

Association of Connecticut Library Boards
Connecticut State Library
231 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106



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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Online Programs Replace 2020 Annual Leadership Conference

Although the pandemic precluded holding our annual November conference, ACLB was still able to provide four educational programs via Zoom during the third week of that month. Some 40 to 50 people participated in offerings on Board Basics, Advocacy and Budgets in the Time of Covid-19, The Future is Shared: Three Scenarios for 2030, and ACLB's Library Board Assessment Tool. (covered in a separate article on page 3 of this issue).

"Being a Library Board: Library Board Basics" is a popular program offered frequently to accommodate the ever-changing makeup of public library boards of trustees. Led by ACLB President Gail B. Richmond and Dawn LaValle, Director, Division of Library Development, Connecticut State Library, the session is also available for presentation to individual libraries. It covers Board Governance, Advocacy and Fundraising, and Effective Board Practices as well as links to online resources on topics covered. The program includes the role and responsibilities of the trustees, library director and Friends of the Library; fundraising and advocacy; characteristics of effective boards and meetings; and orientation for new members.

"Advocacy and Budgets in the Time of Covid-19" was presented by Libby Post, President of Communication Services, an integrated marketing and strategic communications firm based in Albany that works with libraries, advocacy organizations, health care agencies and not-for-profits.

Even during the pandemic, the speaker noted, libraries are about community engagement. There is always a need to market to and communicate with constituents via newsletters, email, social media, signage and good customer service. To help ensure receiving continued financial support, libraries need to remind the public of their role in reopening the community in this time of covid. Maintaining accurate statistics on services to the community, including assistance to local government efforts in connection with the pandemic, is especially important as impending budget cuts may result in a "financial Armageddon."

The session covered the nuts and bolts of local funding and stressed the need to know how the budget process works and who the players are. Developing a consistent message about the library's offerings is essential to gain needed financial support, and that message should be conveyed by staff as well as trustees. The message should be included everywhere and repeated regularly for reinforcement.

Interim State Librarian Maureen Sullivan and members of the Advisory Council on Library Planning and Development's Resource Sharing Committee presented "The Future is Shared: Three Scenarios for 2030." The Connecticut State Library formed this committee with members from all types of libraries and tasked it with developing these scenarios and establishing
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Association of CT Library Boards

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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

Executive Committee

President: Gail B. Richmond
Vice President: Carol Mikulski
Secretary: Wendy Berlind
Treasurer: Susan Phillips
Membership: Susan Phillips

Newsletter: Denise J. Stankovics
Jan Glover
Dawn LaValle, CT State Library, *ex officio*
Barbara Leonard, Friends of CT Libraries (FOCL), *ex officio*

Collaboration is Needed To Ensure the Future of Libraries *By Interim State Librarian Maureen Sullivan*

The year 2020 brought many changes and challenges to the people of Connecticut. In my role as the Interim State Librarian, it was a privilege to see how so many library directors engaged the members of their staff to think creatively and strategically to develop ways to meet the needs of their communities. Virtual programs, curbside service and use of the grounds surrounding the facility in innovative ways became the norm in many libraries. The strong service orientation that is characteristic of those who staff our libraries spurred these individuals to respond to the needs of their residents when so many community organizations and businesses were closed due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

As I look ahead to 2021 and consider the future for Connecticut libraries, I am heartened by the work accomplished in 2020. Among the many programs and services provided by the State Library is the work of the Resource Sharing subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Library Planning and Development. This subcommittee released its three scenarios for the future of resource sharing in a series of information sessions, including one for boards of trustees. These scenarios will be a very useful tool for library leaders to use in the creation of inspirational and aspirational visions for their communities and their libraries.

As the work to create sustainable futures for our libraries moves forward, a critical component for success will be the relationship of the library director and the board of trustees. This relationship is essential to ensure that the library's programs and services are in alignment with community needs; that its policies, systems, work culture and leadership make the library a great place to work; and that the library has sustainable funding.

The ACLB is important to the future of libraries. Its work to develop effective boards of trustees and individual board members is critical to the effective governance of libraries. The ACLB's partnership with the State Library is

also important. It is time for all of the organizations that work in support of Connecticut's libraries, especially the Connecticut Library Association, the Connecticut Library Consortium, the Friends of Connecticut Libraries and the ACLB to come together to create a cohesive, central message about the essential role and work of our libraries to the people of Connecticut. I will urge the new State Librarian, Deborah Schander, to take the steps necessary to foster this collaboration.

Online Programs... *(Continued from page 1)*

the steps necessary to achieve each.

The most desirable scenario is the "transformative" one, in which inequalities such as prejudices are gone, funding is adequate, and universal broadband internet access is available for everyone. A fully integrated library system provides all content to all people, mitigating the great divide in which not everyone has online access to information.

The "market" scenario, reflecting the status quo, involves shifts in budgeting, collaboration and partnerships. All libraries would be restructured for sharing resources, space, staff and expertise. Libraries would investigate the environment in which they exist by using a tool that examines the social, technological, economic, ecological and political landscape as an aid in making decisions.

Finally, the "fortress" scenario is the worst case one, with barriers, restrictions, limitations, and reduced funding and staffing. State services would be curtailed along with funding. There could be another pandemic. Technology would replace some humans and there would be much virtual hybrid learning and resource sharing with other states.

Scenario planning is a way of preparing for the future, with resource sharing as a vital tool.

With the success of these programs, ACLB is looking into providing additional sessions in the months ahead. Links to videos of November's presentations may be found on our web site:

<https://aclb.org>

Introducing ACLB's Self Assessment Tool for Library Boards

To ensure competencies essential to the role of library board members, the ACLB Executive Board has developed a self assessment tool that was rolled out at one of our virtual workshops in November 2020.

Because boards make important fiscal and administrative decisions critical to the functioning of the library, it is important for them to understand their roles and responsibilities and possess information needed to make wise decisions. To do this they need to determine their strengths and weaknesses and form a plan of action for improvement where required and to plan for training and continuing education. In addition to self assessing as a board, ACLB also recommends that individual members assess themselves to gain insight into their individual performance.

The assessment should be undertaken every two years to ensure currency. Library environments are always in flux and board composition changes as terms expire and new members with varied experience join. The assessment tool will aid the board in working together as a team to address the library's needs and concerns. Since Connecticut libraries have different types of boards—advisory, governing, etc.—each board should tailor the assessment to serve its own needs.

The tool is divided into key sections with sub-categories and may be administered in one or more sessions. Each item is to be evaluated on a five-point scale: needs improvement, marginal, acceptable, excellent, and do no know.

Headings under General Knowledge include knowledge of the library's history and mission statement; familiarity with the strategic plan, library policies, and organizational structure; and understanding of the board's role and responsibilities. Members should have reviewed the ACLB Public Library Trustee Handbook available on the ACLB web page.

Under Board Operation the tool includes standards for conducting meetings appropriately such as adherence to well planned agendas with advance input from the director so members can

make appropriate decisions. There should be an orientation process for new members.

The Advocacy section covers promotion of the library, familiarity with the advocacy plan and awareness that a municipal board cannot engage in fund raising. Decision Making covers supporting decisions made in the presence of the director. The Strategic Planning section includes understanding of community needs and participation in the development of a strategic plan. Policy Making covers formation and annual review of policies with the library director to reflect community needs, and board support of staff in policy enforcement.

The Finance division includes familiarity with the budget developed in conjunction with the director and oversight for spending; attendance at town finance meetings to support the budget; and effective communication concerning the budget to interested parties. The final section on professional considerations covers responsibility for the evaluation of the library director and for attendance at conferences and other learning opportunities.

At the completion of the assessment, boards are advised to develop a plan of action involving identifying core deficiencies and appropriate resources and training to address them; scheduling training, consulting or review of the ACLB Handbook to focus on areas needing improvement; and scheduling the next assessment to ensure that deficiencies have been corrected.

Regular evaluation of this kind will ensure that boards are functioning efficiently and meeting the needs of the library and the community it serves.

Library Directors and Board Chairs:

Please help ACLB spread the word about effective board practices and developments in the state's libraries by sharing this newsletter with other members of your boards. Issues are also posted on our web site: <https://aclb.org/>