



Association of Connecticut Library Boards Newsletter

The Association of Connecticut Library Boards (ACLB) is Connecticut's library trustee organization representing public library boards throughout the state.

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2017 Trustee Leadership Conference Set for Nov. 3

“CT Libraries: Challenges and Opportunities” is the theme of this year’s Trustee Leadership Conference, which takes place on Friday, Nov. 3, from 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at the Gray Conference Center at the University of Hartford on Bloomfield Ave. in West Hartford.

State Librarian Kendall Wiggin will open the event with a keynote address on the status of the state and federal budgets as they affect libraries. He will also discuss the challenges facing libraries in our state and nation and report on the “Measures that Matter” summit held in Baltimore. The program is aimed at improving the ability to establish the value of public libraries through meaningful and timely data.

Three break-out sessions will follow Mr. Wiggin’s talk. “Library Trustees, Friends and Directors Working Together” will be led by ACLB President Gail B. Richmond, Carl Nawrocki of the Salem Friends of the Library, and Karen Jensen, director of the James Blackstone Library in Branford.

Dr. Lawrence Snyder, director of cybersecurity, criminal justice and legal studies at Baypath University, will present a session on “CyberSecurity in Your Library: What You Need to Know.”

“Fiber Connections” will be the subject of a session by Maria Bernier, (LSTA) (Library Services and Technical Act) coordinator for the State Library. She will speak about the long-term benefits of high-speed connections. Grants totaling \$2 million are available to Connecticut libraries for conversion from DSL to fiber optic connectivity.

Following lunch and the annual trustee awards presentation, there will be a presentation on “EXCITE Your Library Community” by Jeanine Esposito, founder of Innovation Builders which promotes transformation for the new century. The EXCITE program offers team-based training in collaboration and innovation skills to foster grant-funded programs and services responding to community needs and leading to cultural change at libraries. It was piloted with teams from seven Connecticut public libraries from Oct. 2016-Jan. 2017.

Registration for the conference is open until Oct. 31. The cost is \$35 for ACLB members and \$50 for non-members. For further information see the conference flier and registration form on the ACLB web site, aclb.org.

Keeping Pace with Change ***By State Librarian Kendall F. Wiggin***

The State Library Board recently endorsed the *Best Practices in Connecticut Public Libraries* which I encourage all trustees to take a look at and adopt in your own libraries. The document covers many aspects of library service, but I want to highlight the section on staff and in particular the best practices around professional development.

The benchmark for professional development is that “The library delivers valued programs and services through competent, well-trained staff who understand community needs and are committed to high-quality customer service. Staff have the necessary training to provide the best possible patron experience and ensure that patrons have access to all materials and services provided by the library.”

The key point here is that this is “continuing” education. For libraries to meet effectively the changing needs of their communities and library users, library staff must continually update their skills and knowledge. My library school education was a point in time. Certainly the core values of librarianship haven’t changed, but almost everything else has. For instance, demographics and technology are two areas that radically changed since I graduated from library school.

One of the strengths of the public library is that it provides services to a full age spectrum that is very diverse. But within that age spectrum we now have multiple generations that are very different. Each generation does not become a clone of the former. There are big differences between how Boomers and Millennials, the two largest population groups in our society, use libraries. The services libraries provide for Boomers aren’t always going to be the same as for Millennials. To reach the children of Millennials (Generation Z) your library can’t be providing the same programs that were offered to their parents. Most certainly the children’s area should not even look the same as when any of us first used libraries.

It goes without saying that technology plays an ever-important role in our daily lives—and it, too, is generational. Library staff need to be

able to employ a wide range of high tech tools. They need to communicate with patrons on many different technology platforms. But staff at all levels within the organization need to be aware of technology trends and the effective application of technology to library services.

As trustees, you should be supporting staff development by supporting funding for continuing education and approving policies that encourage staff continuously to update their skills. Make it a priority for library staff to take advantage of the multitude of continuing education opportunities available to them.

The need for continuing education is not limited to library staff. *Best Practices in Connecticut Public Libraries* also encourages annual training and/or continuing education for all boards. To that end, I hope to see you on November 3rd at the ACLB conference.

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9. You will need to learn more about your community.

Advice: Without a sense of the community it serves, the library suffers from the impact of educated guesses, nostalgia, and being a place of reaction rather than proactive thinking. Be an active participant within your community. Introduce community members to your director. Ask questions about serving any new group or underserved population. Listen, observe, and look for opportunities for the library to be a catalyst for civic engagement.

10. Satisfaction. You have taken on a role that has the potential to influence the lives of your neighbors. The public library has endured through decades of economic turmoil, political change, and population shifts.

Advice: Stand up for what is right, do your homework, and proudly represent the institution to the community.

Sincerely, Your Library Director

Maxine Bleiweis, 2015 recipient of the Charles Robinson Award for Innovative Leadership and former Executive Director, Westport Library, now consults on library innovation through Maxine Bleiweis & Associates.

Dear Incoming Trustee

By Maxine Bleiweis

This article originally appeared in the June 3, 2017, issue of Library Hotline. Used with permission.—Ed.

Dear Incoming Trustee:

Congratulations! You've just taken on one of the noblest of positions—representing the public library. You've been sworn in, elected, or appointed, and your work is about to begin. What might you expect?

1. Challenges to the American Library Association's (ALA) Library Bill of Rights.

Advice: Practice having meetings at which you are urged to remove materials from the library. Anticipate that a controversial group will want to use your meeting room. Rehearse what you will say to your family, friends, and coworkers when a situation is reported in the press.

2. Fellow board members and community officials who put forth opinions and suggest actions that are counter to the direction the library has set.

Advice: Have an up-to-date strategic plan and understand why and how it came about. Stay on task to get to the goals outlined—and ask hard questions if you are not making progress. If you feel your strategy is outdated, make a new plan...don't act without one.

3. Dissatisfaction with progress by other board members and an impulse to take control of the process.

Advice: Play your part in avoiding the “meeting after the meeting” in the parking lot. Open dialog should be encouraged and a formal evaluation process set in place—not just for the director but for the board as a whole and its individual members. Create a “report card” for an annual review of your participation, preparation, and how seriously you take your role. Evaluate how you work as a group. It can be sobering to tally the responses and create an action plan based on the feedback. Look first to what you can change in your own approach to achieve the results you want—it's far more in your control than an attempt to change your colleagues.

4. A group of people who get too comfortable with one another and neglect the needs of the community.

Advice: Make sure the group is fluid, and represents a variety of experiences and interests. Term limits work to your advantage by preventing burnout and increasing the number of residents who have an understanding of library needs from the inside. Having dozens of informed former board members throughout the community and serving on other boards will benefit the library.

5. People who comment to you about the library and expect you to correct the situation.

Advice: Welcome comments and direct them to the person who can do something about them—the library director. The board acts as a governing body, not as micromanagers. Making promises or comments on behalf of the board to individuals, groups, or the press is unwise, unless you are the board president or other official spokesperson and are articulating officially determined library policy.

6. When interested people say, “What's new at the library?” you freeze or remember only the budget cuts, layoffs, and roof leaks.

Advice: At each meeting, ask your director for anecdotes that you can share. Positive stories about how libraries change lives will impress and engage your constituency. Have in your back pocket some statistics, such as how many people enter the building in a week.

7. Potential conflicts of interest.

Advice: Discuss any conflict of interest and draw up an agreement signed by every board member stating that they will not benefit monetarily from transactions made by the library. Recuse yourself from any votes that call your participation into question.

8. Everyone could be watching! Public libraries operate under a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) that differs from state to state. This means that what is said in a public meeting is part of the official record, and only certain topics can be discussed in executive (private or closed) sessions.

Advice: Familiarize yourself with your state's FOIA, review your practices from time to time, and seek legal advice when necessary. Otherwise, you could find yourself spending hours responding to requests for information or being cited for improper procedure.

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Our Mission

- Enable member library boards to improve library services in their communities.
- Broaden trustee knowledge of current developments in the library field.
- Improve communication and cooperation among library boards.

What We Do

- Provide workshops geared to the needs of trustees across the state.
- Maintain strong liaison with library-related organizations on the state and national levels.
- Provide consultant help to library boards and individual trustees

Officers

President: Gail B. Richmond
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Barbara Leonard, Friends of CT Libraries (FOCL), *ex officio*