

Why CE Matters to Your Community

The Alaska State Library strongly supports continuing education for librarians, a profession of knowledge workers devoted to providing information in multiple formats to users. We inhabit a world of change and libraries are not exempt from these forces. In 2000, Peter Drucker wrote:

“Why this explosion of demand for continuing education? ... For most of human history a skilled worker [in manufacturing or building] had learned what he needed to learn by the time his apprenticeship was finished at 18 or 19. Not so with the modern knowledge-worker. Physicians, medical technicians, computer-repair people, lawyers and human resource managers can scarcely keep up with developments in their fields. This is why so many professional associations put continuing education among their highest priorities.” (*Forbes* magazine, May 15, 2000)

The people of Alaska realize many benefits when librarians attend continuing education. Some of these are:

- *Financial benefit:* Library directors and branch librarians must attend continuing education once every two years so the libraries remain eligible for the Alaska public library assistance grant and the Library Development Coordinators' training and resources. The State Library offers one continuing education reimbursement grant annually for each public library in Alaska.
- *Efficient access to reliable information:* As knowledge workers, librarians provide reliable assistance to a large number of ever-changing information resources, ranging from free and licensed information on the Internet, to books and periodicals, and the services of local, state, and national agencies and information repositories. By attending continuing education, librarians learn about new sources of high-quality information, so they can quickly navigate the ever-changing information landscape and efficiently lead people to reliable information they need for school, work, life challenges, and recreation.
- *Enhanced use of technology:* Society in general and libraries in particular are in a state of flux due to rapid technological changes. By attending continuing education, librarians learn how to use new technologies to reach out to and serve the public more effectively and how to enhance access to library collections over the Internet. These services are essential for people who do not have computers at home.
- *Supporting education every day:* Libraries support education every day by providing early literacy programs for preschoolers, reading materials and research assistance for students in school and college, and materials for lifelong learning of adults and seniors. By attending continuing education, librarians learn about new services and information resources designed to meet these diverse educational goals.
- *Fuel for the economic engine:* Librarians help job-seekers and business entrepreneurs find vital information about employment and business opportunities. By attending continuing education, librarians learn about new business information resources and new programs designed for people looking for work or developing a small business.
- *The place for e-government:* As more people use e-government services, the library has become the place where they can access the Internet, ask questions, and get immediate human

assistance. By attending continuing education, librarians learn how other libraries have coped with the challenges and mastered the opportunities of delivering effective e-government services. This service is essential for people who do not have computers at home.

- *Serving as community centers:* Public libraries serve people of all ages, ethnicities, and incomes every day and provide an array of services and programs that no other community institutions can match. By attending continuing education, librarians are on the fast track to learn about innovative services that meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population.

The Alaska State Library offers Continuing Education grants annually to Alaska public librarians. The State Library believes it is imperative that librarians and staff stay current in their knowledge and skills and learn about innovative services and programs by completing continuing education. In short, the beneficial impact of continuing education is to continually improve library services to people across Alaska.