

KDLA September 2010 Trustee Tip of the Month *Do Libraries Need Bylaws?*

Bylaws are the rules written and adopted by the library to provide the structure for how the Board will conduct its business. Bylaws can be simple and only need to include the basics to explain how the library board is set up and how it conducts business. Many bylaws will be based on the legal requirements. The by-laws should include the following:

- **General Information:** name and establishment authority of the organization
- **Board Information:** number of members, appointment procedures, term length, resignation, absences, conflict of interest
- **Board officers:** offices held, election procedure, duties and responsibilities of each office
- **Meetings:** meeting frequency, special meeting procedure, meeting notification, order of business, attendance, quorum, Open Meetings Act
- **Finances:** fiscal year, bonding of treasurer, audit
- **Required reports:** distribution method, minutes, financial reports, statistical reports, annual report, standards
- **Committees:** standing and ad hoc committees, membership, and purpose
- **Library Director:** duties and responsibilities
- **Parliamentary authority:** include which rules of order will be used to govern proceedings and conduct – Robert's, Sturgis, or locally adopted rules of order
- **Amendments:** process used for amending and/or changing the bylaws

It is best to write bylaws that are "just right." Include the information that needs to be included but avoid making the bylaws too detailed. If something needs to be explained, consider including the explanation in the board policy manual instead. Policies are more easily changed.

For example, the by-laws would say "Regular meetings shall be held on monthly basis, at a time and day specified by the board." The policy manual can say "Regular meetings will be held in the Library on the second Tuesday of each month at 4:00 p.m." Since the specific details are in the policies, it can more easily be changed if necessary.

Quick Tips:

- ◆ All libraries need to develop bylaws to provide governance and methods of operation.
- ◆ Review your bylaws and board policies on an annual basis.
- ◆ Each new Trustee should receive a copy of the bylaws and be familiar with them.
- ◆ If you want help with your bylaws, contact your Regional Librarian.

This is not legal advice and I am not an attorney. If you feel you need legal advice you should consult an attorney.

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