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Fall Issue 2026

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Message from the Executive Director



As I reflect on the past several months, I am proud of the important work taking place in libraries across Mississippi and grateful for the continued support that makes this work possible.

One of the most significant outcomes of this year's legislative session was the continuation of level funding for our agency. I sincerely appreciate the Mississippi Legislature's recognition of the essential role libraries play in strengthening communities throughout our state. This funding stability allows us to continue supporting public libraries and the vital services Mississippians rely on every day.

I am also deeply grateful for our federal funding through the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Through the Grants to States program, this investment enables us to expand services, strengthen local libraries, and support meaningful initiatives benefiting communities across Mississippi.

Over the past few months, I have especially enjoyed seeing libraries embrace the America 250 initiative. Through patriotic book recommendations, activity guides, Story Walks, and other engaging programs, libraries are creating meaningful opportunities for individuals and families to connect with our nation's history. It has been exciting to see these efforts take shape in communities throughout the state.

Summer library programming has been another highlight. It is inspiring to see summer reading programs drawing strong participation from readers of all ages. Libraries are not only promoting literacy, but also

creating welcoming spaces where people can gather, learn, and grow together. The creativity, enthusiasm, and dedication shown by library staff during this season have been truly remarkable.

As we look ahead, we are preparing to celebrate a milestone that holds special significance: the 100th anniversary of the Mississippi Library Commission. Reaching a century of service is a testament to the lasting impact libraries have had on generations of Mississippians. I am honored to serve as Executive Director during this historic moment, and I look forward to celebrating our rich legacy while also focusing on the future and the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

I continue to be inspired by the dedication of library staff across our state. Their commitment, innovation, and passion for service are at the heart of everything we accomplish and help ensure that Mississippi public libraries remain trusted community institutions.

As we celebrate our successes and look toward the future, I encourage everyone who values libraries to be an advocate for the services they provide. You can support libraries by getting and using a library card, participating in programs, sharing library stories, volunteering, supporting local initiatives, and communicating with elected officials about the importance of library funding. Each of us has a role to play in keeping libraries strong, accessible, and ready to serve future generations.

Thank you to our legislators, federal partners, libraries, and communities for your continued support. Together, we are making meaningful progress, and I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.

FCC Review of E-Rate

The FCC is currently reviewing the E-Rate program, which helps schools and libraries afford internet access and network services.

Public comments are now being accepted through **October 13, 2026**. Libraries, supporters, and community members who want to learn more or participate can visit MLC's [FCC Review of E-Rate: Mississippi Library Information and Resources](#) webpage.

The page includes current information, important dates, Mississippi-specific resources, and links for submitting comments.

Helping Libraries Stay Connected



Reliable internet access is now essential infrastructure for modern library service. Across Mississippi, public libraries help patrons apply for jobs, complete schoolwork, access government services, conduct research, build new skills, and connect with important resources. [MLC Technology Services](#) works behind the scenes to help make those services possible.

Through the federal E-Rate program, MLC helps public libraries obtain discounted support for the internet access and network infrastructure they need, including broadband service, Wi-Fi, cabling, switches, and other technology that keeps libraries connected. These discounts save Mississippi public libraries approximately \$1.6 million in technology costs, helping local libraries stretch limited funding while maintaining essential digital services. MLC's state-level E-Rate Coordinator works directly with libraries on filings, deadlines, and program requirements, helping libraries maximize federal funding and reduce local technology costs.

Technology Services staff also provide practical, hands-on support beyond the filing process. Libraries can receive help-desk assistance, remote troubleshooting, and on-site support when needed. Staff also help libraries plan for future technology needs, maintain reliable service, and improve access for patrons.

The impact of this work reaches beyond technology. Reliable internet and strong library networks help students succeed in school, job seekers connect with employment opportunities, small businesses access online resources, families reach essential services, and residents participate more fully in today's digital world. By helping libraries stay connected, MLC helps communities across Mississippi stay connected as well.

America 250 Mississippi and Veterans History Project: Helping Communities Explore History



America 250 Mississippi continued in June through participation in the S-RESA Making Connections Conference and the Mississippi Municipal League Conference at the Gulf Coast Convention Center. These events provided opportunities to share information about the statewide commemoration and connect with educators, local officials, and community partners.



The **Veterans History Project** also expanded its work across Mississippi during May and June. Eight Days of Veterans' Stories were held at libraries, city facilities, veteran organizations, and Mississippi Veterans Affairs homes, resulting in 34 newly recorded stories. An additional eight recruitment and outreach activities connected the project with veterans, Veterans Affairs leaders, community organizations, and residents of veteran homes. Together, these efforts are helping preserve the firsthand experiences of Mississippi veterans as an important part of the state's America 250 story.



Are you a veteran who would like to share your story, or do you know a veteran whose story should be preserved? [Learn more about the Veterans History Project and how to participate](#), or contact us at VHP@mlc.lib.ms.us.



Image, right: Participants in the Veterans History Project at the Mississippi Library Commission. Pictured, top: Staff Sergeant Mike Corban, U.S. Army, Vietnam. Middle: 178th Airborne Brigade veteran James Wallace, U.S. Army, Vietnam, Specialist 4. Bottom: Sergeant Marsha Holder, U.S. Army, Vietnam/Army National Guard.

MLC in Retrospect: A Century of Expanding Access



When the [Mississippi Library Commission](#) was created in 1926, approximately 83 percent of the state lacked free public library service. The Mississippi Federation of Women's Clubs had made library service in every county a statewide goal and strengthened the Mississippi Library Association's campaign to establish a state library agency. The new Commission was authorized to advise communities seeking to establish or improve libraries and to operate portable library collections. In the decades that followed, transportable collections, Depression-era library projects, and bookmobiles carried books and library services beyond established library buildings and into communities across Mississippi. Today, that commitment to overcoming distance continues through public library internet and Wi-Fi access, MLC's technology, network support, and statewide online resources such as the MAGNOLIA databases.

State aid, multi-county library systems, federal assistance, and investment in qualified library personnel gradually created a stronger statewide network. By 1970, all 82 Mississippi counties were supporting, to some degree, free countywide library service. MLC continued to broaden the meaning of access through Talking Book Services for eligible residents who cannot use standard print, interlibrary loan and resource sharing, digital services, and new technologies. The methods have changed considerably over the past 100 years. Still, the central purpose has remained: helping Mississippians reach quality library services, dependable information, and reading materials regardless of location or barriers to using traditional print.

MLC Center for the Book: Celebrating Mississippi's Literary Heritage



From May through July, the [Mississippi Center for the Book](#) prepared to represent the state at the 2026 National Book Festival on Saturday, August 22, 2026, in Washington, D.C., and the Mississippi Book Festival on Saturday, September 26, 2026, in Jackson. Mississippi's 2026 Great Reads from Great Places selections are *One Mississippi* for young readers and *Choctaw Traditions: Stories of the Life and Customs of the Mississippi Choctaw* for adult readers. These selections will help introduce

festival visitors to Mississippi's books, authors, culture, and literary heritage. Two MLC staff members will travel to Washington to staff Mississippi's exhibit, promote the selected titles, and share information about the state's literary traditions and library services.

MLC received a \$9,000 award through the COSLA-IMLS National Book Festival Support 2026 program to assist with festival participation and related Center for the Book programming. The funding will help cover staff travel, lodging, transportation, materials, shipping, and supplies for the National Book Festival, with a portion also supporting the Mississippi Book Festival and additional literacy activities. The Center for the Book also supported MLC's America250MS patriotic literacy campaign, Come Read with Us, through social media book features, reading recommendations for children and adults, and activity guides based on ten patriotic picture books. Together, these efforts connect Mississippi readers with books while promoting the state's authors, stories, history, and literary heritage on both state and national stages.

Supporting Public Library Staff Across Mississippi



Great library service begins with the dedicated employees who welcome, assist, and serve Mississippians every day. The [Mississippi Library Commission](#) supports these local teams through professional development designed to strengthen communication, customer service, leadership, and workplace effectiveness.

In August, MLC is hosting two comprehensive, in-person training programs led by Dr. Lindsey Lewis.

This training provides practical strategies for everyday library situations, including exceptional customer service, effective communication, conflict resolution, and positive interactions with patrons and coworkers.

Managers and supervisors explore essential tools for leading teams with confidence, including setting clear expectations, coaching employees, promoting accountability, addressing workplace challenges, and supporting staff development.

These workshops are part of MLC's continuing commitment to working with public library directors and employees through training, professional discussion, statewide coordination, and practical support, helping libraries and their communities thrive.

Image, top right. Mississippi public library staff from several different branches participate in the Frontline Staff Training: Communication and Customer Service workshop led by Dr. Lindsey Lewis.

Professional Development and Conference Connections



Continued professional development helps library staff stay connected to new ideas, practical tools, and colleagues who understand the opportunities and challenges of library service. This fall, Mississippi library staff will have several opportunities to learn, share, and bring useful ideas back to their local communities.

The [Association for Rural & Small Libraries Conference](#) will be held September 16–19, 2026, in Montgomery, Alabama. ARSL is especially relevant to many Mississippi public libraries because of its focus on rural and small library service, practical problem-solving, community connection, and programs that can be adapted for libraries with limited staff, budgets, or space.

The virtual [Mississippi Library Association Annual Conference](#) is scheduled for October 22–23, 2026. MLA provides an important statewide opportunity for library staff, trustees, partners, and supporters to connect with colleagues, learn from one another, and strengthen library service across Mississippi.

MLC encourages public library staff to take advantage of professional development opportunities when possible. Whether through statewide meetings, regional conferences, or national gatherings, these experiences help library workers return home with new strategies, stronger professional connections, and ideas that can benefit the communities they serve.

Follow MLC Online

Follow the Mississippi Library Commission on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) for library news, program highlights, resources, and updates from across the state.

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

Continuing Education Links

- [Continuing Education Catalog July-December 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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This publication is made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Grants to States Program as administered by the Mississippi Library Commission.

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