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Section 10: Trustee Continuing Education

10.1 – Trustee Continuing Education Requirement

As noted in the Per Capita State Aid section of this manual, in order to earn future State Aid, library boards will have to attend mandatory training at seven (7) hours per year per library board.

Library Trustee Continuing Education Requirement Continuing education for New Jersey library trustees is required by law. Under NJSA (New Jersey Statutes Annotated 15:21-2.3): a member or members of the board or commission must have received a minimum of seven (7) total hours of library-related education annually to qualify for state aid, among other requirements.

10.2 – Continuing Education Opportunities

The regulation leaves it to your discretion. The library director and board president sign the “Accuracy Certification.” As long as you are comfortable that the education was “library-related” you will be able to say “yes” to the questions. Aside from the New Jersey State Library Trustee Institute, examples of continuing education may include dealing directly with library issues or broader topics such as customer service. Regional training, watching a video on serving the elderly and having a library in-service day (you may want to join with other libraries if you decide this might be valuable) would all qualify, as well as workshops on common law and regulations pertaining to libraries and library law, duties of trustees/commissioners, budget creation and implementation, fundraising workshops, or a tour of a library to gain understanding of operations and current service trends.

Multiple opportunities to fulfill the Continuing Education requirement are provided through the NJ State Library. Programs are held regionally periodically throughout the year to educate trustees on in their roles and responsibilities, library law, and other important trustee activities.

The “Trustee Academy Webinar Series” by ALA's United for Libraries is an excellent series of online courses designed to help Trustees become exceptionally proficient in their roles on behalf of libraries. Topics include Trustee Basics, Working Effectively with the Library Director, the Library's Budget, Advocating for Your Library, Evaluating the Library Director, Per Capita State Aid, & New Jersey Library Law. The New Jersey State Library offers 100 site licenses that provide Trustees with one year of FREE access (July 1 to June 30) to the Trustee Academy.

The New Jersey State Library is committed to providing the highest quality of trustee education available. The Trustee Institute, held every two years, is part of our goal to train trustees to be knowledgeable about their responsibilities and to help them understand core competencies to improve their skills as trustees and therefore better advocate for their library. Attending the Trustee Institute provides trustees with many of the tools that will help them to achieve their goals. (Note: that the Trustee Institute and Trustee Academy are offered biennially.)

10.3 - Resources Available in New Jersey

The New Jersey Library Trustee Association (<http://www.njlibrarytrustees.org/>) publishes a newsletter, conducts workshops and sponsors meetings in areas of library service. Boards should budget for staff and institutional memberships in NJLTA to support the professional organization that supports NJ librarians and libraries. This is your membership organization and you and your entire board should support it. Membership dues are very reasonable but the information you receive is invaluable.

10.4 - Resources Available Nationally

The American Library Association holds an annual conference at which there is programming for trustees planned by United for Libraries. United for Libraries publishes materials for trustees and can be contacted for program and speaker suggestions.

United for Libraries
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
(800) 545-2433, ex. 2161.
<http://www.ala.org/united/>

Trustees need to commit themselves to their continuing education. It is part of a trustee's obligation to improve skills, exchange ideas with other trustees, and participate in the planning of continuing education events. Trustees can also gain much from active participation NJLA, NJLTA, and ALA's United for Libraries at the national level. Consider working on a committee or on the executive board for a real education that also benefits the library community at large.