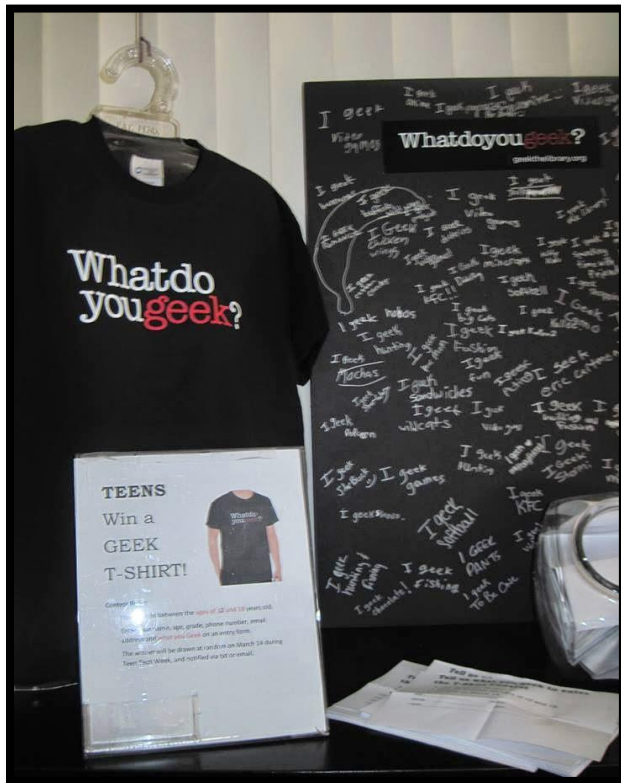


## HOT Insights from the MLA/DLA 2014 Conference

Tracy Carroll, Sally Hull, and Bill Taylor attended the MLA/DLA 2014 Conference back in May and came back energized with lots of learning to share but I asked them to pare it down to their *favorite* session and what they learned from it.

### Tracy asks, What do you geek?



So what do you geek? Being a "geek" I initially thought that this session would be a techy talk about some cool new technology, but this was a little different because it wasn't so much about being a "geek", it's more about what you're passionate about. It's turning your passion into support from the community. 'Geek the Library' is a community-based public awareness campaign designed to highlight the vital role of public libraries in today's challenging environment and raise awareness about the critical funding issues public libraries face.

Whatever you geek, serious or fun, the public library supports you. Hancock War Memorial Branch Library is the ONLY Maryland public library participating in the 'Geek The Library' campaign. Branch Manager, Marilyn Pontius, found out about the campaign during her trip to the Association for Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL) Conference in 2013. Marilyn signed up to join the campaign and received great response from her community. She put up a blackboard provided by the campaign and got great responses especially from the teens in Hancock. It became a conversation piece and it was simply a way of finding out what her patrons were passionate about and it became a way to engage the community about the importance of libraries. The community participated by writing out what they "geeked" on the board seen here and below. The 'Geek The Library' campaign provided most of the gear from t-shirts, bags and bumper stickers. They provide much of the marketing material for free! Marilyn said that the only expense that she had was purchasing a banner that was less than \$50. I thought that it was a great way to promote libraries at virtually no added cost to the library other than a commitment of time.

# Tracy asks, What do you geek?

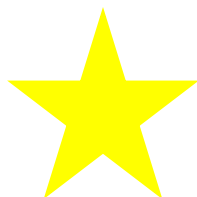


The 'Geek The Library' campaign is a great way for libraries to start conversations with their communities about why the library is important. It's still not too late to join the campaign, sign-up continues until June 30, 2014. Find out more information [here](#).

The campaign is sponsored by [OCLC](#), a nonprofit library cooperative that has provided services to help libraries deliver more to their users for four decades. Supported by a grant from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), OCLC partnered with Chicago-based marketing communications agency [Leo Burnett USA](#) to create the campaign.

## What I learned:

The 'Geek The Library' campaign is a great way to start a conversation in your community about the importance of libraries. Initially it engages the community to share what they are passionate about, but it became an avenue to share with the community why libraries are important and even get funding if needed. The 'Geek The Library' campaign sign-up runs until June 30, 2014, so it's not too late to sign up! Talk to your administrator and see if you can sign up your library today!



**DID YOU KNOW...** Tracy was also at the MLA/DLA 2014 Conference to accept the Davis McCarn Technology Award for her creation of the Summer Reading Club online registration website that has been adopted by several public library systems across the state!

Presented annually by the Citizens for Maryland Libraries President in recognition of outstanding achievement that has improved library service and library advocacy in Maryland. Includes a framed certificate, a book store gift certificate in the amount of \$100, recognition in the CML Newsletter, on the CML web site and in other CML publicity as appropriate.

## Sally recommends fostering healthy, welcoming relationships with patrons through understanding



During the Joint MLA/DLA Conference May 9th, 2014, I had the opportunity to attend several very informative sessions. All of the sessions I attended had great take-home information. However, the one that most caught my attention was Coping with Mental Illness: Strategies for Staff presented by Erin Kelly from the Enoch Pratt Free Library and, Lea Ann Browning, the Deputy Director of the Mental Health Association of Maryland.

The first half of the session gave a brief overview of specific types of mental illness, such as Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Panic Disorder, and Schizophrenia. Since one quarter of the adult population in the U.S. is diagnosed with one or more mental illnesses, it stands to reason that librarians should be aware of and equipped to interact in a responsible and respectful way with patrons or co-workers who may suffer with these issues. The program 'Mental Health First Aid' has trained more than 6,500 Marylanders to provide initial help to those developing a problem or crisis. We learned which key state agencies were provided the opportunities to be trained in Mental Health First Aid and how libraries can benefit by having trained staff.

The second half of the session focused on how we can communicate using conversation and body language with those who are having a hard time adhering to basic library rules. Time was spent discussing different situations that employees have found themselves in and different negotiating tactics and compromises that can be used to calm disruptive behaviors in a way that is discrete and respectful.

As library staff, it is important that we treat each patron with courtesy and professionalism. Erin and Lea Ann provided us with many great tips and resources. I would heartily recommend anyone given the chance to listen to what they have to say, to take advantage of any opportunities to learn more about mental health issues, and to foster healthy, welcoming relationships with all of our patrons.

## BILL SAYS, “THINK LIKE A BUSINESS!”



A public library is not a business (which is one of the many reasons I like working here!) but we can be more successful in our non-profit mission by learning some lessons from the for-profit world. The value of merchandising – that is, designing the physical environment to encourage sales (or in our case, circulation) is one such lesson that was emphasized in a recent MLA/DLA conference program. Sharon Lauchner, the Library Collections Manager in Frederick County, had lots of great ideas, not to mention very contagious energy and enthusiasm. Her slides, notes, and handouts are at <http://lanyrd.com/2014/mladla14/scydck/>. I'll just hit a few highlights here.

Displays don't always need a rotating theme. A permanent “power wall” of appealing non-fiction books can be a big draw, boosting their visibility and circulation. Sharon's example shows a small library that put their entire non-fiction collection on one big wall, with face out displays above and regular shelving below. In a larger library, this could be done for just a portion of the collection, say cookbooks, or health and wellness. One big advantage to having display and regular shelving together this way is that when the face-out display books are taken, replacements are right there, ready to fill in with.

Mixing media can boost circ. Why not have non-fiction DVDs shelved with or near the non-fiction books?

Have some of the good stuff in the back. Supermarkets keep the milk in the far back corner to encourage people to walk through the whole store, where they can be tempted by impulse items. Likewise, we could have some popular part of the collection (Maybe the hold pickup shelves? Or the new books?) located further into the building, so people will pass by other appealing items on the way, and maybe do some impulse checking out.

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## BILL SAYS, “THINK LIKE A BUSINESS!”



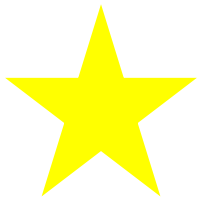
Speaking of impulse items – why not keep some of these types of books right at the checkout desk, like the candy in the supermarket? Maybe how-to or self-help books? Celebrity bios? Romances?

We can promote e-content in areas with print content: posters for Zinio in the magazine section; a bookmark or poster for Overdrive in the fiction area.

When all the copies of a big blockbuster are absent from the new books shelves, you could put a small poster or bookmark display in their place with read-alike suggestions. In other words – “Sorry we’re all out of Such-and-such by Nora Roberts – see the info desk to request a copy. And meanwhile, have you tried these other authors?”

Kids’ picture books can be displayed in face-out bins, like LPs in a record store. (For my colleagues under 30, LPs are an antique form of music storage from before you were born.) Storing the picture books this way does make more work for shelvers, but Sharon reports that kids love browsing in such bins.

So – those are just some of Sharon’s great ideas. Contact me, or see her notes and handouts, for more!



**DID YOU KNOW...** Julie Zamostny is the MLA/DLA 2015 Conference Director? The team is off to a great start! So far, we are partnering with NASA and the speaker series (the Wednesday night, Thursday night, and Friday afternoon events) will focus on the topic of STEM Teaching, Learning, and Application: A Triple Bond Between Libraries, Schools, and NASA. If you want to get involved or have suggestions for preconferences, programs, or special events, just send an email to [jzamostny@washcolibrary.org](mailto:jzamostny@washcolibrary.org) or call 301-739-3250 ext. 554.