned how to find related information in our library records to assist with that. I loved their suggestion about understanding our patrons' PURPOSE of reading for any search – is it for reading practice, bedtime snuggles, laughing, these all have a bearing on what materials would be welcome for their situation.

They shared great resources and lists that we can use in our library to find appropriate materials to fit the stated reading purpose.

C. We All Belong - Welcoming Teens with Intellectual Disabilities to Public Library Services

This program was presented by Michele Gagner from Waukesha Public Library. She shared such a variety of Storytime/Activity program experience over years, and that was helpful in seeing a bigger picture. She shared ideas for connecting, what worked and what did not for programs in this population.

Michele's presentation got me thinking outside the box. She shared about connecting with the school district to do a program for people with intellectual disabilities. However, my thoughts went to working towards a connection with our local supported employment and day services agency.

Adults with intellectual disabilities have a much lower level of community connection and I would love to see this improved in our community by providing an opportunity to connect at our library. Ideally, I'd love to try a regular Stories and Activities style program that was geared for adults of all ages & abilities, but I need to process this for a while and problem solve with our director to see if or how that goal could best be accomplished given our time and budget constraints and what would work well for our community.

2. Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session. Did you talk to someone you didn't know at a session? Sit next to someone at a luncheon and have a meaningful conversation? Visit with an exhibitor? How did **this** experience affect your overall outlook of the conference?

I had a number of amazing connection experiences. The first was being able to meet in person with the PBS co-hort program that I have been learning with online this year. It just cemented my connections and reinforced the benefits this program has been to me, bringing it to life even more. I even had the great pleasure of renewing a connection with someone I met through the DPI (Department of Public Instruction) Youth Services Development Institute in 2017! We both were part of the panel that presented for Playful Learning at the Library: Deepening Family and Community Engagement with PBS at this year's conference.

I also decided to participate in an informal Ukelele meet-up. This was exactly the kind of small group connection and refreshment I needed in a big day of learning.

I really appreciated the chance to spend some time with and get to know some of our own WVLS members who were attending as we also had some informal meetups. I got to have some great conversations with Denise from the Rhinelander Library and that was a big highlight connection for me.

3. As a result of attending this conference, what two things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?

I plan to print out and share with our circulation staff the resources that Kay and Julie made available regarding reading levels as well as the information about understanding our patrons' purpose for reading as we help them search for materials to fill their needs.

I already began discussions regarding a Stories and Crafts/Activities program for adults of all ages and abilities with our director and with the director of BRI (Bridging Resources for Independence). My goal is to try at least one program of this type sometime between January and April, see what the interest is, what I learn and evaluate potential for the future here.

4. What kind of support is needed for you to implement these two things? Support from your staff? Your Board of Trustees?

We are a small library with all part-time staff employed. I need our staff to be open and responsive to the resources I share in order for them to be useful to all families and patrons walking in our doors who are searching.

To implement a Story and Activity program for adults and/or adults with intellectual disabilities beyond trying out one event, I need to make our current budget work. This means I would need to cut from our regular preschool Storytime or get creative at finding ways to do the extra program with little cost. My felt need is to have the moral support or approval from the director to move ahead after that which includes knowing how much time it takes me to prepare so I know if I can sustain it on my current work schedule.

Thank you Wisconsin Valley Library Service for providing the WLA conference experience through this scholarship. It was a rich experience, and I am grateful!



WLA Conference 2023

Maxx Handel

This year I was lucky enough to be able to attend the WLA conference. I have only attended one other conference in the past and it was ARSL. Both these conferences were very different and provided so much great information.

One session I attended that made a great impression was the Considering Renovation or a New Building Behind the Scenes of Prep Before the Design Team with speaker Emily Kornak. This session broke out what is needed for a renovation or new building. She let us know where to start such as a space needs assessment, existing goals vs. new ideas, how you can update and remain flexible in the future. Make sure you analyze everything, conduct interviews, and request proposals. Her expertise on the subject really helped put some things into perspective and gave me an idea of where to start on my own project.

Tying into the above session the next session that built onto this was Time to Dream: Assessing Library Space and Service Weeds with speaker John Thompson. He gave a great presentation and showed everyone what to look for when evaluating your library. Main points in his session were to evaluate your community and what the library currently offers, check standards such as the areas with strengths and places to improve. He even included a link to a guidebook to help with the process. This session provided me with a great resource and answered a lot of my current questions.

Another session that stuck with me was From Book Desert to Book Oasis with speakers Jerrissa Koenig, Kelly Kneisl, Alisha Green, and Julia Reid. I attended this presentation mainly because of the title. I came out of this session with amazing ideas and with a lot of new information. I didn't know that 1 in 7 people in Wisconsin struggle with literacy and that a home with 100 or more books in it would mean a child would more likely be able to read in grade school. They provided everyone with so many resources and ideas, showing what L. E Phillip's Library has orchestrated over the years such as Books on Buses, Book Bike, Little Libraries, and Story walks. Their mission is to make Eau Claire a book oasis and connect with their people who may not come to the library but still need resources and would benefit from what the library has to offer. It got me thinking on how our library can expand outside of our building to connect with members of our community who don't come to our building but probably would if they were approached and shown what we can offer in a different setting.

A highlight to the conference that I found very helpful was being able to find more vendors for specific needs my library has. Currently I have been working on improving our bilingual section of the library. During my time at the conference, I was able to connect with vendors who had good selections in this area. Even more surprising was finding a vendor who

specialized in interactive tables/computers. Our library currently has one interactive table and due to its popularity, we were looking into getting another one in the future.

After attending this conference, I came away with so many great ideas. Two of the things I most want to implement are starting to work on a strategic plan that will better benefit the library. Our current strategic plan will be expiring soon and the new one I would like to incorporate renovations and plans for an expansion in the future to better serve our patrons in the future. Another great idea that stuck with me was a story walk. We currently do not have a story walk in Medford and it would be so beneficial to have one in one of the parks. To implement these ideas it will take support from the community, staff, city council and the library board. These are such big projects, there is no way they can be done in 6 months. A story walk can be implemented on library property around the building but the bigger idea would be to have a permanent story walk installed at a Medford park area.

WVLS Post-Conference Report

October 24 – 27, 2023

Rita Ludvigsen – Director – Western Taylor County Public Library - Gilman

Highlight three sessions from the conference.

1. Building Civility One Relationship at a Time – Nolan Finley ad Stephen Henderson

This session was our conference opening keynote speaker. The reason this session stands out to me is because I have become aware of how little we actually listen to what someone is saying to us. We're too quick to run the conversation through our filters and come up with an opinion. This session was a good reminder to engage civilly. We need to:

- Drop assumptions – figure out why you think the way you do. Recognize differences and similarities. Reach a level of respect that allows you to not be angry.
- Set reasonable expectations – don't set out to win, the other person is not out to destroy you. Find something that you find valuable, that intrigues you. Check your self-righteousness at the door and be willing to challenge your own viewpoints.
- Listen – listen intently – be able to repeat what they are saying back to them. Be able to ask questions. When you're able to do these things, then you are listening. This frames your exchange into a more collaborative conversation.
- Investing in the relationship – don't walk away – don't quit. Ability to have conversations that don't damage the relationship. Invest in the exchange. Realizing that the relationship is more important than the content.

2. You Are Not Alone. School and Public Library Cooperation – Sue Salzsieder, Rebecca Barry and Glenny Whitcomb

This session talked about partnerships between public schools and public libraries. The presenters talked about different events and activities that they have collaborated on between the Chilton School District and the Chilton Public Library. Western Taylor County Public Library and the Gilman School District have a good relationship. This session gave me more possibilities that we could engage in.

- Read around the school – 10 – 12 sessions where we could invite families to come after school to read a story, complete a craft and have a meal.
- Book Bites - Chilton holds this over lunch in the school library for grades 3 – 8. Librarians prepare interesting book bites from Novelist and present them to the students while the students are having lunch. The public library brings in books to leave at the school for a month.

- STEAMFEST – Annual event held in the gym at the school. Different STEAM activities are presented in stations and students/families are invited to experience all of them. Participants receive a punch card at the start of the event. As they attend each station, they receive a punch on their card. At the end of the event, they can turn the punch card in for a prize.

3. From Book Desert to Book Oasis – Jerrissa Koenig, Alisha Green, Julia Reed

The librarians from the L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library presented statistics indicating that our region is a book desert. They shared ideas of how to make it a book oasis!

- Books on Buses
- Book Bike
- Book Bins at food pantries, community tables, shelters, career development centers
- Story walk
- Using QR codes to measure success

Highlight a conference experience.

It was nice to connect with other librarians from the WVLS consortium and get to know them better on both a professional and personal level. I had the opportunity to visit with Heidi O'Hare from Tomahawk Public Library. Heidi talked about bringing in Lisa Koenecke – owner of Inclusion Ally, LLC, to one of the staff development days. Heidi, Maxx and I discussed the possibility of Tomahawk hosting the session, all of us sharing the expense, which would allow all of our staff to experience the presentation that Lisa offered at conference. We were also able to bounce questions and experiences off each other to come away with new perceptions and ideas.

Two things to implement in the next six months –

After discussions with other directors, I'd like to implement "Staff Development Days" on Federal Holidays. In the past, we've always been open to the public. Staff meetings are typically held during work hours. This would give us the ability to attend seminars, field trips to other libraries or just do some librarian self-care. Things that help empower our staff and show how much we value them.

Not sure if we'd be able to do this in six months, but I would like to investigate the possibility of collaborating with the school to do a STEAMFEST.

Support?

Staff Development Days - We will need to talk with our library board to see if they would support closing the library on federal holidays and paying our staff while they are working on continuing education.

STEAMFEST – This is going to require collaboration between our library and the public school. We would need volunteers both from the school and the community. We would probably need to write a grant or get financial support through our friends' group. This would absolutely be an all-hands-on deck kind of event!!

WVLS Post-Conference Report – WLA 2023 – Alexander Johnson, Marathon County Public Library

1. Please highlight three sessions from the conference.

What were the session topics? Who presented them? What made these presentations effective and meaningful to you?

- a. “What do YOU Think? Empowering Your Team to Think and to Act”: Michelle Dennis, Hedberg Public Library (Janesville, WI) – This session covered how to walk the difficult management balance between offering instruction and fostering independence. I’ve put considerable thought into this (since striking that balance is management at its finest), so it was helpful to hear additional specific examples for how to achieve that and maintain it. One of the best ways the speaker described for knowing when you’ve succeeded is when the manager can leave for a conference, confident that they’ve developed their team enough to run the place in their absence. I was glad to receive a report to that effect from my team when I returned.
- b. “School District Partnership – Opt In Library Cards”: Eric Robinson, Dwight Foster Public Library (Fort Atkinson, WI) – This session reviewed this library’s process for making it as easy as possible for students from their local school district to get a card at the public library. Since implementing this program, all a parent has to do to get their child a public library card is check a box during the process of enrolling their student for the school year. The library staff had a great deal of work to do behind the scenes in order to maintain data integrity, but these were surmountable obstacles and worth the effort, given that the first year of the program resulted in over 700 new cards (for a city of around 12,500 people). This presentation was useful as an idea for how to bring more people into the library (both students and parents, who might be more inclined to sign up on their own after this experience), but also for the level of detail it offered on how to accomplish this (especially regarding pitfalls to avoid).
- c. “After All These Years – Initial Lessons Learned From Implementing a Library System Merger”: Steven Platteter (Deputy Director, Prairie Lakes Library System), Melissa McLimans (Library Strategist and Consultant, WiLS), Jennifer Chamberlain (Executive Director, WiLS) – This session described the majority of the process of merging the Arrowhead Library System and the Lakeshores Library System to form the new Prairie Lakes Library System. It has been a long and complex process that is complete as far as the patron experience is concerned, but still has some details to be worked out behind the scenes. I was particularly interested in this because of my role in the NICE Project, (which is currently exploring the potential of WVLS and NWLS sharing an ILS instance, which involves some of the same challenges as a system merger). One of the key pieces of insight was that in order to maintain momentum for a project like this, it is sometimes necessary to commit to the partnership and entrust the new shared governance with determining final details, rather than attempting to determine all of them ahead of time.

2. Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session. Did you talk to someone you didn’t know at a session? Sit next to someone at a luncheon and have a

meaningful conversation? Visit with an exhibitor? How did **this** experience affect your overall outlook of the conference?

- a. Mealtimes (those without speakers) were the best setting to meet new people, and those opportunities were among the best benefits of the conference. As a first-time attendee, I was fortunate that some previous attendees from elsewhere in the state were welcoming, since that facilitated branching out in networking. Not only did I serendipitously meet other staff to discuss ILS and system merger details with (over spaghetti the first night), but I also met people from a much broader set of places and roles than I would have if I had spent time networking primarily with staff at individual sessions. I already knew that the library world was full of great people, but to be immersed in it and surrounded by it is significantly more rewarding and productive than just knowing that on an intellectual level. Though there were lots of people at the conference, I was left with an impression that the library world is small, and that after attending I'm now only a few degrees of separation away from most of the library staff in the state.
3. As a result of attending this conference, what two things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?
 - a. The representative from Playaway recommended a better way to shelve their Wonderbook product (which is notably thicker at the open end than it is at the spine, creating an unfortunate accordion effect if shelved normally). We'll likely implement that shortly, and keep our collection more in order.
 - b. If feasible, I'd like to implement something similar to the opt-in card partnership mentioned earlier between our school districts and the library. It would take longer than six months to fully implement (both due to technical complexity and since it should start at the beginning of a school year), but some preliminary work could happen before then.
 4. What kind of support is needed for you to implement these two things? Support from your staff? Your Board of Trustees?
 - a. Implementing the shelving will be fairly simple, though it will require some money from our operations budget.
 - b. Implementing the opt-in public library cards for local students would require support from each school district in our service area, so it would take several conversations. Our circulation staff would need to be deeply involved as well in order to ensure that the cards would align with our standards for consistent and accurate data.

WLA Post Conference Report 2023

1. Three of the sessions I attended that I really enjoyed were: **Believe in the Vision: Hiring STARS** - Kevin Luebke, **Building Diverse Collections with Teaching Books & Book Connections** - Mary Ellen Graf, and **DRA Numbers and Decodables, What is This and Why Does it Matter?** - Julie Beloungy and Kay Heiting. These presentations were effective because they gave me great resources to act on job responsibilities that I haven't had as much experience in. I'm excited to check further into the information that was shared, and I now have more confidence in acting on them.
2. On Tuesday I attended the Intellectual Freedom meeting at the request of my director who could not attend. In my small group I met a director from Hayward that has experienced extreme stress and physical issues due to the push-back on inclusive books etc. Her decision to retire is due in large part to that stress level. It made me realize how important these conferences are to meet others who have been going through things that we may be facing or could face in the future. We can prepare and be there for each other as a sounding board. You could tell how much she needed to vent and despite her love of her work, the toll it has taken on her physical being.
3. I plan on delving into Book Connections and creating some bookmarks with QR codes and/or reading lists based on topics that the students in the schools might be studying to let them know what we have here for them to help with their studies. My other plan is to dig into the offerings PBS has regarding Media Mentorship and how we can use that in our programming. There were some very interesting resources that could be of use to us in not recreating the wheel. With the decodables, I have already taken a step by contacting someone who can relay information to me regarding what reading format our schools are using so we can better support them.
4. I would need staff support for some of the programming that might come about because of our findings as well as extra planning time to look further into all the great resources!

Thank you so much for the opportunity to attend this great conference. In addition to the sessions and keynotes, networking with my colleagues was such a highlight. It's one of my favorite parts of getting a refresh!

Sincerely,

Denise Chojnacki

WVLS Post-Conference Report

Sarah Moscatello - MCPL

1. Please highlight three sessions from the conference.

What were the session topics? Who presented them? What made these presentations effective and meaningful to you?

Sarah French of the Irvin L. Young Memorial Library and Tiffany Helgersen of the Monona Public Library presented an enthusiastic presentation called *Every Child is an Artist: Process Art in the Library*.

Throughout the presentation, their passion for this type of educational program really shined and was really motivating as an attendee to implement their ideas. They gave a generous amount of resources, including handouts and even an educational slide show libraries can play that explains to caregivers the mental and emotional benefits of process art. I especially appreciated the in-depth program outlines they gave attendees that include budget, materials needed, specific instructions, and a program reflection outline. Their resources make it easy for other libraries to implement process art programs, and I cannot wait to bring these programs to our Mosinee community.

Similarly, Maggie Strittmater from the McIntosh Memorial Library, gave a presentation called *How Creative Interactive Displays and Passive Programming Bring People Together* that was full of fantastic ideas attendees could bring back to their locations afterwards. She even started a group online where ideas could be shared between participants, making it a really interactive presentation. I really appreciated that not only did I gain specific ideas I can implement at the Mosinee Branch, but that I also gained the language to explain why these programs are so vital for community engagement.

The most impactful presentation overall for me was *Let's Talk Mental Health: Beyond Self-Care*, by Beatriz De La Espriella, LCSW. Not only did participants learn about mental health in general, but we did a deep dive into how to access our own mental health, how to make self-care sustainable, and how to bolster personal resilience. I especially appreciated how we were walked through making a personalized implementation plan. Overall, this was a really informative session that gave participants so many resources and opportunities for improvement that will reach far beyond the conference.

I also have to mention the fantastic line-up of keynote speakers at this conference. The opening keynote on building civility with Nolan Finley and Stephen Henderson was a passionate and informative speech on the four pillars of civil engagement, a wonderful opportunity to "...find paths of friendship even during disagreements". This timely keynote really started the conference off on the perfect note to me, and was bolstered by the enthusiastic and exceptional presentation by DEI Consultant Lisa Koenecke about improving our inclusion. I appreciated the specific examples on how we can improve our ally-ship and the reminder that equality is different than equity.

2. Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session. Did you talk to someone you didn't know at a session? Sit next to someone at a luncheon and have a meaningful conversation? Visit with an exhibitor? How did this experience affect your overall outlook of the conference?

After the wonderful experience of attending my first Wisconsin Library Association last year, I knew how pivotal networking experiences were and went into this conference with the personal goal of speaking to someone new at every luncheon and the majority of conference sessions. I was proud that not only did I follow through with my goal, but I had really meaningful conversations with several of the exhibitors and even presenters themselves. These conversations led to several group invites that I feel will be really beneficial to me personally and professionally, and I know I never could have made these connections without attending this conference.

3. As a result of attending this conference, what two things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?

I would like to implement at least two process art programs in 2024, using the ideas and knowledge I gained from the conference to also educate our patrons on how process art can improve emotional and intellectual intelligence.

Secondly, I would like to incorporate at least two of the passive programming ideas from the presentation entitled *How Creative Displays and Passive Programming Bring People Together*.

As always, I intend to share what I have learned with our Branch team, as I gained so much valuable knowledge from this experience.

4. What kind of support is needed for you to implement these two things? Support from your staff? Your Board of Trustees?

To implement the above ideas, I will need the necessary materials to complete the programs, which I believe I already have at my branch. I would also need the support of our wonderful programming and media team to promote these events.

WVLS Post-Conference Report

Andrea Bennett

1. Please highlight three sessions from the conference.

What were the session topics? Who presented them? What made these presentations effective and meaningful to you?

Building Diverse Collections with Teaching Books and Book Connections. This presentation was given by Mary Ellen Graf. Teaching Books and Book Connections are both fantastic resources for teachers, parents, homeschoolers, and librarians. Access is free and provided through Badgerlink. A particularly useful tool for collection development is the Collection Analysis Report. These reports provide insight into the different genres, cultural representation, or lack of representation, along with other meaningful information. Mary took us through the various ways to run these reports and how to understand the results. I will be conducting a list analysis report for each of my collections, both juvenile and young adult. If I see a particular area where we are lacking representation, for example, there is a link to follow with a list of books to help aid in collection development. This is also a great resource for creating book talks and generating book lists for students and patrons. It allows you to share lists and book talks by creating a QR code. I see this as a resource we will use consistently moving forward to help build diverse and inclusive collections.

How to Say Hard Things: Lessons Learned in Years of Crisis. This presentation was given by Brandi Cummings. Supervisors often need to have difficult conversations with both patrons and staff. This session touched on the most important piece of successful communication, humanity. When having a difficult conversation, we need to recognize the humanity in the other person even if they are tearing you down. Especially when we are on the receiving end of false information, it is important to respond with kindness and civility. If we cannot take this important first step, it is unlikely there will be a positive outcome. As a supervisor, when speaking with staff, you need to communicate using compassion, transparency, and directness. Learning to live in conflict well will help empower you to have difficult conversations with more positive outcomes.

Every Child is an Artist: Process Art in the Library. This presentation was given by Tiffany Helgersen and Sarah French. Process art is a fun, unique way for young children to explore and create. Children create their own, unique piece of art, with no instructions and no expected outcome. A supply list was provided, along with instructions for a variety of programs. An art table was set up and we were able to play with some of the tools and techniques talked about in the presentation. I have come away with fun, new, unique programming ideas we can easily implement.

2. Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session. Did you talk to someone you didn't know at a session? Sit next to someone at a luncheon and have a meaningful conversation? Visit with an exhibitor? How did **this** experience affect your overall outlook of the conference?

I had the opportunity to talk with a fellow youth services librarian during and after the session focusing on Teaching Books/Book Connections. We discussed the benefits of this resource and how it will be a useful tool for collection development. It also came to light that we both have classes regularly. We brainstormed ideas on how we could use the book list feature to create bookmarks with a QR code for book lists and book talks for the students. This conversation is just one example of how networking with other librarians can result in great, new ideas.

3. As a result of attending this conference, what two things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?

Building strong, diverse collections is a goal we are currently working toward. Book Connections has numerous features we can utilize as we work through this process. Using the Collection Analysis Report feature, I will be running reports for the juvenile and young adult collections. By running these reports at the end 2023, we can make more informed choices as we begin purchasing for our collections in 2024.

New, unique program offerings using process art will be implemented in the coming months. A plan is in place to have a passive process art program during the holiday break. Passive programs have become popular with our families over the past few years. The versatility of process art programs makes them quick and easy to carry out utilizing what you have on hand.

4. What kind of support is needed for you to implement these two things? Support from your staff? Your Board of Trustees?

Staff support is crucial in order to implement these two ideas successfully. Programming staff support is necessary to execute the process art programs and continue to build on the ideas we were given. Support and guidance from the Library Director is imperative as we work toward building a more diverse collection. All staff involved in collection development will need to work together as a team with common goals and guidelines.

WVLS Post-Conference Report

Maria Pregler (TBSPL)

1. Please highlight three sessions from the conference.

What were the session topics? Who presented them? What made these presentations effective and meaningful to you?

- a) Book Club Uncovered was presented by Stephanie Hanus, Cathy Tuttrup, Maura Jaeger, and Nina Wagner. The four ladies took turns presenting on the various book clubs they facilitate at the Brookfield Public Library to bring diverse groups of people together. During the presentation, they also discussed various book clubs that didn't take off at their library. The presentation from the four ladies was very easy-going, and appreciated the honesty of what has and hasn't worked over the last 20 years. I left the session with many insights and fun ideas that I cannot wait to try at T.B. Scott Free Library.
- b) Let's Talk Mental Health was presented by Beatriz DeLa Espriella. During the session, Beatriz explained that she is a mental health social worker who specializes in public libraries and librarians' mental health. During the session, we were asked to converse with whoever we were sitting next to about different ways we take care of ourselves in and outside of the library. We were also informed of the different signs of someone struggling with a mental health issue and what it means to be part of someone's support system. I must say, this was by far the most meaningful session I attended at the conference. I think it made many of us aware that we literally are all in this together. I was also able to walk away with many new ideas for taking better care of my mental health and the realization that self-care in any form takes time to make a difference.
- c) PBS Media Mentorship was presented by Mouna Algahaithi, and Michael Hartwell. This session was predominantly about different ways to enhance book and digital literacy in libraries while incorporating the PBS Kids website. While my title at the T.B. Scott Free Library is Head of Adult Services, I offer a number of adult story time programs for differently-abled adults in our community. This session was extremely helpful in the sense that it gave many options for incorporating digital literacy with my existing story time program. I cannot wait to try some of the PBS offerings with my adults.

2. Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session. Did you talk to someone you didn't know at a session? Sit next to someone at a luncheon and have a meaningful conversation? Visit with an exhibitor? How did **this** experience affect your overall outlook of the conference?

During our first night at the conference, I struck up a conversation with Becky Garrety from Beanstack. During the conversation, I explained that I am a new user to Beanstack aside from using it personally, and that I would like to use it for some adult programming other than summer reading. Becky mentioned that she was presenting a session on Beanstack that week that would go through different program ideas for all ages. She also gave me her business card so we could discuss the individual needs and/or wants of my patrons. After I attended her session, I came away with so many different reading challenge ideas that I had no idea existed in Beanstack.

3. As a result of attending this conference, what two things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?

One key piece of information I intend to make use of before the end of the year is to supplement my special needs story time with PBS Kids. I feel they offer a lot of videos and games that my adults may relate to more readily.

We are also planning a Mental Health Staff Development Day for February of 2024. I have been in contact with Beatriz DeLa Espriella, and it is my hope that she can provide some mental health materials and/or suggestions that I can share with the staff.

4. What kind of support is needed for you to implement these two things? Support from your staff? Your Board of Trustees?

Once I have successfully included PBS Kids into my special needs programming, I may ask some of the staff to suggest other reading and/or crafting materials for my patrons that are more appropriate to their learning levels.

One of the biggest pieces of dealing with mental help is learning that you're never alone and getting past the stigma of just ignoring how you're feeling. It is also important that individuals have a support system in the workplace and outside of it. By implementing a self-awareness process towards mental health in my library, we will all need both support of each other as staff, as well as support of our board of trustees to assist in creating a supportive working environment.