

NEW JERSEY LIBRARY

TRUSTEES *Newsletter*

SPRING 2007



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Decisions – Decisions – Decisions –
A Time to Reflect and **Spring into Action**
Gail Dysleski

Let me ask you the following question. What do the following events have in common? The maiden voyage of the Titanic, the 2000 Presidential election, and the release of the Beatles first song. In each event, a series of decisions were made that changed history and the lives of people. As trustees, you are asked to make many important decisions that affect your library and the people who use it. Whether it is a decision on policy, starting a new service, or implementing a strategic plan, those decisions will have an everlasting effect.

In today's increasingly complex environment, a decision is not a single event. Unrealized factors (both internal and external) arise that have implications beyond our initial intention. Our patrons, watchers of government operations and observers of social change all take an interest in what factors lie behind the changes that we make. Let's take some time to reflect on the process we use in making our decisions. Decision-making means that we have enough information on which to base a good policy or action. We should also be able to justify why a certain decision was made. The decision-making process requires looking beyond the face value of a short-term change. We also need to consider that the long-term impact the decision has on the community.

We constantly ask ourselves the following questions when we are making decisions:



(1) Are we responding to changing demographics and interests of the community?



(2) Are we responding to community needs by being open the best hours to serve them?



(3) Are we ensuring that staff are equipped to deal with increasingly sophisticated technology and library users who are already familiar with that technology?



(4) Is the library relevant to community goals and initiatives?



(5) Do we get feedback from both users and non-users on practices, policies and purchases?

Our decisions should value and appreciate the best of what we have, envision what else might be possible and generate dialog of what should be.

Take some time during your board meetings to reflect on your decision-making process and renew your commitment to energize your library as a vital entity in the community. Establish policies that nurture, not restrict. Be an advocate for library advancements. The future of your library is not beyond your control if you gain an understanding of trends and issues.

One way to do that is to attend conferences or workshops designed for trustees. Look in this newsletter for upcoming workshops that you might want to attend. Also, if you would like to have an NJLTA workshop in your area,



please let me know by emailing ptumulty@njla.org. Invite us to hold a workshop in your area.

*HOPE TO SEE YOU AT
ONE OF THESE EVENTS!*

Membership Meeting Update



New Jersey Library Trustee Association is once again holding its annual membership meeting at the New Jersey

Library Association Annual Conference at the Ocean Place Resort and Spa. This year's program features Kevin Nedd, Councilperson and Mayor's representative on the Board of Trustees for the Washington Township Free Public Library in Long Valley, Morris County. His topic is Connecting with Municipal Officials. It doesn't matter if you are a municipal library trustee, an association library trustee or a county library Commissioner, this will be a useful session or working with your elected government body. In addition, there will be a short business meeting to address the proposed dues structure that was announced and described in the February listserv. As is our custom, the membership meeting will take place on Tuesday, April 24 from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm, room to be announced. There is no cost to attend this program. Be there to talk about the future of NJLTA, learn about connecting with your elected officials and share ideas.

If you wish to attend any other conference session, you do need to register. See www.njla.org/conference/2007 for details.

► Dues Proposal



NJLTA is working to improve its support for you as a library trustee. The association spends its money to help you to be a successful trustee, mainly on the newsletter and on support for the annual Trustee Institute. Association dues have been \$10 for well over twenty years. During that time period, the cost of

living and of doing business has escalated. It is time for an increase. The Executive Board is recommending an increase to \$20 per member. The information on the benefits and activities of the association can be found on the webpage

www.njlibrarytrustees.org

and is reprinted below. The dues are a good deal for New Jersey's library trustees and the residents they serve.

WHY JOIN NJLTA

Being a good library trustee is demanding. The issues you deal with reflect today's complex world. The New Jersey Library Trustee Association can help you make informed decisions about complex library issues. As a library trustee you are probably dealing with, or will soon have to meet, these challenges.

You know that today's library offers more than books. With the advent of DVDs, iPods, Internet, and other computer services, appropriate library policies are critical for all these new informational services. What is a policy? What is a procedure? How do I write an effective policy?

Trustees must hire and evaluate the library director. What do I put in the advertisement and where do I place the ad? What questions should I, and may I, ask of the candidate? How do I evaluate the library director?

Trustees should know about their community and residents' needs. By doing so, trustees can wisely allocate resources to insure the best possible library services. How do I administer a community survey and use the findings to develop a library mission statement, goals and objectives? How do I develop and present a budget to meet our community goals? How do I make my building accessible to my patrons?

The New Jersey Library Trustee Association can help you meet these challenges.

NJLTA jointly publishes *New Jersey Public Libraries: A Manual for Trustees* with the New Jersey State Library. (Available online,

njlibrarytrustees.org at the NJLTA webpage or in print for \$12. Send a check or voucher payable to NJLTA, Box 1505, Trenton, NJ 08607 or fax 609-394-8164.)

NJLTA offers a continuing education program at the Annual NJLA Spring Conference.

Perhaps the most important job of today's library trustee is that of library advocate. In times of tight budgets and funding cutbacks, it is vital for trustees to step forward and make sure libraries receive a fair share. Each year, NJLTA keeps a close eye on what is going on in the state capital, especially at budget time and posts the latest information on its webpage

www.njlibrarytrustees.org

click on Legislative Updates or

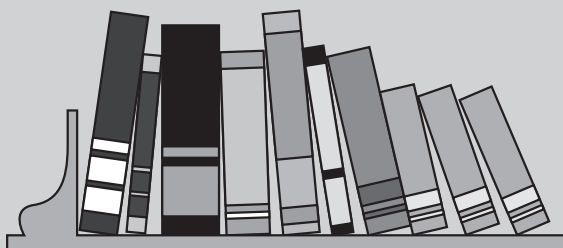
www.njla.org/legislative

*Your membership fee can help
SAVE thousands of dollars
for NJ libraries.*

WHAT NJLTA DOES

- ✓ Advocates for the betterment of all libraries and provides free advocacy training on demand
- ✓ Voices your library concerns to state and local legislators
- ✓ Strengthens and educates members through educational seminars
- ✓ Keeps you abreast of library and trustee happenings through newsletters (three times a year), a monthly listserv and a webpage
- ✓ Participates in the publication of a manual for trustees
- ✓ Supports the annual Trustee Institute through planning and financing

*Join NJLTA and add another voice for the
advocacy of libraries in New Jersey.*



► More Clearing Up the Confusion

QUESTION

What are the Regional Library Cooperatives? I've heard about them and I'm not sure what they do.



ANSWER

In our last issue, we addressed the differences among the New Jersey State Library, the New Jersey Library Association and our own organization, the New Jersey Library Trustee Association. Now let's talk about the Regional Library Cooperatives. The four Cooperatives (Highlands in northern New Jersey, Infolink in eastern New Jersey, CJRLC in central New Jersey and SJRLC in southern New Jersey) are organizations that offer such services as supplemental telephone reference service, statewide delivery and QandANJ (the state's 24/7 live internet reference service). Working closely with and using funding from the State Library, the Cooperatives offer shared library services for their members.

In addition, the Cooperatives provide technical and other library skill training sessions at a reasonable price for staff at their member libraries. Recent training sessions at the four Cooperatives include such topics as blogging, RSS feeds, plagiarism prevention, book repair, Flickr, podcasting and time management. The Cooperatives also offer discounts for electronic databases and electronic audiobooks. In many ways, the Regional Library Cooperatives make library staff members' life better and make serving their customers easier.

While the New Jersey State Library also offers discounts, free databases and training, it takes a number of library organizations, each with its own mission to serve New Jersey's diverse public libraries.

One of NJLTA's goals is to "clear up the confusion" among the variety of organizations that are out there to help your library provide dynamite customer service and products to the residents of your community.

Is there anything out there in the library world that is confusing you? If so, please email NJLTA at kaveni@comcast.net for answers in this newsletter. The questioners will remain anonymous, as they have the **Clearing Up the Confusion** features in this and previous newsletter issues.

Trustee Institute

Plans are in the works for the 2007 Trustee Institute. As in the past, the event will take place at the Ocean Place Resort and Spa in Long Branch, New Jersey. The dates for this year's institute are Friday, September 28 and Saturday, September 29, 2007. Michele Stricker, from the New Jersey State Library, is developing a schedule of programs that is sure to please. She plans to repeat certain popular programs and is in the process of developing new sessions of interest to New Jersey's library trustees. Flyers regarding registration will be sent to New Jersey's public libraries later in the spring.

See article below.



► The Importance of Trustee Training

Norma Blake, New Jersey State Librarian

These are complicated times for public libraries, and the need for proper trustee training is more important than ever before. Every library board should be comprised of the best candidates, and your position as a trustee requires dedication and knowledge. When you became a trustee you promised to be an active participant in supporting your library at the local, state and even national levels. Skilled trustees are critical to the success of libraries and it is only through ongoing training, whether a novice or seasoned trustee, that you will learn best practices and successful strategies to better advocate for your library.

Always begin training with an orientation of the library. It is essential for new library trustees and is the key to making them feel welcome and confident. The entire board benefits when new trustees are well informed early on and can assume an active role in board activities shortly after their appointment.

Being a library trustee means you have been entrusted with the welfare of an important institution that strives to serve everyone in your community. A library trustee must know many things including library law; the roles and responsibilities of the board; how to work effectively in a group and with the library director; legislation that affects libraries; national library trends; and library terminology. You must also be aware of library services and resources, community use and needs, and what resources are available from the New Jersey State Library and the New Jersey Library Network.

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The Importance of Trustee Training (continued)

Trustee training enables you to support the growth of library services, to advocate for excellence, and to build effective board policies and procedures. It provides you with strategies so that you may strive for adequate funding and public support for your library and maintain fiscal responsibility. Training offers you methodologies and tools to work on behalf of your community for needed library services. It helps you assess your community and its needs so that you may provide the best library service possible. Training gives you the evaluation tools necessary to hire the library director, one of your most important responsibilities.

Because the trustee is the link between the library and the community, it is essential for you to have an overall view of trustee responsibility. The New Jersey State Library and the New Jersey Library Trustee Association are here to help you. Both organizations provide training opportunities throughout the year.

Contact us at **609-292-3831** with your questions and concerns, and take advantage of our many resources. We hope you will attend the New Jersey Library Trustee Institute on **September 28-29, 2007**, in Long Branch.

The New Jersey State Library will be sending out more information and the Trustee Institute brochure in April. The workshops scheduled are varied and interesting, and well worth attending. We hope more than one trustee from every library will attend.