

**CINDI HICKEY** INSTITUTE FOR CONTINUOUS EDUCATION, EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY, KS

# The Profession's Coach

**Kansas librarians were delighted** when Cindi Hickey came into their lives. Kansas is a really big state, sprawling over 82,000 square miles. For its small-town librarians, many of whom are without an MLS, professional development opportunities required hours spent driving—as well as hard-to-come-by travel money for overnight lodging.

Hickey, coordinator for the Institute for Continuous Education (ICE), flipped the model and brought the workshops

grams delivered throughout the state and oversees the Library Services Certificate Program, which offers undergraduate college credit for library management courses.

What makes it work is Hickey's contagious enthusiasm for "the tools small rural libraries can use to provide big, urban library services and deliver them to the desktops of their customers." Roseanne Siemens, executive director of the Kansas Library Association, says, "With grants from the Library Services and Technology Act and KanEd (the statewide network for video collaboration and data sharing), Hickey has coordinated and moved library continuing education activities into the live video format and into all regions of the state."

Hickey is also a skilled planner and trainer. She helped design *New Pathways to Planning* (<http://skyways.lib.ks.us/pathway>), begun as a series of workshops sponsored by North East Kansas Library System in 1998. The system required all its member libraries to have a written library plan.

Hickey created a web site that allowed librarians to go through that planning process step by step, in the comfort of their own institutions. The tutorial, worksheets, and readings show librarians how to profile their communities, do an internal library audit, develop vision and goals, identify and enlist stakeholders, and put the plan into action.

Because she views librarians as role models for lifelong learners, Hickey is

passionate about making professional education easily available. Aware that "many Kansas librarians who don't have the MLS have trouble recognizing themselves as library professionals," she wants to make sure they benefit from training opportunities sponsored by professional associations as well as the ones offered by ICE.

How does she accomplish all this? By imitating the never-give-up attitude of her favorite fictional hero, Dory, the blue fish from *Finding Nemo*. When things seem overwhelming, Hickey hums Dory's song, "Just keep swimming, swimming, swimming." She doesn't know yet exactly how she's going to get there, "but I'm sure I will discover the way if I just keep swimming." ■



to the librarians instead. She taught her first Internet class in 1994, and even though all that was available as a virtual classroom was email and the bare beginnings of the World Wide Web, the librarians appreciated the opportunity to attend class from their home locations.

The challenge of training people across such enormous distances was not new to Hickey, who had previously been the Nebraska Library Commission's information technology trainer. No wonder Patti Butcher of the North East Kansas Library System, says, "She has an innate understanding of the needs and issues of rural public librarians and is able to integrate new technologies in nonthreatening and user-friendly ways."

At ICE, Hickey coordinates all continuing education pro-

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