

# Significant Dates and Events in the History of Librarian Certification in Wisconsin

1921

- With the active support of the Wisconsin Library Association, the Wisconsin legislature passes the first public librarian certification law in the nation.

1923

- The new certification law goes into effect, administered by an independent State Library Certification Board.
- Certificates are mandatory for all library employees who spend “a major portion of their time in tasks related to librarianship.”
- Communities of fewer than 2,000 people are not covered by the certification requirement.
- No enforcement mechanism is formalized within the law or the Administrative Code.
- Once a certificate is issued it does not expire.

1965

- The Wisconsin Library Commission becomes part of the Department of Instruction, and public librarian certification becomes a responsibility of the new Division for Library Services, with the assistance of an advisory council.

*[Throughout the early years of certification, the guidelines for certification distributed by the state library agency gave the Division staff some latitude to make exceptions, waive requirements, or issue alternative authorization to work in the library. For example:*

- If an applicant did not meet the educational requirements the division could issue a certificate “if satisfied by examination or otherwise that the applicant has attainments substantially the equivalent of such prescribed education and training”.
- Or, if the educational requirements were met but the experience requirements were not, the division could issue “a license to engage in library work for not to exceed one (1) year. If, at the end of the year for which the license is issued, the division is satisfied that the person has done successful library work during the year, it may renew the license from year to year for such additional time as is required to qualify for the librarian certification required.”
- Finally, if the division was “of the opinion that any such library board or other governing body is unable to secure a librarian who holds the requisite certificate, the division may grant to the library board a permit to employ a person with out the required certificate” for one year, which in an emergency could be renewed for one year.

*Some of these exceptions continued into the 1980s, but gradually were eliminated through the use of temporary and provisional certificates which had much more objective rules.]*

1975

- The Report of the Task Force on Library Manpower and Education is released, recommending that librarian certificates be renewed with evidence of continuing education.

## 1979

- Rule changes instituted requiring that all new public librarian certificates are granted for a five year period.
- Recertification requires continuing education.
- All certificates issued before 1979 are considered permanent.
- Library systems are given responsibility for validating educational endeavors for certification purposes.

## 1980

- The Wisconsin Recertification Manual for Public Librarians is published. It provides guidelines for acceptable continuing education activities based on recommendations of a committee.
- The Council on Library and Network Development (COLAND) is established, with the responsibility to advise the State Superintendent of Public Instruction on public librarian certification.

## 1982

- Administrators of public libraries located in communities with a population of fewer than 2,000 people are required to be certified.
- The grade IV certificate is created to apply to librarians working for communities with fewer than 2,000 people. The other three grades cover the following population ranges: grade I = 8,000 or more; grade II = 4,000 to 7,999; grade III = 2,000 to 3,999.

## 1986

- Employment of a properly certified administrator becomes a requirement for a public library to participate in a public library system.
- Library system administrators become the enforcement agents for regional library compliance, including compliance with the certification rules.

## 1995

- Grade IV certificates are eliminated.
- The population guidelines for the remaining three grades are changed: grade I covers populations of 6,000 or larger; grade II covers populations of 3,000 to 5,999; grade III covers populations fewer than 3,000.

## 2000

- A distinction is established between provisional and temporary certification, and provisional certificates become renewable every 5 years instead of annually.
- The required number of contact hours for continuing education is made the same for all grade levels: 100 hours in 5 years.
- Library directors eligible for temporary certification must apply within three months of employment.

## 2004

- Temporary grade II and grade III certification is available for up to four years for individuals to complete the four library courses required for regular grade II or III certificates.