

The Massachusetts Library System (MLS)

Fund: 7000-9401

The **Massachusetts Library System** provides support to libraries through delivery services, databases, eBooks, and training for library workers.

MLS During the Pandemic

The MLS Consulting & Training Services Team worked collaboratively with MBLC to publish a blog post on March 4 that provided resources about the virus and how libraries could begin to prepare for it. As more information became available, MLS worked with MBLC to launch the “Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Massachusetts Libraries” LibGuide on March 12.

MLS suspended all in-person training and consulting services on March 13. To support library staff, the Consulting & Training Services Team provided several live online learning opportunities including converting in-person trainings to online, COVID-19 related trainings, and virtual check-ins with librarians.

Compared to the same time the previous year, MLS increased the number of live learning opportunities and more than quadrupled the number of attendees at these sessions. In 2019, MLS held 66 sessions with 1,112 in attendance. And in 2020, MLS held 73 sessions with 4,733 in attendance.

Delivery

Statewide Delivery was suspended for 10 weeks due to the pandemic. Prior to being shut down, it was on track for almost 15 million items delivered in FY20, with over 9 million items delivered between July 2019 and March 2020. Statewide Delivery provides community members with access to collections far beyond their local library, and MLS worked to get the service up and running as safely and quickly as possible. Delivery will continue to support libraries as they help their communities recover from the pandemic.

Online Learning Resources

In addition to live online learning opportunities, MLS also provided library staff with a variety of online learning resources that they could do anywhere, anytime. These included LibGuides on topics such as Social Justice, Inclusive Collections, Marketing, Reader’s Advisory, Online Training Resources, recorded webinars, and videos on teleworking tips.

During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of online learning resources saw a dramatic increase in use from the same time the previous year going from 1,750 views of recorded webinars and videos in 2019, to 17,411 in 2020, and 24,982 LibGuide views in 2019, to 119,524 in 2020.

Consultants

MLS consultants saw a significant increase in the number of member interactions and consultations they provided between March and June, compared to the previous year, going from 281 in 2019, to 605 in 2020. Questions ranged from library closings, to virtual services, to dealing with the uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

MLS and its staff were able to respond to the pandemic quickly and efficiently to ensure that Massachusetts libraries that depend on the services we provide receive the information they needed in a timely manner.

