National Impact of Library Public Programs Assessment Phase 1

A White Paper on the Dimensions of Library Programs and the Skills and Training for Library Program Professionals

ALAAmerican Library Association JUNE 2019
Preface

The National Impact of Library Public Programs Assessment (NILPPA) has an ambitious goal: to conduct foundational research documenting and illuminating the potential of library public programs to fortify libraries, strengthen communities, and improve lives.

In today’s fast-changing world, library programming is increasingly integral to enhancing library responsiveness and adaptability. Through programming, libraries identify, address, and reflect community needs; enhance their institutional capacity and services; and contribute deeply to our democratic society. But the library field has lacked sufficient data on whether, and how, these efforts are working—knowledge that is necessary in order to prepare the library workers of today and tomorrow to provide the best possible library experiences for our communities.

Our NILPPA work began with a planning project, concluded in 2014, that confirmed the need for national research in this field. The project’s first report, National Impact of Library Public Programs Assessment White Paper, was published in December 2014; it garnered hundreds of comments from the library and information sciences (LIS) field and established a foundation for ongoing research. Since then, the field has moved forward in exciting ways, with significant impact measurement, community engagement, and leadership training that has further established the importance of programming to libraries’ work.

With National Impact of Library Public Programs Assessment Phase 1: A White Paper on the Dimensions of Library Programs and the Skills and Training for Library Program Professionals, we take the first steps toward codifying what many of us in the library field already know: the programming work coming out of libraries is extraordinarily diverse and important, and creating successful programming requires a broad array of skills and competencies that sometimes we may neglect to fully appreciate.

The following pages summarize the findings of our national research effort, conducted between 2017 and 2019, that explored the dimensions of public programs and related competencies. In the course of our research, we heard from practitioners that, unlike other areas of information science expertise, the skills needed to deliver great programs are acquired at different points of professional development—often in ad hoc circumstances. Likewise, many aspects of library programming have developed by happenstance and are inspired by immediate need. By exploring important dimensions for categorizing public programming and providing a set of related competencies, our research provides critical groundwork needed for future studies of program impact.

We hope this white paper will advance the field’s understanding of how, when, and why library programming is happening. Our intent is for practitioners to see themselves and their communities in this research and use these frameworks to affirm and enhance their programming; for these findings to illuminate the possibilities for LIS programs to expand their curricula to meet the needs of a field that uses programming as the most direct pathway to community; and to inform ALA professional development efforts in support of emerging needs in the field.

NILPPA’s future phases will build on Phase I’s programming framework and practitioner competencies by documenting the skills and mastery levels necessary to public programming and assessment and by exploring how best to evaluate and respond to community need, document impact, and foster a culture of evaluation. These efforts will support best practices and contribute to a broader understanding of the societal value of library programming. Ultimately, program participants and community members will benefit from quality programming that serves their greatest needs and interests, providing them with the necessary resources to reach their individual and collective potential.

Mary Davis Fournier
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Comment on the white paper online at NILPPA.org.
Introduction

As U.S. libraries transform to meet the needs of a changing nation, public programming is rising to the forefront of their daily operations. While libraries have always had a broad educational mission and an esteemed role as collection holders and lenders, the 21st century is witnessing their rapid transformation to centers for lifelong experiential learning, hubs for civic and cultural gatherings, and partners in community-wide innovation. To date, little national data is available to understand the impact of this shift on libraries, library users, or their communities, or to describe effective practices across the field. National research—including the findings shared in this white paper—is imperative to assess current program offerings in libraries of all types as well as to identify the skills and training necessary to support library workers as they address these new demands.

NILPPA’s Goals
Through a research grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the American Library Association (ALA) conducted the first phase of a multi-year, multi-part research project to document the characteristics, outcomes, and value of public programs and to contribute information to help prepare future generations of library workers to excel in this work. The National Impact of Library Public Programs Assessment (NILPPA) is a natural outgrowth of ALA’s mission “to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.” To serve that mission, this intensive first phase of NILPPA has brought together a network of researchers, practitioner-researchers, and advisors to explore two foundational questions:

- How can we characterize and categorize public programs offered by libraries today?
- What competencies and training are required for professionals working with library programming today?

Over the past two years, NILPPA researchers have developed a deeper understanding of the current nature of library programming and created a baseline for future work on trends and forecasting. Establishing a multidimensional picture of library programming and defining emerging training needs sets the foundation for future phases of research, which will ultimately enable the individual library to situate itself within national trends. This work will also help the library field assess community-wide impacts and document the elements of programming that assure its greatest success.

The Rise of Public Programming
Historian and Carnegie Corporation of New York President Vartan Gregorian once called libraries “the treasure houses of civilization,” a description that is likely to inspire images of vast shelves of books and magazines, reference materials, perhaps films, photographs, and even precious artifacts. This
image speaks to the perceived essence of libraries. But libraries today have expanded their traditional roles. They are also meeting places, theaters, classrooms, laboratories, lecture halls, children’s spaces, performance platforms—a host of gathering places. The existence of these spaces, in part, reveals an accelerating commitment to public programming that is occurring at an unprecedented level in the library community. Through these programs, libraries are extending the ways in which they provide equal access to knowledge and informal education opportunities as their core purpose in a democratic society.

When library scientist and mathematician S.R. Ranganathan proposed his Five Laws of Library Science in 1931, he could hardly have anticipated how the Fifth Law, “The library is a growing organism,” impacts library practices today. The archives of the ALA’s Public Programs Office (PPO) reveal that tens of thousands of libraries of all types have presented an array of programs through PPO grants alone. The Public Libraries Survey, conducted by IMLS in 2016, reported that public libraries across the United States had presented 5.2 million programs that year, an increase of 72.1% since 2010. In another measure of the proliferation of library programs, PPO’s ProgrammingLibrarian.org website and opt-in mailing list have grown dramatically—from 3,796 subscribers in March 2015 to 6,556 in March 2019.

The trend toward increased programming continues in libraries of all types, including public libraries, academic and school libraries, and a host of special libraries. Programs may be on special topics, such as gardening, finance, or photography. They may facilitate wide-ranging discussions on world affairs, climate change, or healthcare. They may present authors, encourage book club activities, or support political debate. The topics, formats, intended audiences, and program partnerships vary widely. But the common denominator in libraries across the country is that public programming has become central to libraries’ work.
NILPPA’s Role in Understanding the Importance of Public Programming

Many individual libraries have reported data about their programs, but the library field has little aggregate data about the collective impact of programs or how programs have changed over time. The growth of programming is accompanied by several important questions: How do library programming workers prepare for their changing roles and responsibilities? What skills are needed? Where will they be learned? How will growth in programming impact library infrastructure and building needs? How do librarians select programs? How can they determine trends in community needs? How will growth in programming impact library infrastructure and building needs? How do librarians select programs? How can they determine trends in community needs? How has the focus on programming impacted public perception of libraries? NILPPA's multiphase research will examine these questions.

As a result of NILPPA: Phase I research, we established two frameworks: one for defining multiple dimensions of library public programming, and the second for identifying the competencies required to produce effective programs. The next research steps will add to this baseline research, continuing to build an understanding of the impact of library public programs on libraries, individuals, and communities.

NILPPA research also affirms the importance of programming research as an essential component of the library field. Libraries are not only gateways to learning for their patrons, they are also institutions of self-learning, knowledge-seeking, and innovation. As library workers respond to emerging community needs and interests—and libraries as an institution are viewed in new ways—library leaders need data to further understand the nature and effect of changing practices for the library, the program participants, and the community as a whole. They also need to ensure this vital work is visible and to share the changing image of libraries emerging from programming.

In early 2018, Forbes published, and quickly removed, an op-ed by economist Panos Mourdoukoutas arguing that Amazon had made libraries obsolete. Not surprisingly, the piece received thousands of responses from both library workers and library users—including the NILPPA white paper authors—who made it clear that libraries offered a vast number of services beyond the

### Benefits of Programming

**INDIVIDUALS WILL BENEFIT**
Library programs are opportunities for continuing education and lifelong learning. They serve residents of all ages and income levels. They serve a community’s diversity through engaging entertainment, enrichment, and opportunities to encounter new ideas and learn new skills.

**COMMUNITIES WILL BENEFIT**
Programming helps develop a community voice and can support civic dialogues. It helps foster community networks, introduces residents, invites newcomers, and allows exploration of ideas in a safe environment. Programming opens doors to new partnerships that can extend the community identity.

**LIBRARIES WILL BENEFIT**
Cultural programs build awareness of the library and its value within the community, drawing increased attention to many important services the library provides. Program audiences are likely to return to the library to use collections and access electronic resources. They are also likely to communicate the value of the library to others.
circulation of books. Following the public outcry, Forbes quickly made the unusual decision to delete the op-ed. All the same, the author's original post made clear that many in our communities are unaware of contemporary library services. Librarians need the information emerging from research to articulate the vision of a 21st-century library and create broader public awareness and support.

The findings of this project will support core library practices, build programming competencies, and offer opportunities for new research partnerships. Ultimately, NILPPA will promote more and better public programs, and help us understand the benefits of these programs. Individuals, communities, and libraries will be best served through programs that address the changing needs of today's society.

To understand the impact of library programs, we must consider these three types of benefits together. Furthermore, to ensure that they reach all audiences adequately, library workers need to understand and master core competencies associated with programming. They also need the means to document and analyze their work within the nationwide landscape of practices to effectively learn from each other and export successful programming strategies, as relevant, to other communities.

Project Design

The NILPPA: Phase I research used a range of research methods, including surveys, interviews, conferences, discussion forums, reviews, and reports, to gather national data from many different library sectors. Participants in this process were ALA PPO staff, the NewKnowledge research team, a core research team of six library professionals, a national advisory team consisting of 20 additional library and allied field professionals, and over two thousand library workers around the U.S. currently responsible for programming. Resources included a broad review of university curricula, as well as a sampling of library job listings and position descriptions. Researchers drew on findings of such related projects as Project Outcome, WebJunction, the University of Washington Impact Study, Measures that Matter, Programming Librarian, the Pew Library Typology, and others. Blog posts on the NILPPA website have highlighted the project's core questions and preliminary findings, and presentations at professional meetings have provided ongoing updates.

Throughout the project, researchers used rigorous approaches to data collection and analysis that incorporated a variety of opinions. The team deployed and redeployed surveys to assure inclusive representation of library types and to test for validity of terms and findings. The advisory and core research teams reviewed all findings and augmented the study through their own research and experience. The results from this first phase will shape the ongoing research design with an eye toward our aim of advancing public programming in all library types across the country.

Defining Key Terms

The feasibility of the project required that respondents and researchers share a common understanding of key terms that, on one hand, appeared simple, but on the other, required a great deal of discussion and vetting within the field. As part of the current research phase, terms such as program, public, and instruction have undergone testing and refinement to ensure they
are commonly understood. One term, competency, already had an effective definition that was affirmed through the testing process.

Working definitions used during the research process were:

**Program:** A program is an intentional service or event in a group setting developed proactively to meet the needs or interests of an anticipated target audience.

**Public:** The advisors concluded that, for the purposes of this research, public and public programs refer to the library’s public—the community the library serves or the audiences the library targets with its programs. For example, for a public library, the audience may consist of the whole community or a component of the community, such as older adults. In the case of the academic library, the public may be the student body, a specific department, or a special component of students. This definition underwent considerable review and discussion to clarify the “free choice” nature of the attendees. If attendance is required at a program, it is outside of the definition.

Based on the input from research participants, we arrived at a final definition that combined the terms public and program:

A **public program** is a service or event in a group setting developed to meet the needs or interests of an anticipated target audience. All libraries, regardless of type, have a public—the audiences the library tailors its programs to and the people the library serves.

**Competency:** “Professional competencies comprise the knowledge, skills, and abilities which are teachable, measurable, and objective and which define and contribute to performance in librarianship.”4 A competency has two dimensions: (1) knowledge, skill, or ability; (2) the level of mastery of that knowledge, skill, or ability.

**Instruction:** The public programming definition eliminated programs considered to be a form of formal instruction. For a program to be defined as academic instruction, it must meet specific conditions: the event occurs during a course meeting time or a part of the coursework; the event is restricted to students and instructors affiliated with the specific course; and students are penalized for failing to attend or meet this requirement. This definition helped clarify the nature of “public” programs and refined the focus of the research.

**Question 1:** How Can We Characterize and Categorize Public Programs Offered by Libraries Today?

This first phase of NILPPA’s research provides the foundation for national metrics to assess how library programming is impacting library services and users. A critical step in this process is finding a way to characterize and categorize the breadth and variety of public programs occurring in libraries of all sizes and types.5 What are the topics and formats in use? How are programs paid for? What audiences are being served? Who are the most valued community partners? How are programs evaluated to assure
quality and meaningful impact? And, ultimately, what outcomes are evidenced through effective public programming?

Research Process
To avoid redundancy and learn from others, NILPPA researchers began their work by delving into and leveraging the work of related projects. This includes the work of Project Outcome, for example, which was critical for inventorying program descriptions and dimensions, and Measures That Matter, a joint project of IMLS and the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies that has worked to streamline data from the nation’s public libraries since October 2016.

NILPPA researched numerous related reports and organizations to think about initial categories. The team also considered a number of other efforts related to programming. The team worked closely with Project Outcome staff to define a categorization scheme initially based on content or topic. Programming Librarian, an ALA website, provided their menu options, such as program budget, library type, program topic, program type, and audience. The site was recently re-designed based on how library workers use the information—categories that received few clicks were eliminated, while popular categories were kept. As the site continues to be refined and updated, it serves as a reflection of the library programming work in the field.

The University of Washington surveyed visitors’ use of technology in libraries, resulting in a categorization of technology use—relating to education, employment, health and wellness, civic engagement, and more—that could potentially inform library programming. To further examine ways programming is visualized and talked about elsewhere, the NILPPA team reviewed efforts such as the Pew Library Typology study, which confirmed the importance of library public programming to the American public. Meanwhile, the Public Libraries Survey, conducted by IMLS, provided NILPPA’s first working definition of program, and WebJunction’s competency index for the library field emphasized new overarching components, 21st-century skills, accountability, and community engagement—all of which are applicable to the goals of public programming.

Drawing from this rich background of research, the NILPPA team undertook a detailed meta-analysis that became the basis for a draft categorization scheme, reviewed and refined by the project advisors. The evidence-based classification creates four dimensions, each further refined by subdimensions, as you can see in Figure 1.

From October 2017 through February 2018, the researchers and advisors continued to refine the model and assure its relevance to all program types. One significant change was the addition of a single key question (or sub-dimension) for all dimensions. Each question relates to the program’s goals and intentions, an important component in NILPPA’s eventual objective of measuring impact.

Library Profile: What type of library is it?
Program Characteristics: What is the most important intended outcome? Categories may include such outcomes as education, recreation, or dialogue.
Audience Scope: Is the program trying to appeal to the library’s entire audience or a subset? Subsets could be audiences divided by age groups or perhaps intended for special interests such as bilingual programs.
Program Administration: How was the program developed? Is this a library-developed program, one developed with a partner, or perhaps something from a national organization, such as ALA?

From April through October 2018, the researchers conducted a Library Programming Validity Survey to corroborate the research team’s definitions and preliminary categorization schemes. The surveys, which reached a wide field (see Figure 2) of library professionals in a variety of library environments, focused on clarifying the anticipated outcomes of programs, which feature prominently in the next phases of the NILPPA initiative. Focusing on outcomes addresses the importance of developing programs intentionally rather than opportunistically. Furthermore, to determine collective, nationwide impacts, libraries must first measure their programs’ outcomes on an individual level.

Researchers also conducted a series of case studies of programs across library types that illustrate intended outcomes, and to determine whether new intended outcomes should be added to the framework. Based on these studies, one additional dimension emerged, one sub-dimension was adapted, and one was eliminated. This process produced the following intended outcomes representing library programs across the country.

- Participants learn new knowledge.
- Participants learn new skills.
- Participants change their attitudes.
- Participants change their behaviors.
- Participants gain awareness of library resources, services, or programs.
- Participants have fun or are inspired.
- Together, libraries and participants build stronger and healthier communities.
**Research Findings: What Makes a Library Program?**

Ultimately, this extensive testing process resulted in the Library Program Categorization shown in the framework in **FIGURE 1**. Identifying the primary and sub-dimensions of library programs is essential to the subsequent phases of the NILPPA research. The second question of this study explores how best to prepare those library professionals responsible for building and delivering effective programs. Together these findings provide a more nuanced understanding of the nature of library public programs today.

### FIGURE 1

**What Makes a Library Program?**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIMENSION</th>
<th>PRIMARY SUBDIMENSION</th>
<th>OTHER SUBDIMENSIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIBRARY PROFILE</strong></td>
<td>Library Type</td>
<td>Library Subtype&lt;br&gt;Geographic Area&lt;br&gt;Community Demographics&lt;br&gt;Library Size and Capacity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Public&lt;br&gt;• Academic&lt;br&gt;• K-12&lt;br&gt;• Special</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS</strong></td>
<td>Primary Intended Outcome</td>
<td>Program Topic&lt;br&gt;Program Format&lt;br&gt;Location&lt;br&gt;Deliverer&lt;br&gt;Program Frequency</td>
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<td>• Participants learn new knowledge&lt;br&gt;• Participants learn new skills&lt;br&gt;• Participants change their attitudes&lt;br&gt;• Participants change their behaviors&lt;br&gt;• Participants gain awareness of library resources, services, or programs&lt;br&gt;• Participants have fun or are inspired&lt;br&gt;• Together, libraries and communities build stronger and healthier communities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRAM AUDIENCE</strong></td>
<td>Audience Scope</td>
<td>Target Audience&lt;br&gt;Demographics&lt;br&gt;Actual Audience&lt;br&gt;Demographics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Appealing to a library’s entire audience&lt;br&gt;• Appealing to a subset of the library’s entire audience</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION</strong></td>
<td>Development Model</td>
<td>Funding (library, patron, partner, etc.)&lt;br&gt;Specific Sponsors or Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Developed by the library itself&lt;br&gt;• Developed by or with a community partner&lt;br&gt;• Developed by a national or regional organization</td>
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**Question 2: What Competencies and Training Are Required for Professionals Working with Library Programming Today?**

The second question explored in NILPPA: Phase 1 asks how programming librarians, in today’s fast-changing library landscape, acquire the skills and competencies needed to perform their jobs well. Do most programming librarians hold advanced degrees in library science? Are they gaining these skills through formal education, on the job, or in some other manner? How can we best prepare the programming librarians of tomorrow to be leaders in their communities and the field? Of course, before we answer these questions, we must first determine the competencies and skills required by today’s programming librarians.

**Research Process**

As with research on library program categories, research on the competencies and training was a multi-step, detailed process. Throughout the research program, NILPPA’s research and advisory group met in workshops, through phone calls, and online discussions to review the findings and summarize the work.

To understand the specific competencies required for library programming professionals, the research first looked at how the library field perceives competencies overall. This initial phase of the research in 2017 reviewed three types of information across many sources and institutions in the library field:

1. Explicit competency frameworks for the library field as a whole;
2. Competencies described in advertisements for library positions;
3. Websites for ALA-accredited graduate programs, examining programming components of the 58 English-language websites.

The websites for the graduate programs included overviews, course listings and descriptions, specializations and concentrations, and highlighted competencies. Based on this review, only 50 of the 58 degree programs that had publicly available materials offer courses that address programming. However, no university required students to take these courses; all were offered as electives. The course titles and descriptions suggested that programming courses were heavily focused on young adults, children, storytelling, and diversity. Fewer than half of the degree programs listed an explicit programming-related competency that graduating students must master.

In parallel to the review of printed information, the research team went directly to the field for additional input. Researchers surveyed library professionals for their perspectives on the skills, knowledge, and abilities they found most important. Asked how confident library programmers felt about their ability to run programs, 1,086 of 1,247 respondents to our surveys answered positively, replying “always,” “almost always,” or “usually.” Of these respondents, 961 had completed a library and information science degree or were currently enrolled, and 278 had not received this type of degree. Interestingly, completing a library and information science degree did not seem to make a difference to self-reported ability to run programs. In fact, ninety-three percent said they learned to run programs on the job, 62% from colleagues, and 74% from other informal learning.
In June 2018, the research team held five 90-minute discussion forums with 41 library practitioners, representing K–12 libraries, academic libraries, various library types in rural areas, tribal libraries, mixed library types, and emerging library leaders. The forums expanded on the core competencies identified by the field through the survey on program skills, knowledge, and ability. These discussions placed particular emphasis on the importance of assessing community needs, noting that the process is critical but challenging as communities become more diverse.

**Research Findings: The Nine Competencies of Programming Librarians**

Shifting roles for libraries have significant implications for framing the competencies needed by library program professionals. Interpersonal skills like convening, collaborating, and facilitating increasingly take on greater significance. Confidence in one’s ability to do programming appears to stem less from subject-area expertise (information skillsets) and more from the ability to leverage community resources and facilitate experiences (social skillsets). By becoming more context-dependent, programming competencies require greater flexibility from setting to setting.

The ability to conduct a community assessment emerged across research activities and received considerable attention among advisors as well. They discussed the embedded competencies of being able to map and analyze assets and needs, develop programs based on this work, identify underserved and unserved populations, and forge productive partnerships.

The emphasis on creating community connections underscores the need for programming librarians to recognize and celebrate cultural diversity. This is an area in which community partners, especially those trusted by culturally diverse groups, can help librarians who are not insiders to a group build new relationships and hone services with community members’ involvement. Library workers can learn many skills from others in the community. They can also look to the work of other professional associations in setting diversity standards, such as the American Psychological Association and the International Literacy Association. Competency frameworks in fields like social work, psychology, and other social sciences may have applicability to this work. An important next step in serving the needs of programming librarians, therefore, is to define more fully how such competencies can be developed and strengthened.

Researchers and advisors also recognized that informal learning opportunities contribute tremendously toward developing competencies. They discussed how such opportunities can be made more available, citing mentoring, conference attendance, MOOCs like those offered by Coursera and other platforms, online webinars, and other types of credentialing as possibilities. And, importantly, certain skills may be best learned in these informal settings and on the job. In addition, nationally distributed and grant-funded cultural and science projects such as Bridging Cultures: Muslim Journeys, NASA @My Library, and other traveling programs can combine effective content with guidance on using and adapting them to specific audiences.

As a result of the research activities, NILPPA identified nine areas of library programming competencies (see **FIGURE 3**) that, when combined, are unique to library program professionals. Each area includes competencies with different levels of mastery. Future NILPPA research will further explore these competency areas.

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A visitor at an exhibit about Native American health and wellness at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pa.

Only 50 of the 58 degree programs that had publicly available materials offer courses that address programming. However, no university required students to take these courses; all were offered as electives.
Knowledge of the Community
Works toward understanding the communities for which programs are developed, including their particular needs and interests; building respectful, reciprocal relationships with community members and organizations; and ensuring access to a wide variety of programs for all community members, especially those who have historically been underserved or face other challenges to access.

Interpersonal Skills
Works toward communicating effectively and appropriately with all stakeholders and audiences to provide consultation, mediation, and guidance during programs and in other contexts relating to programs.

Creativity
Responds to challenges and problems with inventiveness, flexibility, and creativity to resolve them.

Organizational Skills
Works toward managing time and projects efficiently and effectively at multiple levels: individually, institutionally, and in collaboration with outside organizations and agencies.

Content Knowledge
Works toward sufficient knowledge of program content to deliver, manage, or evaluate programs, according to role.

Event Planning
Works toward planning, managing, and implementing events that are both developmentally and culturally appropriate for their intended audiences.

Financial Skills
Works toward budgeting, seeking funding for, and managing the finances of a program or suite of programs, often in collaboration with external partners.

Evaluation
Works toward using statistical and qualitative tools to measure program effectiveness and impact on all community audiences, including those that have historically been under- and underserved; and using this information to iteratively improve the development and delivery of programs.

Outreach & Marketing
Works toward communicating information about programs to all community members who could potentially attend or benefit, using a variety of digital and analog channels in ways that are culturally and developmentally appropriate.
Conclusion

NILPPA: Phase I research will have many useful applications for the field. It provides two essential baseline frameworks that can help library workers shift the perspective from thinking about individual library program outcomes at their own library to a broader consideration of library program impact across the US, offering vital insight into how individual libraries may move forward, or how programming staff may shape their professional development focus. Our results offer guidance to library and information science graduate programs, encouraging them to consider curriculum to help students develop core programming competencies. National and regional organizations, including ALA, will also be able to use this research to create new opportunities for continuing education and professional development for all library workers. Finally, an articulated understanding of programming competencies can help library workers of all types design strategic plans—including hiring decisions, space allocations, and processes towards diversity and inclusion—with intention toward and attention to the growing importance of programming in today’s library.

The first phase of this essential research also creates the foundation for NILPPA’s next wave of studies, which will continue field-wide dialogue about public programming in libraries. We are confident that these assets will help us measure the impact of library programming on all stakeholders and strengthen the transforming role of libraries as they respond to the needs of our changing nation.

References

3. Across all research activities, 2,245 library workers participated in the studies. We tried to reach as many unique library workers as possible both to include the maximum number of voices and to reduce burden. However, individuals may have participated in multiple research activities. Above, we use the approximate number (2,000) as a conservative estimate of unique participants.
5. For a full description of the research process and multiple iterations of the work, please see NILPPA.org.
6. For a full description of the research process and multiple iterations of the work, please see NILPPA.org.

Participants at an event for the PBS series The Great American Read at Sedona (Ariz.) Public Library
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Comment on the white paper online at NILPPA.org.
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