

## Kansas Trustee Certification Program to Launch July 1, 2007

by Shannon Roy, Editor

After July 1, Kansas libraries will be receiving a new publication called *Reaching for Excellence: The Kansas Trustee Certification Program*. Its appearance will make it an obvious partner with the well-received *Reaching for Excellence: Certification Program for Kansas Public Library Administrators*. The two programs are different in some ways but they have the same goal. They are intended to develop fine public libraries that will give excellent service to Kansas communities.



*Ellen Miller Presides over the Endorsement of the Kansas Trustee Certification Program*

The certification program for Kansas trustees may be a new program, but Kansas has been a leader in trustee development for some time. The Kansas Library Trustee Association (KLTA) was founded in 1999 and now has over 800 members. KLTA and FOKL (Friends of Kansas Libraries) have sponsored splendid programs at the annual Library Tri-Conference and all seven regional library systems have had trustee training programs.

The KLTA Board has continuing education of trustees as the organization's top priority. They have effectively partnered with the State

Library of Kansas to develop a program for trustee certification.

One of the major tasks of developing a trustee certification program was to determine the core competencies, called core skills in this program, which trustees need to develop to do their job effectively. The five core skills that were chosen are:

**Core Skill One:** Trustees shall be able to employ and supervise a qualified library director and periodically evaluate the director's competence.

**Core Skill Two:** Trustees shall have the skills to enable the library board to function effectively through good board organization, good documentation and new trustee orientation.

**Core Skill Three:** Trustees shall be knowledgeable about the library's annual budget and skilled in advocating for the library's needs with local government, community leadership and state government.

**Core Skill Four:** Trustees shall be capable of assessing and adopting policies that will result in the effective operation of the library, in accordance with state and local laws and with full

respect for the Library Bill of Rights.

**Core Skill Five:** Trustees shall facilitate an ongoing process of strategic planning for the library and will determine their community's future needs for library facilities, collections and information access.

The program is completely voluntary. Kansas trustees who wish to participate in this program will document one hour of training in each of the five core skills. The training may be taken in a variety of ways, including:

- Educational sessions provided at the local library board meeting
- Workshops sponsored by regional systems, library organizations or libraries
- A statewide library conference or pre-conference
- A national library conference or pre-conference
- Online or desktop training events
- Training credit will also be given for teaching a workshop or online event, but that credit will be limited to presentation time.

Once the training requirement for the program is met and documented, the trustee will receive an initial certificate that will be valid for three years. To qualify for re-certification, the trustee must take an additional five contact hours of training. The training for re-certification may be taken in any area or areas of the five core skills.

It is difficult for library trustees, who are usually volunteers with careers of their own, to pursue trustee training. The State Library staff and the KLTA Board have worked hard to make the program as flexible as possible. But the initial response from the trustee community has been very positive. Most trustees want to be well-informed and most are committed to excellent library service. They know that a good library is critically important to the quality of life in their home community.