



Newsletter #6

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### **ARE POLICIES FOR THE COMMUNITY OR INDIVIDUALS?**

The Bellingham (Mass.) Public Library board adopted a policy May 11 that bans latex balloons and gloves in the library building. The library was facing a lawsuit from area resident Patrick Callahan, whose 9-year-old son Andrew has a severe latex allergy. Callahan asked the library to prohibit latex in February after a children's program left balloon sculptures on display in the building. "When they refused to institute a policy, we recognized it as discrimination right away," he said, adding that his son's school implemented a policy immediately when Andrew enrolled. Library Director Charlotte Rabbitt told the local paper that the policy was in the works before the library received the litigation papers. "Trustees met a month ago and started instituting the policy not to have latex on the premises. . . . It takes time," she said. Rabbitt noted that no other public buildings in the state had latex-free policies, and that research had turned up only two comparable measures nationwide, both in Wisconsin. Ed Popielarczyk, a magician who often entertains children at library venues, made and left the balloon sculptures at the library. "It's selfish of this family," he said, "because they are denying other kids access to have fun with balloons." He added that the policy could hurt his career and the careers of other entertainers who use balloons in their performances. Callahan dropped the suit after the trustees adopted the new policy.

*Comment: In today's litigious society it is important to be sensitive to the less fortunate, persons with disabilities, and persons with sensitive health conditions. Some policies exist to affect the majority of users while other policies exist to respect a very small number of users. As the library board, you have to decide when the introduction of a policy is needed and the breadth that the policy needs to envelope. One could argue that the library's new policy potentially affects an emergency medical team from providing lifesaving support in a library building because many paramedics wear latex gloves as standard operating procedure.*

### **NEW EDITION OF WYOMING LIBRARY LAWS**

The State Library has issued the 2005 edition of Wyoming Library Laws as a tool for board members, directors and interested individuals. This edition updates the 2002 edition with changes that occurred in the Statutes as the result of the 2005 Legislative session. Among the changes is the new wording to the "patron privacy" law, Wyoming Statute 16-4-203(d)(ix) changing "library circulation and registration records" to "library transactions and registration records." Electronic and paper interlibrary loan transactions, computer sign-up logs, computer histories, and all other transactions are now part of the law with the change in wording. Such records shall not be open to inspection except for administration of the library or except as requested by a custodial parent or guardian to inspect the records of his minor child.

Within the Open Meeting Law, the 2005 Legislature added a paragraph requiring that minutes for all Executive Sessions be recorded and held by the board.

Additional copies are available from the State Library.

## **A TRUSTEE WORKING FOR YOU**

*Following is part of a report from Jim Connor, an energetic and active library board member in Colorado, who is serving in a national capacity for the Association for Library Trustees and Advocates (ALTA) within the American Library Association:*

This past year I was privileged to travel over 17,000 miles visiting with library leaders, making 9 keynote presentations and presenting 34 trustee training workshops at the invitation of local library boards and directors, and in cooperation with state librarian offices. Results have been evident in the growth of membership in state trustee associations, and more effective participation by trustees in the governance of, and advocacy for their local public libraries.

Many positive changes are on the way from ALTA, and the new Advocacy Network to provide direct support and local area training for library directors, trustees and friends in the art of speaking out for libraries. Political and financial erosion has occurred in many areas of the country that can only be stopped with effective grassroots action.

A concerted effort is being made to reach those who are unable to attend conferences, for whatever reason. As an example: 1) The Advocacy Institute in Chicago was presented on the web, with tapes being made available for local use; 2) An Advocacy Tract will be introduced at the meeting in New Orleans in 2006; 3) An \$80,000 grant has been received to bring the advocacy institute to regional meetings; 4) A new transportable trustee-training program is being prepared for introduction in 2006. These are but a few of the many important improvements in communication and direct support being offered to public library and state associations this year.

As your Regional Vice President, my primary responsibility is to build, train and assist trustee organizations in every state, and every community. To me that means working with all of you in a cooperative attitude of providing the kind of public library services and programs our communities deserve.

I look forward to visiting with all of you in the coming year, if you choose to invite me. In any case, let me know how I can best serve you.

Personal regards, Jim Connor, Regional Vice President, Region 10 for the Association for Library Trustees and Advocates.

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*Jim conducted a multi-county board training workshop in Buffalo earlier this year. If you would be interested in a multi-county full day board member training session with Jim in your part of the state please contact Jerry Krois at the Wyoming State Library.*

*You can learn more about ALTA by going to [www.ala.org/alta](http://www.ala.org/alta).*