

1.Full Name: Betty J. Birner

2.Town where you live: Hawthorn Woods

3.I have been a resident of the Ela Area Public Library District since: 2015

4.Do you have a library card? What do you like to use it for:

Of course I have a library card! I use it to check out books in all forms – hard copies, books on CD, and audiobooks online. I've used it to check out movies as well, but less often.

5.Why are you interested in becoming a library trustee:

When I moved here ten years ago, I was struck by the quality of the library. I want to help to maintain this treasure. When I retired from NIU last May, I looked for a way to serve my community, and working with the library seemed like a natural fit. There is nothing I'd love more than to ensure that future generations have the same access to the written word that I had, access which made me the first in my family to attend college and which has directed my career and priorities ever since.

6.Briefly describe any qualifications (work experience, education, leadership roles, attributes, skills/training) that you feel would provide positive input to the work of the library board.

I have a Ph.D. in Linguistics and taught at Northern Illinois University for 24 years. I've written nine books and dozens of book chapters and articles. I was Director of Graduate Studies in the English Dept. at NIU for five years, coordinating curricular and budgetary needs and resolving student and personnel issues. I also spent two years as President of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Arlington Heights, directing the Church Council and working with planning, budgets, and vision.

7.Please describe any former or current public service activities and accomplishments, especially if they are related to libraries and library service, in the community (school groups, service clubs, other boards or commissions).

During the 27 years in which I've been a member of my current church, I've been not only the President of the congregation, but also (at various times) the director of its PADS homeless-shelter program, the founding chair of its Living Beyond Our Walls community-service initiative, a founding member of its POWER social-justice program, and a member of the Social Ministry Committee and the Adult Education Committee, for which I have taught more than a dozen classes.

8. What do you see as the library's role in the community now and in the future?

The library is the community's primary repository of knowledge, culture, and arts, as well as a community gathering place. It's a nonpartisan 'third space' where all people can feel welcome. For me, a library is a shared space for learning, growth, and interaction. Books are, for many people, at the heart of personal growth; and the library is at the heart of the community. There is no more important institution in a community than its library.