

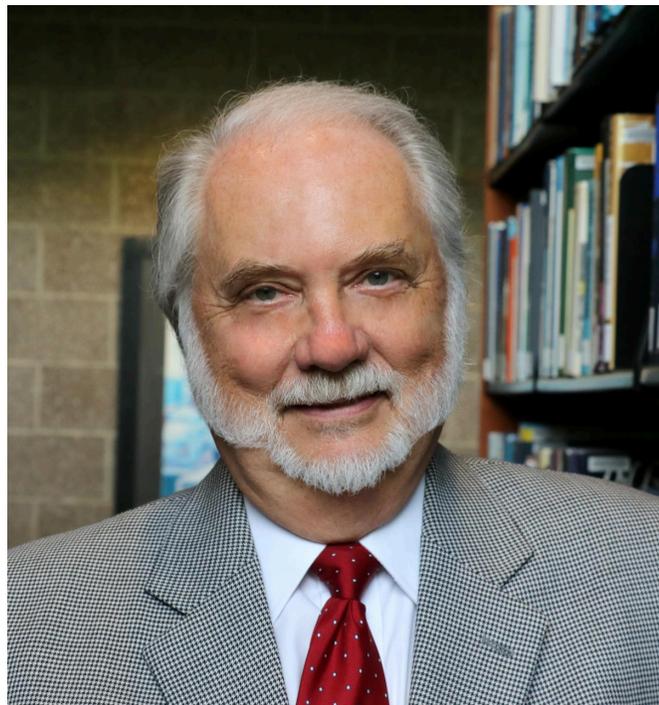


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February 2026

Events Bring Change

In everyone's life there are first occasions for many different events that often become significant memorable events. Among each person's list of firsts might be the acquisition of a first pet or a first vehicle, a date to attend a first prom, or an individual's first trip to a scenic beach. Certainly, for most people, a family's shared traditions during the Christmas Holidays that feature the exchange of gifts and meals can also be a memorable event never forgotten.



Exposure to some events are first memories that are shared in historical terms. Examples might be the highwire walking of funambulist Phillippe Petit, the 1969 Apollo 11 moon landing, the first American concert performed by The Beatles, or the development of life changing medical procedures like a human heart replacement.

Entities of government, like the Mississippi Library Commission, can also experience events that are singular events such as the statewide HOOPLA service, the MAGNOLIA

database collection, or the maintenance of the PIG program. Certainly, the work of MLC as a defender of the right to read concept that enhances the knowledge of the library user is yet another event that is “front and center” every day. Looking at the historic events of MLC, one might immediately think of the many weather events that have been survived, some leading to the construction of the “state of art” building MLC occupies.

Other events affecting MLC would include the many fine, dedicated people who have served as members of the Board of Commissioners for MLC and the staff members who have developed policy procedures to enable the important work performed by MLC to develop a status for the Commission that represents fairness in procedure and accessibility.

There have been thirteen Executive Directors since the creation of MLC. In just a few weeks, #13 shall give way to #14 who shall, like those earlier, work diligently to maintain the successful services of MLC. It is these actions that shall create new events to be remembered. As the musical group the Byrds sang in Turn!Turn!Turn!, there is a season for all things.

Jennifer Lena: Leading Libraries into the Future



The Mississippi Library Commission (MLC) Board has selected Jennifer Lena, the agency’s current Deputy Executive Director, as its next Executive Director. Lena will assume the role effective March 21, 2026, succeeding director Hulen Bivins, who recently announced his retirement.

Well qualified, Lena brings more than 15 years of experience at MLC to the position, along with a commitment to strengthening library services across the state. Reflecting on her work and future goals, Lena emphasized the importance of libraries and their community impact.

“One of the most satisfying parts of my job is hearing library staff share stories about the profound impact their libraries have made in the lives of individual patrons,” Lena said. “Looking ahead, I hope the next 15 years bring innovation and growth. More than anything, I

want to see libraries remain what they’ve always been at their core: welcoming, essential hubs for their communities.”

Lena joined the Mississippi Library Commission in 2010 as Fiscal Services Director, where she oversaw the agency’s finance department. In 2014, she was promoted to Administrative Services Director, expanding her leadership to include Finance, Human Resources, Operations, Grants, and Technology Services. In November 2024, she stepped into her current role as Deputy Executive Director.

An alumna of Belhaven University, Lena holds a Master's degree in Public Administration and a Bachelor of Science in Management. She also earned a Master's degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Southern Mississippi.

With a strong background in administration, finance, and management, Lena is well positioned to guide the Mississippi Library Commission into its next chapter of service and innovation.

MLC Celebrates 100 Years

2026 marks 100 years of continual library service for the state's citizens. MLC was created in 1926 as a result of lobbying efforts of the Mississippi Federation of Women's Clubs in collaboration with the Mississippi Library Association. The goal was to provide library services in every county of the state.

In the early years, the agency was housed in a cloak closet on the second floor of the New Capitol, and much of the service was provided through bookmobiles that traveled throughout the state as well as a "library mule" that carried books to many counties!

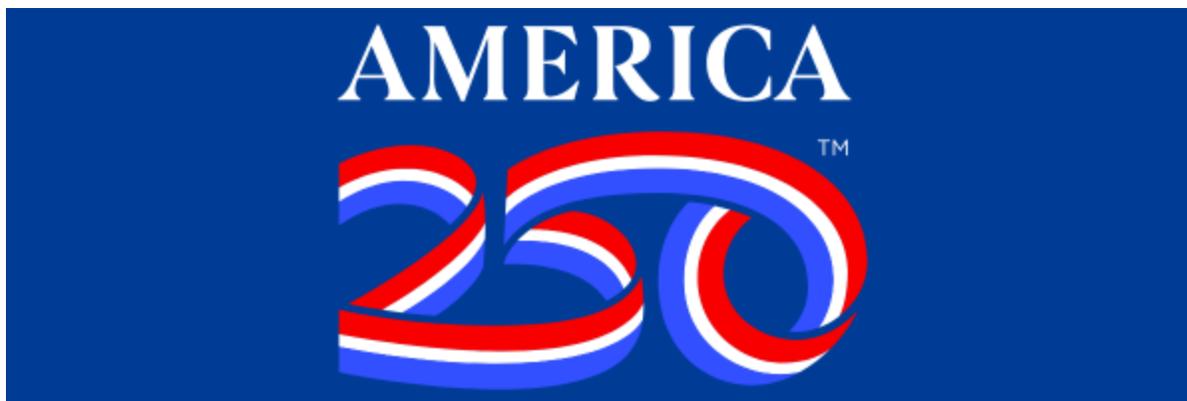


10. Oktibbeha County Library, WPA Days, Ollie Vaughan, librarian visiting patrons by mule.

During the first few decades, the State Library Commission endured many challenges. In 1950, after almost 25 years, the Library Commission Reorganization Bill was passed. It changed the name to the Mississippi Library Commission.

In honor of this celebration, the Commission's social media will feature posts two to three times per week highlighting each of our 100 years since our creation in 1926. The challenges and successes of a statewide service agency are chronicled with photos from our archives to document our story. For more stories about MLC through the years, follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and our other social channels.

MLC will have a birthday party in early November. Watch for an official invitation early in the fall. MLC would love to have you celebrate with us, as you are an important part of our



On July 7, 2025, Governor Tate Reeves announced the launch of Mississippi's America250 Commission (A250-MS). The Commission is led by Co-Chair First Lady Elee Reeves, Co-Chair Lynn Hosemann, Co-Chair Jolynn White, Visit Mississippi Executive Director Rochelle Hicks, Kathy Henry, and America250 Mississippi Commission Development Director Nancy Carpenter.

The Mississippi Library Commission team is proud to be partnering with A250-MS to engage constituents in awareness and celebration of our country's 250th year celebration of freedom. From promoting national programs and opportunities to supporting related local and state initiatives, MLC is acting as a primary information and communication resource. The America250 tab on the MLC website features current activities and our [MLC AM250 Photo Journal page](#).

To support the America250 Mississippi Commission in their work to promote this historic 250-year milestone, MLC has designed a patriotic literacy campaign called "*COME READ WITH US: Great Readers can become Great Leaders.*" Of course, this is an endorsement of the Mississippi Department of Education's "Strong Readers Strong Leaders" Program and the strides they are making towards improved literacy. MLC has created a dedicated [America 250 Mississippi LibGuide](#) on the MLC website that provides general information, student competitions related to America's freedom, reading activity guides for patriotic children's books, American Innovator science kits to introduce elementary students to an exploration of American inventors, and professional support for teachers and librarians.

In the fall, MLC partnered with the GRAMMY Museum of Mississippi and the Mississippi Coding Academy to provide surrounding Kindergarten through 12th grade teachers with professional development aligned to the [America 250-MS](#) theme. MLC also presented America250 resources to public and university librarians in Hattiesburg, Jackson, and Oxford.



MLC continued to spread the word in January at the Mississippi Municipal League 2026 Mid-Winter Legislative Conference. MLC's AM250 display welcomed participants as they arrived each day for the event. MLC staff invited attendees to share via video their Happy Birthday wishes for America's 250 years of freedom as well as for the Mississippi Library Commission's 100 years of service.

Throughout 2026, MLC will continue to attend conferences, trainings, festivals, and celebrations conveying the message of America250 and sharing the broad range of available resources. If you or one of your community organizations would like for MLC to bring the America250 resources to an event, please contact Marvin Jeter at mjeter@mlc.lib.ms.us or 601-432-4157.



Mississippi Veterans History Project Underway

The Mississippi Library Commission is proud to expand the [Library of Congress's Veterans History Project](#) by offering Mississippi Veterans the opportunity to record and share their firsthand recollections of their service. All U.S. military veterans who have

served our country since World War I are encouraged to participate so that future generations may hear directly from them, even if they did not see combat.

Some of the stories that our veterans have shared are so meaningful! We learned from [WWII Navy veteran Arthur \(Audie\) Gardner](#) that he was in the boat next to General Douglas MacArthur when he fulfilled his 1942 pledge, "I shall return." Gardner personally witnessed the Supreme Commander of the Southwest Pacific Area "return" and lead the campaign to retake the islands from Japanese forces. Thanks to the [Waynesboro Public Library](#) for allowing us to come and record former Seaman Gardner tell this story along with many other veterans in their local area.

[Army veteran Christopher Hubbard](#) came to record at MLC's studio and shared the impact that his JRTOC instructors had on his decision to enlist. He also shared the lifelong benefits he gained from his years in the Army.

MLC's employee [Navy Petty Officer Neil Machowski](#) also told his story about serving on a Navy battleship during the Gulf War in the early 1990s.

Although more than 182,000 veterans live in Mississippi, there are only 500 oral histories in the collection. To help MLC add to Mississippi's collection, sign up to tell your story. Email us at VHP@mlc.lib.ms.us and provide your contact information, or call 601-432-4157 to schedule a time to record. Also, you may submit information by answering a few brief questions, and pressing "submit" at <https://www.mlc.lib.ms.us/america-250/veterans-history-project/>. If you are a library or community that would like MLC to record in your area, please contact us at 601-432-4157 or VHP@mlc.lib.ms.us.



About Us

The Mississippi Library Commission is committed, through leadership, advocacy and service, to strengthening and enhancing libraries and library services for all Mississippians. Learn more about us at mlc.lib.ms.us.

Continuing Education Links

- [Continuing Education Catalog January-June 2026](#)
- [MLC's YouTube Channel](#)
- [Special Collections](#)

MLC Resources

- [America250](#)
- [Bookmatch](#)
- [Center for the Book](#)
- [MAGNOLIA Database](#)
- [Talking Book Services](#)

- [Veterans History Project](#)



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