For Immediate Release

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Public Library Association to Bring More Than 8,000 People to Nashville for National Conference Building the Future of Libraries
Speakers include Stacey Abrams, Samantha Bee, Soledad O’Brien

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (Jan. 30, 2020) – The Public Library Association (PLA) will bring more than 8,000 passionate public library professionals, exhibitors, speakers and guests to the Music City for its national conference Feb. 25–29. The event will feature more than 120 programs focused on inspiring and developing the future of U.S. public library services.

The biennial conference will bring to the forefront the library profession’s commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and social justice (EDISJ) through its topics and array of speakers. Nashville nonprofits will be part of this focus, as well, with local social enterprises like Thistle Farms joining a Pop-Up Shop at the conference, and conference attendees assembling snack packs for the Oasis Center and the young people experiencing homelessness they serve. And library staff will tour and learn from local groups like Conexión Américas in a sold-out Day in the Community.

“The roles of public libraries keep expanding as the needs of our communities change,” said PLA President Ramiro Salazar. “The public library has always been and continues to be an exceptional connector of people and knowledge – democratizing access to essential information and resources for all. We look forward to learning, connecting and leading as we gather in the vibrant city of Nashville.”

Author, serial entrepreneur, nonprofit CEO and political leader Stacey Abrams will be the opening speaker on Feb. 26. After witnessing the gross mismanagement of the 2018 state election, Abrams launched ‘Fair Fight’ to ensure every Georgian has a voice in the election system. She also created ‘Fair Count,’ which works to achieve a fair and accurate 2020 Census count of all people.

Comedian and TV host Samantha Bee will close out the conference Feb. 29. Now starring in “Full Frontal with Samantha Bee,” she was the longest-serving regular correspondent on “The Daily Show” (from 2003–2015) and has hosted the “Not the White House Correspondence Dinner.” Bee also has published a series of personal essays, titled “I Know I Am, But What Are You?” and is currently writing a young adult novel.

In addition to Abrams and Bee, the conference will host Big Idea sessions each day led by other trailblazers in the community, like award-winning journalist Soledad O’Brien, award-winning author Dr. Bettina Love and the first Deafblind person to graduate from Harvard Law School, Haben Girma.
Other PLA 2020 conference highlights include:

- Programs specifically focused on **library services for immigrants and refugees**, with examples stretching from Long Beach, Calif., to Kansas City, to the Southern Adirondack Library System in New York. As welcoming, networked and inclusive community hubs, libraries are uniquely positioned to help newcomers establish community roots, build careers and achieve their education goals.

- Sharing community-based responses from the **Public Libraries Respond to the Opioid Crisis with their Communities** national project. PLA and OCLC will release their Call to Action report on Feb. 27 and will feature a Tennessee case study at the conference program at 10:15 a.m. **Blount County Public Library** will share its innovative partnership with Recovery Court, which empowers individuals with substance use issues to leave prison, reenter society and strengthen community ties.

- Preparing for a complete count in the **2020 Census**. Ninety-nine percent of hard-to-count Census tracts are within 5 miles of a public library, which will be **more important than ever** with the first-ever online response option. During the 2010 Census, over 6,000 libraries hosted Census Bureau outreach sites. The PLA 2020 Conference will host a session focused on Census preparations featuring former Metro Nashville Council Member **Fabian Bedne** and Nashville Public Library staff on Feb. 28 at 3:30 p.m.

- Fighting for the future of library digital collections for all. “Public Libraries Changing the eBook Publishing World” on Feb. 27 at 4 p.m. will highlight how librarians are working with independent authors to get the attention they deserve through the Indie Author Project. “Building the Case for #eBooksForAll” on Feb. 28 at 10:15 a.m. will provide the most current information on the national campaign to strengthen digital lending rights and oppose restrictions like Macmillan Publishers’ embargo on library eBook purchases.

From eliminating overdue fines to virtual reality, to social workers joining the library ranks, the PLA 2020 Conference will feature the most important trends in library programs and services for communities nationwide.

For more information, please visit [http://www.placonference.org/](http://www.placonference.org/). To register for a press pass, please email Larra Clark at lclark@ala.org.

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The Public Library Association ([http://www.ala.org/pla](http://www.ala.org/pla)) is the largest association dedicated to supporting the unique and evolving needs of public library professionals. Founded in 1944, PLA serves nearly 9,000 members in public libraries large and small in communities across the United States and Canada, with a growing presence around the world. PLA offers professional development opportunities, unique public library initiatives and a conference that welcomes public library staff into meaningful partnership. In collaboration with its parent organization, the American Library Association, PLA strives to help its members shape the essential institution of public libraries by serving as an indispensable ally for public library leaders.