

## **National Librarian Certification Program to be Offered to Post-MLS Librarians**

by Jenifer Grady, Director, ALA-APA

The goal of the Certified Public Library Administrator program (CPLA) is to improve the quality of library service through the provision of practical knowledge and skills essential to successful library management.

Many of you may have been involved in the past as discussions arose concerning certification within librarianship. In 2006, the American Library Association-Allied Professional Association is launching its first national certification for public librarians who have three or more years of supervisory experience. The goal of the Certified Public Library Administrator program (CPLA) is to improve the quality of library service through the provision of practical knowledge and skills essential to successful library management. Candidates will demonstrate proficiency through coursework and evaluation.

Many states have a certification requirement for public library workers, but the standards and requirements vary from state to state. States usually have laws that govern certification (SC). They may be for all levels of staff (KY), only for librarians, or only for directors (MA). Some staff have to get the certification in order for the library to receive state funding (MI) or because they participate in the state retirement plan. The purpose for the certifications may be as a legal requirement, skills enhancement (OK), or as requirement to practice (VA). They may require an application, copies of diplomas, or an exam (NM). They may be free (IA) or cost up to \$80.00 (GA). Re-certification or renewals may be scheduled anytime from biennially (GA) to never (IN) and usually are granted with documented completion of continuing education activities.

CPLA will differ from state certifications because it is for a specific audience of post-MLS librarians with management experience, including supervision of students and unpaid staff, who want a breadth of management and human resources skills to make them more effective in their current or future positions. The courses will be focused on one or more of the competencies: Budget and Finance, Management of Technology, Organization and Personnel Administration, Facility Management and Maintenance, Current Issues, Marketing, Fundraising/Grantsmanship, Politics and Networking, and Serving Diverse Populations.

After applying for the program, each candidate will have three years to fulfill seven of the nine competencies. Although the courses will not have the intensity or duration (usually) of a masters' degree course, they will incorporate a final evaluation or project that demonstrates mastery of the skill being taught. ALA Divisions, library schools, consultants, consortia, state agencies, vendors, and other educators will provide approved courses through face-to-face, online, or other methods of delivery. The Public Library Association (PLA), Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA), and the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA) developed standards for this management-focused curriculum.

ALA invites associations, individuals and library schools that are offering post-MLS certificates in specialties to become providers. This will give those entities a larger pool of students for courses they may already be offering and candidates a richer selection of courses. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was made available September 2005 from the ALA-APA Web site: <http://www.ala-apa.org/certification/cplaproviders.html>.

ALA-APA will be offering other certification programs in the future, also tailored to particular audiences. If you are interested in establishing a certification program in your specialty, the process can begin at any level and eventually needs sponsorship by an ALA Division. We hope the library community will take advantage of this and other certification programs to improve the quality of library service through the provision of practical knowledge and skills essential to the profession.

Please visit the ALA-APA Web site for more information on certification and the other mission, supporting salary improvement initiatives. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at 800/545-2433, x2424 or [jgrady@ala.org](mailto:jgrady@ala.org).