

TRUSTEE

The New York State Association of Library Boards ■ Vol. XVII No. 3 Summer 2006



NYSALB

Linking Libraries with their Communities

President's Memo

Now Is Really The Time!

**By Norman J. Jacknis,
NYSALB President**

When the Presidential election occurred two years ago, I asked the question: are libraries a national issue? I thought they were, but reasonable people could, of course, disagree.

But I cannot see room for disagreement about the importance of this year's State elections for our libraries. After all, the State government sets the rules by which libraries operate and provides the funding for all kinds of library services.

By the time you read this, the elections for New York State offices will have started in earnest - and they are more important than they have been in a long time.

First, it has been twelve years since we've had a gubernatorial election without an incumbent.

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"A Good Year for Libraries"

**by State Senator Hugh T. Farley, Chair,
Senate Sub-committee on Libraries**

This turned out to be a good year at the State Capitol for libraries, with the largest-ever increase in State aid. Along with the historic funding increases, the Senate passed bills which could help enhance efficient and effective library operations.

The big news, of course, was the budget. The largest single-year library aid increase in history — \$20 million — was passed by the Senate and the Assembly, and, in spite of hundreds of vetoes of other budget items, was signed into law by the Governor.

Governor Pataki, by the way, leaves an unheralded legacy of support for libraries. Not only has he approved Legislative funding initiatives, but he is the first Governor since Thomas Dewey in the 1950s to increase library funding in the Executive Budget. The Governor has been a true friend of libraries.

This year's budget increase consists of three components: allocation of operating aid to libraries and systems using the 2000 Census with a save-harmless provision, a four-percent aid increase for all library sys-

tems, and a substantial increase in State aid for capital construction.

The operating aid increases total \$6 million. Use of the 2000 Census provides additional aid to communities with increasing populations, while the save-harmless language ensures that areas with stable or declining populations will be able to continue services.

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Save
the
Date

Friday, May 4th &
Saturday, May 5th
2007

at the

**NYSALB
Trustee Institute**

**Crowne Plaza Hotel
Queens, NY**

Save the Date

2007
Trustee Institute



NYSALB



Make it a Trustee Holiday
for you and your guest

Friday, May 4th &
Saturday, May 5th
2007


at the
Crowne Plaza Hotel
Queens, NY

Highlights include

- Educational Sessions for Trustees & Directors
- Invitation extended to New York City's Mayor Bloomberg to speak
- Tour of the Queens Public Library
- Presentation of the prestigious Velma Moore Award
- Friday Evening Dinner
- Boat ride on the NY Harbor (around Liberty Island)
- Plans for group tickets to a Mets or Yankees Baseball Game
- Opportunity to attend a Broadway Show
- Easy access to Manhattan shopping

Since we are a large group, we were able to secure an outstanding room rate for all attendees. Rooms at the Crowne Plaza are only \$129 per night (plus taxes). That's \$200 below their regular rate! This rate has been extended for Thursday and Sunday evenings for those wishing to make even more of their trip. Cost for the Institute is still being finalized.

The Crowne Plaza La Guardia is a superior first class, mid-rise hotel located opposite La Guardia Airport and six miles from Manhattan. The hotel offers spacious and elegantly appointed guest rooms. It is only one mile from Shea Stadium and the US Tennis Center (US Tennis Open).

Details on speakers and sessions to be updated as confirmed on NYSALB's website. Be sure to visit often to learn more. There will be limited seating for this Institute with early registration to open this fall (on-line registration). 



PRESIDENT'S MEMO

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Although the early polls seem to show an overwhelming margin for one of the candidates, there will still be plenty of debate and opportunity to get the candidates to pay some attention to library issues.

Second, because of the apparently strong sentiment among voters for reform of the State Government, there may be a greater chance for competitive races for legislative positions than has occurred for decades. With greater competition comes greater opportunity to focus those candidates on library issues.

You might start by getting together with the rest of your board and asking the candidates - both state legislative and statewide candidates - how they feel about policy and funding issues of importance to you. Ask your questions in writing and post the answers on the web and in your local newspaper.

You can also make those candidates aware of both statewide and national polls concerning libraries.

An especially good recent and credible source is the June 2006 report entitled "Long Overdue: A Fresh Look at Public and Leadership Attitudes About Libraries in the 21st Century". The report shows how funding libraries is one of the most cost-effective means of solving "pressing community problems, including providing a safe and engaging place for teens; building a strong and literate workforce; and extending access to technology."

You can see the report at <http://www.lff.org/documents/LongOverdue.pdf>. Also don't forget to read their list of ideas in the section called "Want to Help Spread the Word?" at http://www.lff.org/long_overdue061306.html. Of course, to be most effective, you should be spreading the word before

November.

It will be many years before there will be another strategic opportunity, like this, for library trustees. Now is the time to take advantage of the opportunity. Every technique of advocacy, every means of raising awareness of your library and library system, every approach that you held back waiting for the right moment - now is the time to use them all because the politicians now have their "ears to the ground". Let them hear some "library music" from the grass roots that they are so attuned to.

And, if you find a new or particularly effective approach, please share it with your fellow trustees around the state on the NYSALB "listserv" by sending an email to nysalb@www.watpa.org. (You can also send us private email at nysalb@nycap.rr.com.)

Thank you. 

"A GOOD YEAR FOR LIBRARIES"

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The \$14 million capital construction aid program represents an enormous increase over existing funding of \$800,000 per year, although it is admittedly short of the \$1.7 billion in capital needs identified by public libraries and systems. As with the current aid program, grants will be competitive with a geographic distribution component.

The Legislature also considered several significant bills supported by the library community. Two bills which passed the Senate may be of particular interest to trustees:

S.7382/A.11462 - Ensures that a library budget proposal is first approved by the library's board of trustees before it is put before the people for a vote in a school district public library. Currently trustee approval is required before budgets are submitted in other types of public libraries, and school boards must approve school budgets before the public vote. Trustee approval ensures that the proposed budget meets the library's needs, and prevents the confusion of multiple proposals on the ballot.

S.3110B/A.11500 - Enables the New York Library Association (NYLA) to coordinate and consolidate a number of small library capital construction projects, making these small projects eligible for low-cost loans through the State Dormitory Authority. Dormitory Authority funding not only carries lower interest rates, but the Authority's experts are available to help with engineering and financing questions.

These bills have passed the Senate, and are under study in the Assembly.



Trustee Institute, 2006

Where You There?

Sam Patton, Editor

The tenth annual Trustee Institute was held in Albany May 5 and 6, 2006, at the Holiday Inn Turf on Wolf Road. Attendees who arrived early in the afternoon had a chance to tour the State Library and get a behind the scenes look at the facilities there.

Welcoming remarks were given by Janet M. Welch, State Librarian and Assistant Commissioner for Libraries, who told us of several initiatives, including the new NY State License plate celebrating libraries.



One of the highlights of the Institute was the presentation of the Velma Moore Awards.

The award, established in 1962, honors the memory of Velma Moore, who worked as a very effective library activist from 1947 until her death in 1961. Mrs. Moore was one of the chartered members of the Library Trustees Foundation of New York (predecessor of NYSALB). For two terms she was the organization's president and also served as trustee, for 33 years, of the Kenmore Public Library (near Buffalo, NY). She was the wife of former NYS Lieutenant Governor Frank C. Moore. The award carries a \$750 stipend to be donated to the library or library service of the award winner's

choice. Since no award was given last year, NYSALB presented two awards this year, one for 2005, and



one for 2006. **The photo shows Merry Sparano, the 2005 Velma Moore Award winner, holding the trophy, presented by NYSALB trustee Karen Achilles.** Merry has been an active member of the Guilderland Public Library Board of Trustees since 1980. She was instrumental in helping the Library grow from a small community library to the current busy suburban library it is today.

She served as President of the Board during an especially crucial time in 2001/2002 when their director retired after 24 plus years leading the Library.



The 2006 award went to Carol Gleason, shown accepting her award, with President Jacknis and Karen Achilles in the background. Carol has been with the Tully Free Library since 1998, and has

demonstrated outstanding leadership in the demanding variety of work needed by a smaller library, and has coordinated with the Onondaga County Library is staff training in computer systems.

After dinner, participants shared 'success stories' from their libraries. Carol Raphael of Schenectady told us about a county wide reading program where patrons voted for their favorite book. From January through April, twelve events were held. Five people talked about building construction or renovation. Sonja Olsen reported on several programs in Ballston called "Einstein's Legacy," linking technology with advances made by local industries. Janet Welch told of the planned Summer Reading Program. We heard that wireless access to the internet is growing in popularity at many libraries. We also heard that Chemung County became the first County wide library district in the state.

On Saturday morning, people could attend one of two seminars offered in each of two time slots. The first was "Basic Training for Trustees (Not Your Average Boot Camp)," presented by NYSALB Trustees Sam Patton and



Attendees Listen to a Saturday session

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The Library Circuit

Sam Patton, Editor

Not all of us are content to visit our local libraries. Here is an excerpt from the *New York Times* by Anne Eisenberg, published June 11, 2006, about a different kind of book lover, and a different kind of library.

“Susan Kelly is an avid reader of detective novels, but the public library doesn’t always have what she wants and she draws the line at buying books in hardcover. So Ms. Kelly joined a membership library, where she has, among many other privileges, the run of more than 15,000 new and classic mysteries. ‘You can even get the originals of books from the 1920’s,’ she said. The staff members, she added, ‘just pull them off the shelf and hand them to you.’

Ms. Kelly has discovered a little-known retreat: the hushed reading rooms, special collections and lively discussion groups of a membership library — in this case, the Mercantile Library Center for Fiction, founded in 1820 for the education of clerks and still going strong in an eight-story building on 17 East 47th Street, between Fifth and Madison Avenues. Her annual membership fee is \$90.

The Mercantile is one of 17 membership libraries scattered through the United States, survivors of an era long before that of tax-supported public libraries, said Erika Torri, executive director of the Athenaeum Music and Arts Library in La Jolla, Calif. The La Jolla library offers its 2,300 subscribers a large circulating DVD and video collection in art, foreign film and music, among other attractions. An individual membership costs \$40 a year.

All of them are a world apart from public libraries, with their buzzing crowds and constant foot traffic. In

contrast, the reading rooms at the membership libraries have the velvety quiet that Lord Peter Wimsey may once have encountered at the Bellona Club.”

While I can relate to the quiet, rarely crowded atmosphere, I think I would miss the ‘feel’ of a community library, with the very diverse ages, interests, and other programs.

For example, the Pleasant Valley Library here in Dutchess County, was host to at least a pair of rats earlier this summer. No one called for an exterminator, and most were fascinated by the visitors. These were tame laboratory rats, the pets of Candace Coates, who is a Celtic Harpist, and who brought them to the library as part of a children’s program. I hope to get pictures and more details for the next issue.

Our own East Fishkill Library has

dedicated one wall to the rotating display of the work of local artists. The photo shows one of the artists, Ion Zupucu, a photographer, with some of his pictures hanging behind him.

Our reading program recently ended with a magic show with two magicians. One was a young man just starting out. He presented a few special illusions, to music. The second one presented a series of small mysteries to the audience of three to ten year olds and their parents. He told them that the real magic in a library and reading was the magic of imagination which could take readers to far and thrilling, beautiful places. They could use their own imaginations to decide what people and things looked like, not just some TV writer’s one idea.



Libraries: Moving On

By Janet M. Welch, Assistant Commissioner
for Library Services and State Librarian

The 2006 New York State budget provided libraries with a \$20 million increase in library aid, the largest increase they have ever seen. Included was \$14 million in construction and renovation aid for public libraries and public library systems, \$3 million in operating aid for library systems and a \$2.75 million increase in State Aid using the 2000 Census with hold-harmless provisions.

This increase will benefit public libraries in communities across the state. There will be more dollars to help bring existing library facilities up to speed in accommodating new technologies and meeting the needs of New Yorkers with disabilities. Upgraded wiring and lighting, new and accessible space for collections and the public, energy efficiencies and other long-awaited improvements will help improve library services across the State.)

Meanwhile, the increase in State Aid based on the 2000 Census means that public library systems in regions that have gained in population will have more money to address the needs of their growing communities. At the same time, public library users in communities that have lost population will not be penalized.

The aid increase for library systems will enable systems to continue to provide support services to their member libraries, including interlibrary loan and resource sharing, automated access to regional collections, centralized purchasing, and others to help meet ever increasing demands.

This is all good news for libraries. Nevertheless, it's important to keep a realistic eye on public library

funding. The \$14 million in public library construction aid is a one-time only appropriation. Ongoing state support remains at \$800,000 per year to address a more than \$107 billion need for public library construction and renovation statewide. And while a \$5.75 million increase in State Aid is important, it is the first increase libraries and library systems have received since 1998 and only begins to address the growing demands on public libraries.

NOVEL, New York's first statewide virtual library, has achieved wide success. More than 5000 libraries actively use the program, and the number of searches has soared 1400 percent since 2001. Yet NOVEL continues to be supported entirely by temporary federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds. The program receives no state support to meet the growing needs of New York's libraries, schools, colleges, universities, and businesses or to ensure that all public libraries are able to use computer and Internet technologies like NOVEL.

The New York State Library has renewed and enhanced its contract with Thomson/Gale regarding the NOVEL database InfoTrac Custom Newspapers. This contract also includes National Newspaper Index, Informe, Twayne Authors plus four new Gale Virtual Reference titles. The renewal contract begins April 1, 2006 and ends March 31, 2007.

The four new virtual reference titles are: Americans at War; Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa;

Fashion, Costume and Culture; and Europe 1450 to 1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World.

The Gale individual URL address for individual library accounts will not change.

In renewing the Gale contract, New York State Librarian Janet M. Welch accepted the recommendation of NECAT (NOVEL Electronic Collections Advisory Team). NECAT is the working group appointed by the NOVEL Steering Committee and charged with recommending NOVEL-supported electronic collections. The State Library also continues to consult with other organizations involved with the selection and group licensing of electronic collections.

It is important to continue to build on success and work towards even greater support for libraries. The success libraries enjoyed this year resulted from the efforts of NYSALB, the New York Library Association (NYLA), and library supporters across New York in building support for *New Century Libraries* - a Regents legislative proposal to implement the recommendations of the Regents Commission on Library Services.

Watch for more news of *The New York Knowledge Initiative* later this summer and fall.

The recommendations of the Regents Commission on Library Services can be found online at http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/rcols/fin_alrpt.htm, or contact Janet M. Welch, Assistant Commissioner for Library Services and State Librarian, at 518/474-5930 for more information.



Sam Patton, Editor, TRUSTEE

This issue is a little late, due to overlapping vacation schedules for the editor and a lot of the contributors. I am on Cape Cod, enjoying a working vacation with our children and grandchildren, with the beach only a short walk away. One of the pleasures of travel is getting to visit a lot of libraries, and this time I have found a very welcoming small library in Eastham. They have wireless access to the internet, and they don't turn it off when the library closes. So one often sees people in cars in the parking lot at odd hours, surfing the internet.

The use of the NOVEL data bases is growing, and another story gives more detail. The budget this year has some good news, as reported by Janet Welch, the State Librarian, and commented on by Senator Farley in his column.

Computer technology seems to be growing almost faster than our ability to absorb and use it. Just recently I went to a seminar in New York, and heard of a new way of indexing and searching audio collections. A company has developed a method of analyzing recorded speech, creating a searchable database, and then retrieving information from the files. Their program identifies the phonemes used by the language,

then breaks up the audio files into phonemes, or syllables, in a way that ordinary search engines can use words to search a text file. Then they showed how this works in an example. They had several newscasts on file, and asked for search terms, which were then entered into a search box, similar to a Google or other search. The search entry has to be entered in phonetic spelling if the phrase or word sought is spelled in an unusual way. In one example, they entered something like, "Alan Greenspan AND George Bush," and the search returned several examples. Clicking on any item played the audio part of the newscast in which both names were used. They can use the same process in languages other than English, with a list of the phonemes, and the search terms can be entered in the language, as long as the spelling matches the phonemes.

The use of other technologies is expanding in scale, as well. In the New York Times Magazine for May 14, 2006, Kevin Kelly writes, "For 2000 years, the universal library, together with other perennial longings like invisibility cloaks, antigravity shoes and paperless offices, has been a mythical dream that kept

receding further into the infinite future." Even the famous library at Alexandria probably held only 30 to 70 percent of all the known written books of the time. But now there are projects that intend to scan or otherwise create a digital library of unprecedented scope. According to Kelly, about a million books per year are being scanned, at facilities all over the world. With current and developing search methods, the otherwise cumbersome arrangement of footnotes and cross-references can be turned into clickable links to integrate a whole chain of references into immediately available information. To me, there is a possible problem that can arise. There is an old paradox that asks, "If a person of seventy years sets out to do a very detailed autobiography, and discovers that it takes a month to write up one year of life experience, will the author ever get caught up to current events?" With our current publishing rate, can we scan material fast enough to get caught up, or even keep even with the rising tide?

Finally, I wish all our readers a pleasant summer, and look forward to seeing many of you at the next Trustee Institute in New York next spring. ■

TRUSTEE INSTITUTE, 2006

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Dick Strauss. The alternate was "Becoming a Public Library: Best Practices, Lessons Learned," presented by Richard Panz, a library consultant from Rochester, with Marc Chevalier and Catherine Way.

The second slot offered two more sessions. The first was "Fund Raising," with Ann Beneditti, Betty Dodds, Maggie Herlihy, and Suzanne Smith

Jablonski. The second was "Library Makeover - Queens Library's Experience in Implementing RFID," presented by Maureen O'Connor, Director of Library Services, and Peter Magnani, Director of Capital and Facilities Management.

Lunch brought us Special Keynote Speaker, Paul Grondahl, the award-winning reporter for the Albany

Times-Union and long time supporter and lover of libraries "as a patron, researcher and writer.



The attendees enjoyed both the informal and the formal presentations. Please join us in Queens for the 2007 Institute. ■



TRUSTEE

Vol. XVII No. 3 ■ Summer 2006

A Publication of The New York State Association of Library Boards

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TRUSTEE is published four times a year 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. USPS#010-872, ISSN: 1085-3170. Volume XVII Issue #3.

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