NYLA Advocacy Day, 2020

Library advocates including many library trustees, were out in force in Albany on Advocacy Day on February 25. We are considered one of the biggest groups, coming with their yellow scarves, to meet with our legislators as the state budget is under deliberation. The funding requests are $200M for statewide library aid and $75M for library capital infrastructure improvements. As many of you know, the need for construction funds for public libraries is huge - funds to expand, to bring us up to modern codes, to enhance our function as community center.

Of special interest to library trustees is a bill Training for Library Trustees. Both houses have taken up the bill which will require library trustees to complete a minimum of two hours of continuing education each year. LTA has strongly supported this legislation to ensure trustees have the comprehensive and necessary information to be successful and to manage their vital community resource with care.

The state budget will be strained this year, but please continue to advocate for libraries with your local legislators in the Assembly and Senate - in times of crisis, libraries are always there to help but they need resources to provide that help. LTA

Assemblyman Sean Ryan, Chair of the Assembly Libraries Committee, addresses attendees.

IN THIS ISSUE

2......... IMLS News
3.......... News from the State Library
4......... From the Editor’s Desk
5......... Letter from the President
6......... Get Your Library Questions Answered
7......... Time to Shine
Crosby Kemper III, who helped redefine the role of public libraries in nearly 15 years as executive director of the Kansas City Public Library, is assuming leadership of the Washington, D.C.-based Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The U.S. Senate on Thursday, January 9, 2020 confirmed his nomination as director by President Donald Trump.

IMLS, an independent federal agency established in 1996, is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s libraries and museums through grant-making, research, and policy development.

Kemper becomes the agency’s sixth director, succeeding Kathryn “Kit” Matthew. He will serve a four-year term.

“I am honored,” he said. “This is really a tribute to the wonderful work of the board and staff of the Kansas City Public Library and the place of leadership libraries in Kansas City have taken nationally.”

Kemper’s tenure has brought KCPL an array of awards including the IMLS’ National Medal for Museum and Library Service and 5-Star designations by Library Journal in 2013, 2016, and 2017. Kemper himself was accorded the Difference Maker Award from the Urban League of Kansas City.

President Trump nominated him for the IMLS position on November 13. The directorship of the institute alternates between individuals from the museum and library communities.

U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt of Missouri lauded Kemper’s appointment. “He has a deep-seated appreciation for the historical, cultural, and educational value museums and libraries have in local communities,” Blunt said at the time of the nomination. “For the many years I’ve known Crosby, he’s been actively engaged in numerous civic organizations, all of which have made our state an even better place to live and work. His background in public service and business will be an asset to the Institute of Museum and Library Services.”

Said American Library Association President Wanda Brown, “Libraries and museums are community anchors across America; to thrive, they require strong leadership that will represent the interests of everyone. One thing is certain: Crosby knows his community and has done a good job bringing in a diversity of programs so there is something for everyone in Kansas City. He will bring that community work, along with his business acumen and extensive museum experience, to bear at the national level.”
Thinking about Minimum Standards, and thinking ahead to January 1, 2021
– Is Your Library Providing 24/7 Online Access to Current Library Information?

The Board of Regents approved updated minimum standards for public and association libraries in New York State in Summer 2018. These updated standards will take effect on January 1, 2021. Is your Library ready? Has your board reviewed the new requirements for online information? As our increased daily dependence on online information during this difficult Spring of 2020 has poignantly illustrated, it is critically important for every library to provide 24/7 online access to current information about the library through a website or some other readily accessible means.

Here is some information about new Standard 11:

Each library... provides access to current library information in print and online, facilitating the understanding of library services, operations and governance; information provided online shall include the standards referenced in paragraphs one through five of this subdivision (standards 1 through 5).

What does this mean? To meet this standard, a library must post the following board-approved information online:

• **ByLaws** (see Standard 1)
• **Long-Range Plan** (see Standard 2)
• **Annual Report to the Community** (see Standard 3)
• **Policies** (see Standard 4)
• **Budget** (see Standard 5)

In addition, the library’s online information should include, at a minimum, the following elements:

• Library name
• Library street address
• Library website address
• Board meeting dates and times
• Agenda for regular board meetings posted at least a week ahead of the meeting time
• Agenda or topic for special meetings posted at least 72 hours in advance
• Draft Board meeting minutes within two weeks of meeting
• Library telephone number, FAX number, and e-mail address
• Listing of the days and the hours when the library is open to the public
• A brief description of the library (e.g., roles, mission)
• Listing of the services offered to the public and who is eligible to use them (e.g., interlibrary loan, reserves, extended vacation loans, community rooms, photocopying, story hours and other programs, public access computers)
• Explanation of the library’s borrowing rules:
  - who is eligible for a library card
  - length of loan for library materials
  - policies on overdue items, fines, and fees

Help is available! First, check out the publication *Helpful Information for Meeting Minimum Public Library Standards* on the State Library’s website at http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/helpful/index.html. This free online publication is recommended reading for all library boards and library directors/managers. If your library needs more information about the updated Minimum Standards or expert assistance in providing online information about the library for the community, please reach out to your library system director.
Greetings to our readers and members.

As I write for this edition, I know that those of us involved in the library community are facing amazing and unexpected challenges in our personal, professional, and volunteer roles. There is no one who is not affected by this health crisis of COVID-19.

I have no solutions to offer. I want to take this opportunity to commend all of us in library-land for working so hard and selflessly to keep our patrons and our communities in mind while trying to provide library services in a very different world.

I commend the library boards who suddenly, and perhaps, unwillingly, have had to conduct business through online portals. There is a learning curve that must be met. Please see Joe Eisner’s article on things to consider if you and your board must change how often you meet and Joe’s explanation of the Governor’s easing of restrictions on open meeting law requirements.

Libraries have been on the forefront of technology since their inception. In following current guidelines for social distancing, sanitizing, and now closing our doors, each of our libraries has stepped up in providing online options for our patrons beyond what had been the norm. Kudos to our staff for keeping our social media presence up to date and positive. Social media allows our patrons, young and not-so-young with an opportunity to stay connected and not be isolated.

Thank you to our library systems, library directors, technology professionals, and line-staff for thinking of programs and resources our patrons can use to meet parents’ home-study needs. Patrons who may have been hesitant to use online services might, now, give online a try and find that a whole new world opens up to them...all provided by their local library.

My hope, and it may sound selfish, is that financial support for local, system, and the state library will grow now that politicians and their constituents learn how important their libraries were and are when physical usage is restricted. The doors may be closed, but libraries are still vital in the education of our children, and personal learning and reading by all patrons. Knowledgeable and professional staff are still key in helping us all make sense of the information available via the Internet. Ask Google is NOT the perfect resource for getting answers to our questions.

Let us try to look ahead to when we will be able to open our doors to patrons. They will come into a freshly cleaned facility that is finally back in order. I hope they don’t all come in at once, but our staff will be able to handle that. In the meantime, please be safe and let LTA and NYLA help you stay aware of any updates.

Regards,

Adria
As of this writing, life for us personally and for our libraries has become strange and difficult. Libraries and their staff (and Boards) have helping and service built into their DNA so being closed and limiting contact with our community to whatever can be done electronically or by phone is tough. As a Board member, I hope you are making sure your staff are safe, continuing to pay them, and doing whatever you can to be supportive.

The LTA Board was to meet in person March 13-14 to work on several issues as we transition to a NYLA Section but we were cautious and met by electronic means with a shortened agenda. Some key results:

- When we can meet again in person, we will meet for only one day at the NYLA office; other shorter meetings will be conference calls.

- We will sponsor a program at the NYLA Conference in Saratoga (4-7 November). Stephanie Cole Adams (Ask a Lawyer) will present “Is Your Library’s Governance Updated and Legal”. In addition, we will co-sponsor several other programs that have relevance to library trustees such as employment law, effective board meetings, and ethical issues in libraries. We will also hold a membership meeting at which time you can elect Board Members. Stay tuned and check www.nyla.org. Hope to see you in Saratoga!

- The Policies Database that LTA used to have will be a high priority for re-construction by LTA. We will get some help from other NYLA sections.

- There are several other bits of business that need to be done this year - revising our By Laws, re-constructing our membership database at NYLA, recruiting members and recruiting more board members, and planning a regional workshop in 2021. We will be busy!

Your library’s membership in LTA may be in limbo at the moment. Moving our membership database to NYLA is underway but how the membership is determined will be different as we become part of NYLA. Please be patient, keep your check or line in the budget, and it will be sorted out this year.

Hope to see you at the NYLA Conference in November and please contact me if you have any ideas, questions, or would like to be on our Board! ejeancurrie@gmail.com

Please be safe, look after your library as best you can, and let’s hope we will all be back in business soon.

Jean Currie
President LTA
Q. May a library board meet less often than specified in its by-laws, and vote by e-mail or telephone to deal with contingencies or “urgent matters” which might arise in the interval between meetings which have had to be postponed due to adverse weather or other emergency conditions?

A. Under normal conditions a library board may meet less often than specified in its by-laws, but not less often than once a quarter. Neither association nor public library boards may transact business by taking votes by e-mail or telephone as a substitute for actually convening a public meeting in compliance with the Open Meetings Law (OML) which requires a quorum of the board to be present. However, as a result of the exigencies caused by the spread of the corona virus, on March 13, 2020, the Governor by Executive Order suspended the “in person” and quorum requirements of the OML. Meetings can now be held remotely by conference call, provided that the public can view or call in to listen and provided that the meeting is recorded and later transcribed. (Note that this authority expires April 6th, 2020 but no doubt may be extended.)

1) General – what can a board do under normal conditions to meet less often, but at least quarterly?

A library board needs to carefully consider the pitfalls which might be encountered if the number of board meetings is reduced. If the board’s current by-laws specify a number of meetings which is different than the reduced number a majority of the board proposes, the by-laws need not necessarily be changed at that point. At a board meeting legally convened in accordance with the requirements of the OML, the board could by resolution set up a schedule of the dates of such proposed public meetings for the next 12 months, reserving to itself the option of reviewing the matter at a future date to determine whether such a schedule has met the need for the board to responsibly transact routine library business, including payment of bills (see 2 below). This resolution should also indicate who and under what circumstances and for what purposes a meeting of the Board would be convened if a situation arose which required a meeting in addition to those scheduled as listed in the resolution.

2) Payment of bills – note that holding meetings less often than is the current practice should take into account the necessity for making provision for routine business to be conducted, such as timely payment of bills or other matters of consequence which involve unforeseen circumstances requiring board action to resolve.

A public library board should be aware that a public library is subject to audit by the New York State Comptroller. In various published results of such audits, the Comptroller has stressed that a governing body is responsible for approving payments for expenses incurred, and that the board’s responsibility for auditing such proposed payments cannot be dispensed with. But if a majority of the board approves a change to the current meeting schedule, by resolution it can delegate to the director or the treasurer or one or two Board members, subject to a post-audit by a majority of the board at the next regularly scheduled or special meeting, the authority to approve payments in such categories as salaries, taxes withheld from employee salaries, utilities, and payments of those bills which, if delayed, would subject the library to a late payment penalty or cancellation of a service.

(continued on next page)
Now is Your Time to Shine

By John McCarthy

This is a time when pillars will be shaken. This is a time when we, as a society, reevaluate what is really important. What can we do without? What do we absolutely want as a part of our lives? There will be winners and losers. Streaming media will likely boom. Many movie theaters will likely close. Toilet paper companies...well, I wish I had made some stock purchases three months ago. (Modern toilet paper was invented in Albany, by the way.)

I’m not suggesting that libraries aren’t going to end up on the winning side. What I am suggesting is that it is your responsibility to make it the biggest winner. At the end of this crisis, your patrons should have a different opinion of their library. Here is a possible plan of attack to make that happen.

1. Have your Executive Director give you and the rest of the board a full briefing on every online service your library and your system offers. Write it down, so you have it with you.

2. Go through each and every one of those services or have a close friend or family member do it for you if you can’t for some reason. The point here is to know the good bits that you can recommend to others.

3. Identify the influencers and information spreaders in your community. You can’t contact everybody, but it’s a lot easier to spread information than you might think. Grandparents are a great starting place. Convert these people into your library’s champions and get them to commit to spreading the message themselves.

Library usage always surges when times are tough, and be aware, tougher times are coming. Not only will you be serving your community well by increasing their usage of your services, but you will have a new baseline for requesting support for those services from those that fund them. Now is the time when you can do your job or you can do a great job.

In regard to association libraries, while the Comptroller does not audit them, as governing bodies, their boards have similar responsibilities in regard to exercise of due diligence when authorizing expenditure of library funds.

A post audit by either type of board requires the same exercise of due diligence which the board is expected to perform before approving payment of bills: it must assure itself that the requested payments have been validly incurred, and that the payees actually exist. If a board should determine that is not the case, then it must seek to remedy the situation by attempting to recover such improperly disbursed monies.

3) Treasurer’s duties – prudence would suggest that if a board decides to implement a reduced meeting schedule, it seek the guidance of both its auditor and treasurer to make certain that proper procedures are in effect which will guard against defalcations, embezzlement or fraud occasioned by lack of or weak controls in this area. If not already in effect, a faithful performance bond for the treasurer should be considered. As opined by the Comptroller, a board member of a public library should not be the treasurer, nor should a staff member who is responsible for ordering materials or equipment, or certifying that such items have been received.

While there is no such prohibition applying to an association library treasurer, association library boards may wish to consider whether it would be prudent to implement the above described procedures applicable to treasurers of public library boards. The treasurer should be the custodian of library funds, which he/she is authorized to release upon receipt of notice from the board that specified payments as listed on a warrant are in order. With the implementation of proper procedures, such as the listing of bills approved for payment by the board at a legally convened meeting, a single signature check bearing the treasurer’s signature, would obviate the need for multiple signature checks requiring the signature of either the director or a board member.

Please note: If you have any additional questions about this topic, please contact Joe Eisner at jeisner@optonline.net.
New York Library Association
6021 State Farm Road
Guilderland, NY 12084.

Jean Currie, Edith B. Ford Memorial Library, Finger Lakes Library System — President
Suzanne Stockman, Fairport Public Library, Monroe County Library System — Vice President
Edris Scherer, Westchester Library System — Treasurer
Susan Sabers Chapman, Alden Ewell Library, Buffalo & Erie County Library System — Secretary
Philip Archer, Montour Falls Memorial Library, Southern Tier Library System
Catherine Budman, Liverpool Public Library, Onondaga County
Margaret Shapiro, Crandall Public Library, Southern Adirondack Library System
Adria Ripka, Salina Free Library, Onondaga County — Trustee Editor

John McCarthy — Executive Director
Visit us on the web: www.librarytrustees.org
Write to the editor, aripka@librarytrustees.org
Phone: 518-432-6952

TRUSTEE, USPS#080-872, ISSN: 1085-3170, is published four times a year by the Library
Trustees Association of New York State for $10.00 annually per subscriber. Subscription
is a benefit of paid membership; cost of the subscription is covered by membership dues.
Periodical class postage is paid at Albany, NY and an additional mailing office.

Postmaster: Send address changes to -
TRUSTEE, New York Library Association, 6021 State Farm Road, Guilderland, NY 12084

LTA welcomes
these sponsors to our offerings!

COOL INSURING AGENCY, INC.
New Benefit for LTA Members!
Discounted Group Insurance Program
Buying insurance as a group allows members of all sizes to enjoy
the same level of tailored coverage along with highly discounted
rates that would likely not be available to an individual library.
Contact Colleen Parmelee, Program Director at:
cmparmelee@coolins.com or (518) 698-9033.

Please be aware of changes to school board and library budget voting dates

Annual Planning meeting on June 20 in Albany