

Report of Trustees' Forum by J. Catherine (Cate) Sutter

On April 12, 2008, Betty Wadsworth and I attended the Library Trustees' Forum from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Keene Valley sponsored by the Clinton Essex Franklin Library System. Jesse Feller tried to convey basic essentials for NYS library trustees, and the slides he presented can be found on www.ceflstrustees.blogspot.com under the heading "Trustee Forum Slides".

In a nutshell, he explained the extent and history of NYS's library system, the various types of systems, how they are funded, and issues faced by libraries.

In the right-hand column of the web site noted above, you will also find sample library policies, suggestions for fund raising, Right From the Start (a 15 page handbook of responsibilities of directors and officers of not-for-profit corporations), and the Handbook for Library Trustees of NYS.

I found these points especially interesting:

1. He recommended that a complaint form be developed by each Board and provided to the director. When a patron complains, the director is not to have the burden of handling it. To maintain proper relations with patrons, the director should say, please fill out this form; it will be provided to the Board, and they will handle it at their next meeting.
2. He stressed the importance of having personnel policies as the first thing insurance companies assess regarding errors and omissions insurance for trustees is a library's personnel policies. Staff are the number one group that sue boards.
3. Every Board should have a conflict of interest policy.
4. Our Charter and all important documents, including all our policies, should be on our web site, even if they are in a section that can only be accessed by the Board. A number of libraries have lost their charters in fire or by some other means, and no one knows their area.