

News



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New State Librarian chosen to head New Jersey State Library
Jennifer R. Nelson brings vast experience working at the state level

TRENTON, N.J. – Thomas Edison State University (TESU) announced that Jennifer R. Nelson has been chosen to serve as the new State Librarian for the New Jersey State Library (NJSL), an affiliate of TESU.

After an exhaustive nationwide search, with nearly 40 highly qualified candidates, Nelson’s more than 30 years of diverse and relevant experience stood out among the candidates. She will replace Mary L. Chute, who will retire in February.

“We had an outstanding candidate pool, but ultimately believe that combined with her other qualifications, Jen’s state-level experience provides, a strong advantage that will allow her to dive right into the library construction bond cycle and join in New Jersey libraries’ ongoing pandemic related operations. She has experience working with federal programs and supporting innovative statewide programming,” said Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, TESU president. “Jen has built a reputation as an active state and national leader in digital inclusion, equity and diversity programming, and technology and data innovation.”

Nelson currently serves as the director of Minnesota State Library Services, a division that administers Minnesota’s state and federal programs for libraries and the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library. She provided leadership, consultation and support to the Minnesota library community in planning, developing and implementing high-quality

library services statewide. Nelson is also a very active member of the national organization of Chief Officers of State Library Agencies. In this capacity she has recently played a key role in efforts focused on developing the organization's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion statement and advancing efforts in data collection regarding new and evolving library service models. In addition to her state-level work, Nelson also has 20 years of experience at large urban and county libraries.

"I am delighted to be coming to the State Library," Nelson said. "The staff and services at the New Jersey State Library and the larger New Jersey library community are among the best in the U.S. and it will be a privilege to lead as we move forward from the pandemic to a 'new normal.' "

Nelson holds a bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and a master's degree in library and information studies and a master's degree in political science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She was named a *Library Journal* "Mover and Shaker," and has been honored by the Minnesota Governor with the Governor's Award for Continuous Improvement, among other accolades. Widely published, Nelson is co-author of "Technology and Literacy: 21st Century Library Programming for Children and Teens" (ALA Editions, 2012); lead writer of Measures that Matter: National Action Plan for Public Library Data and Outcomes, Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, 2018; and author of "Celebrating Scratch in Libraries," *School Library Journal*, May 2009.

"I have family ties to New Jersey, and I'm looking forward to becoming involved in the community," Nelson added. "As the parent of an adult child with disabilities, I anticipate involvement in the Paralympic sports community in the state."

As State Librarian for the past eight and a half years, Chute led NJSL in the launch of innovative projects that helped New Jersey libraries serve as national models for delivering services to all populations of library patrons. Chute's focal areas have been on promoting equity of access and developing collaborative alliances. Her leadership paved the way for grant funded innovative model programs in areas including workforce development, cultural competency and translation training for bilingual library staff, preservation and digitization, and disaster preparedness and recovery.

“Mary led the successful expansion of an agency-wide focus on both internal and external collaboration and partnerships during a time of limited library funding, and, although she is not one to take credit, I am very proud of her accomplishments,” said Hancock. “I would like to thank Mary for her years of service, and I wish her the very best in her retirement.”

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ABOUT THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY

Thomas Edison State University provides distinctive undergraduate and graduate education for self-directed adults through flexible, high-quality collegiate learning and assessment opportunities. One of New Jersey's senior public institutions of higher education, the University offers associate, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs. Students earn degrees through a wide variety of rigorous and high-quality academic methods that can be customized to meet their individual needs. Identified by The New York Times as “the college that paved the way for flexibility,” the University is a national leader in the assessment of adult learning and a pioneer in the use of educational technologies. The University is home to The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy and the New Jersey State Library is an affiliate. To learn more, visit tesu.edu or email admissions@tesu.edu.

ABOUT THE NEW JERSEY STATE LIBRARY

The New Jersey State Library (NJSL), an affiliate of Thomas Edison State University (TESU), connects people with information and resources through its service to libraries, state government, TESU staff and students, and NJ residents, including those with special needs. NJSL provides support for public, school, academic, and special libraries, and continues to promote services for learners of all ages, including key areas of continuing need such as digital literacy, business outreach, workforce development, summer reading programs, and services for the visually and physically impaired, among others. For more information, visit njstatelib.org.