

NJSL DIRECT

Weekly News Updates for New Jersey Libraries

January 12, 2026

State Library Updates

Uncovering Individual Education Plans with Artificial Intelligence - TOMORROW

You are cordially invited to join an information session on a free, open-source Artificial Intelligence tool called AIEP, developed by the AI for Impact program at the Burnes Center for Social Change.

Created by and with families of children with special needs, AIEP uses artificial intelligence to help families translate, summarize, and understand their child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) in plain language. IEPs are complex documents, often more than 25- 30 pages long and containing educational and medical jargon that is difficult for anyone, especially those who are low literacy and non-native speakers, to decipher.

Developers of AIEP will be joined by New Jersey's Chief AI Strategist for a demonstration of the tool and discussion of the role libraries might play in supporting K-12 special education students and their families.

The session will be held on **Tuesday, January 13 from 2 – 3 p.m.** Registration is not required; [join by clicking here](#). Please contact [Jen Nelson](#) with any questions about the session.

State Librarian's Update - January

Please take a moment to read the [January 2026 New Jersey State Library update](#).

NJSL PRESENTS: A Black History Month Special Event

Please join the New Jersey State Library in celebrating Black History Month on **Saturday, February 21st, 2026** for an in-person screening of the 3-part, New York Emmy Award-nominated PBS documentary “The Price of Silence” from 12:00-2:00 p.m. at the New Jersey State Museum Auditorium in Trenton, NJ. The event is **FREE** and registration is encouraged as space is limited. [Click here to learn more and register](#). Please help us spread the word about this special event!

NJ250 Digital Exhibit Launching in 2026

In partnership with the NJ State Archives, the NJ State Library will soon launch a new digital exhibit: “NJ250: Living Documents, Evolving Rights 1776-2026”. As the nation marks 250 years since the Revolution, our exhibition will explore how New Jersey helped shape and was shaped by the fight for liberty. Through the evolution of its constitutions, discover how the state balanced local needs with national ideals and how the meaning of democracy continues to define both New Jersey and you. As a special sneak peek, in honor of Patriots Week, check out New Jersey as it appeared in 1777, through a map originally published in the *Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure*. Waterways, early roads, and familiar towns reveal a state on the brink of transformation, just a year after the 1776 Constitution. Stay tuned for the full digital exhibit, but for now, [here's a teaser!](#)

Start Planning your Financial Literacy Programs for Financial Literacy Month!

As part of [NJSL's Money Smart for Life initiative](#), all NJ public libraries are encouraged to host a financial literacy event during Financial Literacy Month in April 2026.

Share your Money Smart for Life events! [The interest form](#) for Money Smart for Life is now live on the New Jersey State Library website. Share your upcoming events and programs for NJSL to promote through a shared calendar and on social media. You can also provide speaker and website details if you want to recommend financial literacy resources for other libraries.

Stay updated through the NJSL website: www.njstatelib.org/moneysmart

If you have questions, contact Andrea Levandowski (alevandowski@njstatelib.org) or Sharon Rawlins (srawlins@njstatelib.org).

Our recent blog post introduces Money Smart for Life, exploring why financial literacy matters, how libraries can play a key role in closing knowledge gaps, and what resources and support will be available through this new initiative. [Click to read](#).

LibraryLinkNJ New Categories Added to LearningSpace

Explore professional learning at your own pace on LibraryLinkNJ's LearningSpace, now with two new categories designed to support you both professionally and personally. Check out resources and learning opportunities on the following new topics:

- [Cybersecurity](#)
 - [Everyday Well-Being](#)
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Statewide EDI Resource Solicitation Form for NJ Libraries

As part of the larger [Strategic Roadmap](#) project, led by NJSL, NJLA, and LLNJ, we are conducting an audit of the equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) resources currently being used across New Jersey libraries.

If you or your organization have participated in an EDI training, workshop, or program—or if you've come across a resource you believe is valuable and worth reviewing—we invite you to share it with us through this [EDI Resource Solicitation Form](#). Your input will directly inform this audit and help strengthen collective EDI efforts statewide.

Questions? Contact edi@librarylinknj.org.

National Opportunities

ALA Virtual Event - Recharging in Challenging Times

Across libraries, many professionals are navigating heavy workloads, rising expectations, and the emotional demands of serving their communities. Recharging in Challenging Times: An ALA Virtual Event takes place **Tuesday, February 10th, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.** This event is designed to support you with practical ways to protect your energy, set boundaries, and make the work feel more sustainable. Registration also includes on-demand access through May 10, 2026. [Register here](#).

2026 AARP Community Challenge

AARP has officially launched the 10th year of its Community Challenge grant program, which funds quick-action projects that make communities more livable and spark long-term change!

Key Details:

- Application Deadline: March 4, 2026 at 5:00 p.m.
- Submission site: [AARP.org/CommunityChallenge](https://www.aarp.org/CommunityChallenge)
- Project Completion Deadline: December 15, 2026
- Eligibility: 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), 501(c)(6) nonprofit organizations, government entities, and other organizations on a case-by-case basis

2026 Grant Opportunities:

Flagship Grants

- Support projects that improve public places; transportation; housing; digital connections; and disaster resilience. Awards range from a few hundred dollars to \$15,000.

Capacity-Building Microgrants

- \$2,500 grants paired with expert support, webinars, and cohort learning. Focus areas include walk audits, bike audits, HomeFit® Guide modifications, and disaster preparedness training.

Demonstration Grants

- Designed to replicate promising local efforts. Topics include pedestrian safety (funding support from Toyota Motor North America), high-speed internet (funding support from Microsoft), and housing design competitions. Awards typically range from \$10,000-\$20,000, and will not exceed \$25,000.

[AARP Community Challenge Flyer](#)
[New Jersey Fact Sheet](#)

Questions? Email communitychallenge@aarp.org.

NJSL Presents Events

Our NJSL Presents Webinars are free and open to anyone interested in attending. Registration is required in advance and [all webinars are recorded and posted to our YouTube page](#) afterward. You can also [check out event recaps on our blog](#)! Here's what we have coming up in January, feel free to share within your communities.

- [Culinary Herbs](#) - January 13th @ noon
 - [Gentle Yoga to Lift the Mood](#) - January 29th @ noon
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Professional Development Opportunities

Visit the State Library's [CE Training webpage](#) for a variety of Continuing Education training opportunities for New Jersey librarians, library support staff, and trustees.

[On-Demand Training Portal](#) in the LibraryLinkNJ LearningSpace and [a list of training programs](#) currently being offered.

[Professional Development Links](#) and [Webinars and Other Training Events](#) from the NJLA Professional Development Committee.

Check out the upcoming LYRASIS CE opportunities on their [calendar here](#).

[Click here for a monthly national list](#) of CE and Professional Development opportunities.

Library Marketing Resources

If your library is looking for marketing tips, best practices and inspiration, [check out our Marketing Blog](#) updated monthly. Here's our most recent blog posts:

- [A Guide to YouTube Shorts for Libraries](#)
- [Five Free Library Content Ideas You Can Post This Week](#)
- [The Secret to Social Media Hooks](#)
- [Refresh Your Library's Approach to Email Marketing](#)
- [How to Create Better Hyperlinks for Accessibility](#)

Download sharable social media graphics and videos from the [Statewide Digital Marketing Campaign](#).

Also, you can [download marketing resources from State Library Vendors & Partners](#).

Connecting people with information through libraries.

New Jersey State Library | [Website](#)



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