

October 2008

## You're a Trustee -- Now What?

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### Recommended Citation

Baker, Gordon N. (2008) "You're a Trustee -- Now What?," *Georgia Library Quarterly*: Vol. 45 : Iss. 3 , Article 4.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol45/iss3/4>

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## *We Love* LIBRARIES!

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**W**elcome to a new feature in *GLQ*, written for — and by — library trustees, Friends and advocates, i.e., those who love libraries! And what better person to kick off this new column than Dr. Gordon Baker, chair of the Henry County Library System board of trustees and of the Georgia Library Trustees, Friends, and Advocates Association. Dr. Baker was a school media specialist at the elementary, middle school and high school levels, concluding his 30-year career at Henry County Schools as coordinator of Media Services & Instructional Technology. He currently serves as director of libraries at Clayton State University.

In the coming issues, we will offer resources, success stories, best practices and counsel for library trustees, Friends and advocates for all types of libraries: academic, school, special and public. I hope you'll consider joining the organizations that support the development and networking of Georgia Friends and trustees. Friends of Georgia Libraries, or FOGL, offers high-quality workshops

on Friends groups, advocacy and related topics, as well as other events throughout the year. For more information and a membership form, visit the FOGL Web site at [www.georgia-friends.org](http://www.georgia-friends.org). The Georgia Library Trustees, Friends, and Advocates Association is a division of the Georgia Library Association. For more information on GLA, see <http://gla.georgialibraries.org/>.

We want to hear from you. If you are interested in being a guest author or submitting your stories, please contact me at [lhopper@georgialibraries.org](mailto:lhopper@georgialibraries.org) or 404-235-7134. I look forward to facilitating our communication in the service of strengthening Georgia's libraries and helping them become more visible and viable now and for the future.

— **Lyn Hopper**

*Assistant State Librarian for Library Development  
Georgia Public Library Service*

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## You're a trustee — now what?

*by Dr. Gordon N. Baker*

**E**ach year new trustees are appointed to library boards across Georgia. All public library trustees are appointed by local funding agencies of the library system. For our system in Henry County, these funding agencies are the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education. Although in many systems, funding agencies appoint library board members at large, regardless of district, in our case each district commissioner appoints one board member. The chair of the

commission is responsible for another appointment, and the Board of Education has one appointee.

As a new trustee, you have some important responsibilities, but you also have a wealth of information at your fingertips.

First, you have a library director who has an advanced degree in library science and who has participated in ongoing staff development activities to learn new tricks and trends.

Second, you have your fellow board members, many of whom have served for several years on the board. Third, you have the state library agency, Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS). GPLS has created a very helpful training manual for Georgia public library trustees. Your library director will provide you with a copy. It is your responsibility to study this resource and then ask questions.

Finally, you have professional associations to assist you in becoming



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a better trustee. The Georgia Library Association (GLA), the Southeastern Library Association (SELA) and the American Library Association (ALA), all have trustee divisions to help you.

As a trustee, it is your responsibility to attend the regular meetings of your board of trustees. You cannot be an effective member if you are absent. It is also your responsibility to become familiar with your local library system and its workings.

Important things to remember:

■ The director of the library is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the library and/or library system. The library director reports to the library board of trustees and keeps the board informed of what is happening in the library or system. The library board of trustees must not micro-manage the library system.

■ Trustees are responsible not only to the constituents in the districts they are appointed to represent, but also to all the constituents in the county or region. You must also be able to see the "big picture," and consider how a decision will affect

not only your own district, but the entire library system.

■ Library Day at the Capitol each year is an exciting time when you will have the opportunity to meet with your legislators and network with trustees from other areas of the state. Be sure to attend this important event, which will be held next on Thursday, Feb. 26, 2009.

Serving as a member of your board of trustees will be a very rewarding opportunity for you. I have had the privilege of serving on my local board of trustees for almost eight years, the last four as chair. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [gordonbaker@clayton.edu](mailto:gordonbaker@clayton.edu). ►►

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