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I am honored and excited to begin my work as Executive Director during this milestone year for our agency. Mississippi Library Commission (MLC) is celebrating 100 years of library service, a century marked by dedication, growth, and meaningful impact in communities across our state.

Following the recent legislative session, our agency's state funding remained intact, reflecting the Legislature's continued support and recognition of the vital role libraries play in our communities. In addition, federal support saw a modest increase, providing important stability as we look ahead.

With this momentum, we are moving forward with intention. Our focus will be on honoring the legacy of the past 100 years while positioning MLC for continued success. As we celebrate this centennial milestone, we also commemorate America 250 and recognize the important role libraries play in preserving history, promoting civic engagement, and connecting communities to our shared story. We will continue to prioritize expanding access to resources, strengthening professional development opportunities, and finding innovative ways to meet the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

Libraries have always been vital spaces for learning, connection, and opportunity. As we celebrate this centennial year, we are committed to supporting the library community and ensuring its continued growth and relevance for generations to come.

Mississippi Music Empowerment Program (MMEP)

A Program of the Mississippi Songwriters Alliance



The Mississippi Library Commission introduced the Mississippi Music Empowerment Program (MMEP) to public library directors, and libraries across the state quickly began hosting workshops.

Developed by the Mississippi Songwriters Alliance, MMEP is a youth program making a meaningful difference in libraries and communities statewide.

MMEP's Youth Songwriting Workshop serves youth, adapting to different age groups and community needs. Professional musician educators teach creative collaboration, song structure, and lyric development, helping participants create original songs.

Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math in Action

MMEP incorporates STEAM learning through the songwriting process. Students explore rhythm sound patterns, structure lyrics and melody, and use digital tools to record and produce music. This hands-on approach connects creativity with critical thinking.



The program was presented at the Mississippi Library Commission Library Directors Meeting. That introduction quickly turned into action, leading to workshops in libraries across the state, including Madison Public Library, Carroll County Public Library, Washington County Public Library, and Bolivar County Public Library. Libraries are seeing participation and meaningful engagement.



A library staff member shared, "We saw students who were shy at first gain confidence in social settings and collaborate enthusiastically."

One participant said, "I never thought I could write a song before this, and I want to do more."

When asked what a program like this can mean for young people, Alanna Mosley, a singer-songwriter from Carrollton, Mississippi, and an MMEP instructor, shared her experience.

She explained that music helped her find her voice, not just as an artist, but as a person. It gave her the confidence to stand in front of others and brought her out of her shell in ways she never expected.

She also spoke about a broader issue. As arts funding declines, programs like this give young people opportunities to discover their potential.

Growing in Mississippi

MMEP workshops continue to expand across Mississippi, with additional opportunities available for libraries statewide.

This year also marks a transition in leadership. Trailand Eltzroth is stepping into the role of Education Coordinator for the Mississippi Songwriters Alliance, continuing the work previously led by Sean Gasaway.

“MMEP is not about importing something from the outside. It is about showing young people across this state that the music, creativity, and stories worth telling are already inside them. The goal is to help youth find their voice through instruments, lyrics, and song, creating an experience they carry with them long after they leave the library.”

— Trailand Eltzroth

Why It Matters for Libraries

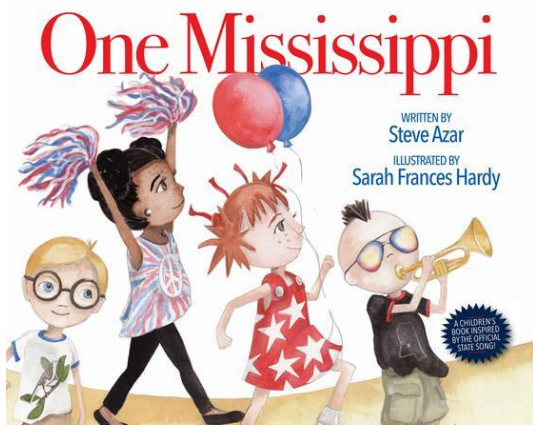
Programs like MMEP provide libraries with an opportunity to:

- Increase youth attendance and engagement
- Offer creative, meaningful programming
- Support mental health awareness through positive expression
- Strengthen community connections through the arts
- Deliver hands-on STEAM learning experiences

[Learn more about the MMEP workshop program.](#)

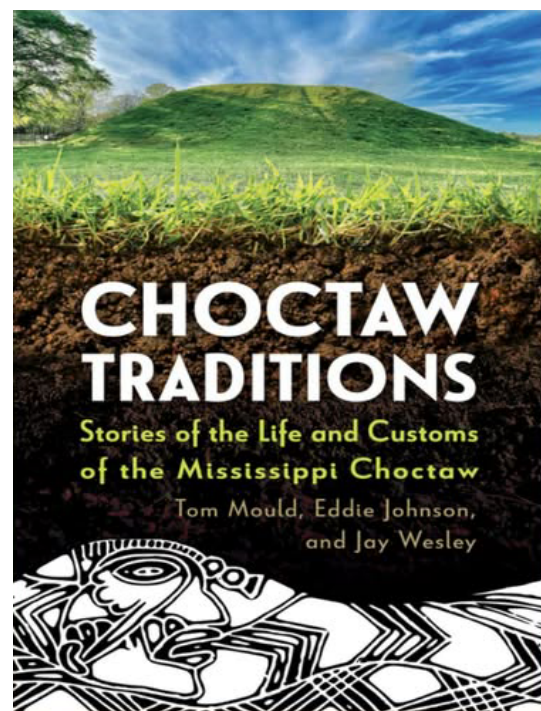
Programs like this reflect the Mississippi Library Commission’s commitment to supporting libraries as centers for learning, creativity, and community connection.

Mississippi Center for the Book



The 2026 Mississippi Center for the Book children's book selection is *One Mississippi*, featuring lyrics from Mississippi's official state song by Steve Azar and illustrated by Sarah Frances Hardy.

The adult selection for the 2026 Mississippi Center for the Book is *Choctaw Traditions: Stories of the Life and Customs of the Mississippi Choctaw* by Eddie Johnson, Jay Wesley, and Tom Mould. The book preserves and shares the rich traditions and cultural heritage of the Mississippi Choctaw.



The Mississippi Center for the Book, an affiliate of the Library of Congress Center for the Book, continues its work connecting readers across the state through its annual “Great Reads from Great Places” selections.

Each year, Mississippi highlights one adult title and one children's title that reflect the stories, culture, and voices of our state.

This year's selections include the children's book *One Mississippi*, featuring lyrics from Mississippi's official state song by Steve Azar and illustrated by Sarah Frances Hardy, and the adult selection, *Choctaw Traditions: Stories of the Life and Customs of the Mississippi Choctaw* by Eddie Johnson, Jay Wesley, and Tom Mould. The adult selection preserves and shares the rich traditions and cultural heritage of the Mississippi Choctaw.

Together, these selections support the Mississippi Library Commission's America 250 and MLC 100 initiatives, using books and storytelling to share Mississippi's story as part of the larger American narrative.

Readers are encouraged to visit their local libraries to explore these selections and take part in this statewide reading experience.

MLC Disability Support Services

Spotlight

During April's National Autism Acceptance Month, the Mississippi Library Commission highlighted the importance of accessible and comprehensive services for Mississippians.



Ruth Jinkiri, Disability Support Coordinator for the Mississippi Library Commission, works directly with community members to share resources and connect individuals and families to services available through their local libraries.

Earlier in the month, the Raymond Public Library hosted an Easter egg hunt where a participant from MLC's support group read to children as part of an autism acceptance-focused activity. MLC staff attended and supported the effort.

Feedback shows the impact of this work. One participant shared:

"I was deeply touched by the program at the Raymond Library. Seeing Ruth Jinkiri from the Mississippi Library Commission there supporting the event meant so much. As a parent of two children with special needs, I watched a child be supported in such a thoughtful way, and it filled me with hope.

In many places, children like mine are not highlighted like that. It reminded me how important this work is.

The dedication and care shown to the disability community do not go unnoticed. Thank you for making people feel seen, heard, and valued."

Additional outreach included programs at the Medgar Evers Library in partnership with the New Progressions adult group, as well as the monthly parent and caregiver support group.

One especially meaningful moment occurred when a young man attending greeted Ruth Jinkiri with a hug. His mother shared that her son had never hugged anyone before. Moments like these highlight the importance of creating welcoming spaces where individuals and families feel supported and valued.

In total, MLC Disability Support Services conducted one on-site program and three off-site programs during April.

Summer Reading Starts Here

Libraries across Mississippi are preparing for a summer of reading, learning, and discovery through their annual Summer Reading Programs.

These programs help prevent summer learning loss, often called the "summer slide," where students can lose academic progress during the break.

Libraries offer reading incentives, live programs, and hands-on activities that keep children engaged. Families can attend events featuring performers, participate in crafts and science activities, and explore new interests.

Many libraries also partner with local schools to support continued learning throughout the summer. From large systems to small rural branches, Mississippi libraries share a common goal: keeping students reading, learning, and connected.



Get Involved This Summer

Families can contact their local public library to learn how to sign up for Summer Reading Programs, pick up reading logs, and explore upcoming events.

Participation is free and open to all ages, making it easy for the whole family to stay engaged in reading all summer long.



Vision Resource Guide

The Vision Resource Guide was created for individuals with visual impairments to help them navigate the complex world of available resources in one convenient location.

The guide contains resources for all age groups and stages of life, including both local and online services. It also features a glossary of terms to assist those who are new to the world of visual impairment.

Find valuable resources related to careers and finances, education, medical services, leisure activities, and more!

Access valuable resources from Vision Resource Guide at visionresourcems.org.



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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No

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