Greater Philadelphia Law Library Association (GPLLA)
Annual Report – 2017-2018 Membership Season
Prepared by Benjamin Carlson

GPLLA Officers for 2017-2018 were Carla Wale, President; Renee Bianco, Vice President / President-Elect; Erin Nagawiecki, Secretary; Paul Riermaier, Treasurer; Siobhan Tronco, Director-at-Large; Charlotte Schneider, Director-at-Large; Laura Chance, Director-at-Large; and Benjamin Carlson, Immediate Past President. The 2017-2018 season was a solid one for us, with many indications of a strong future for the chapter.

On the educational front, GPLLA offered a number of unique sessions on a variety of topics. Our newly-formed Membership Development Group began a series of sessions targeted at newer librarians or those who want to become more professionally engaged. This group, started by two of our board members, held an inaugural meeting on how to create and maintain a career action plan in the fall, and followed up in the spring with a “Writing Workshop Roundtable” to encourage our members to start writing more and looking for writing opportunities in the profession. These two sessions were fairly well-attended, but we are hoping for even better engagement with these kinds of programs going forward.

We also offered a spring educational session on Blockchain, presented by a team manager at Thomson Reuters which drew a good crowd. Our programming of late has been moving more and more into the technological realm as we try to keep up with new developments in the field.

Building on our technology focus, we had been planning to have an annual institute on AI in law in June, but due to scheduling conflicts we were forced to postpone this session until September.

GPLLA continues to offer an online legal research course targeted at those who are new to legal research, or who need a refresher. Enrollment in this course continues to grow, as we had 21 attendees from all over Pennsylvania. We are continuing to look at how to market this course beyond just the law library community, as the course covers basics that are of use to many researchers.

Most of the board’s ongoing initiatives involve streamlining our administration, as we are making a push towards online payments and registrations for events and member renewals to take the burden from our board and committees. Although we have now formalized our Grants and Scholarship fund so that we set aside money every year, we did not receive any applications for grants or scholarships last year, so we were unable to give any awards at all. We are looking into ways to market these benefits better and encourage more members to apply.

GPLLA’s continuing struggle is with stagnant membership for our chapter. For at least the last five years we have been hovering around 190 members, but we are exploring ways to expand our reach to areas that may not be covered by a local chapter.