



# Trustee Update

## Library News You Can Use

### You got your budget, now what?

**W**isconsin counties, villages, and towns typically pass their budgets in late fall. It is possible that your municipality and county have already passed their budget, so you know how much your library will be getting from them in 2008. (Depending on your situation, you may also be getting money from one or more adjacent counties.) If not, you will probably know soon. But because the budget process never really ends, what is the next step?



The first thing is to say “thank you” to your local municipality, and your county, even if you didn’t get all that you asked for. You will have to go back and work with these same officials next year, so you want to maintain a professional working relationship. This thank you message, from the library director and board, is also an opportunity to remind those being thanked of all the good things that your library will be able to do because of the appropriation.

If you got less than you requested, now is the time for the library board to take a look at the budget and decide how to reallocate funds to balance your budget. Will you spend less on materials? Will you reduce a service, or hours? Will you ask for money from your Friends? It is possible that when the

village passed your reduced budget, they said that you were asking for too much in a certain line, for example, salaries. However, since Wisconsin Statutes 43.58 mandates

that library boards have “exclusive control of the expenditures of all moneys appropriated for the library,” it is up to you, the library board, not the village, to decide where to apply any reductions.

It also is important to take time, right now, while the memory is still fresh, to reflect on what worked, and what did not work well, in your budget process this year. Did you present too many facts and figures? Not enough? Would a heart-warming anecdote about a satis-

### What is this newsletter?

*Welcome to ‘Trustee Update’*

**Y**our job is a very important one—we take it very seriously and we know you do too. This newsletter will provide information that will help you perform this important job well.

Trustee Update will be published quarterly—in February, May, August, and November—and will be sent to library trustees’ home addresses. It also will be archived at [www.scls.info/pr/trustee/](http://www.scls.info/pr/trustee/), and announced to library directors via the scls-directors email list.

If you have suggestions or requests for topics for future issues, just send an email to Cheryl Becker at [cbecker@scls.lib.wi.us](mailto:cbecker@scls.lib.wi.us) or Mark Ibach at [mibach@scls.lib.wi.us](mailto:mibach@scls.lib.wi.us). ♦

fied user help send home your message? Was anything unclear? Are there areas of misunderstanding regarding state statutes—such as the three year maintenance of effort requirement, or the effects of the new payments from adjacent counties?

Take notes and spend time at one or more board meetings planning what changes you will make for next year. As you do so, remember that SCLS staff is available to help you, if needed. Contact information is included on the next page of this issue of “Trustee Update.” ♦

### Did you know...

...that even with expanded Internet and computer technology availability in public libraries, demand is still outpacing supply in many libraries? Nearly 80 percent of libraries report there are fewer public Internet computers than patrons who wish to use them at different times throughout a typical day.

–“Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2006-2007.” (ALA)

# Trustees must be advocates

A library advocate is someone who understands the value and importance of public libraries and the services they provide, and can communicate that value and importance to the community and decision makers, persuading them to give libraries the financial (and other) support they need. The role of advocate is one of a trustee's most important roles.

"The Small But Powerful Guide to Winning Big Support for Your Rural Library" (with good ideas for larger libraries too!) is available at [www.scls.info/pr/pdf/ruraltipsheet.pdf](http://www.scls.info/pr/pdf/ruraltipsheet.pdf) and has some simple rules to help you get started.

- ✓ Never assume people understand what the library does or what it takes to do it. Use every chance to educate others.
- ✓ Ask! Research shows that even people who don't use the library appreciate its role and wish to support it.

## SCLS staff contacts:

Questions about preparing library budget requests, Wisconsin library law, library trustee powers and responsibilities? Contact Cheryl Becker at (608) 246-7973 or [cbecker@scls.lib.wi.us](mailto:cbecker@scls.lib.wi.us).

Questions about marketing, advocacy and funding? Contact Mark Ibach at (608) 246-5612 or [mibach@scls.lib.wi.us](mailto:mibach@scls.lib.wi.us). ❖

- ✓ Don't do this alone. Your message is most powerful when others speak up for you.

Did you know that even people who don't use libraries tend to support them? A 2007 Wisconsin study found that non-users generally agree that libraries are important, essential, and a vital municipal service, and that nearly 30 percent of current non-users think libraries deserve more funding. The report is available at [www.wplc.info/current/Wisconsin\\_Library\\_User\\_2003-2007.pdf](http://www.wplc.info/current/Wisconsin_Library_User_2003-2007.pdf).



Another strategy is to show that libraries are a good deal, and an excellent use of taxpayer money. Many studies have measured the economic impact or taxpayer return-on-investment for public libraries. There also are resources to conduct local studies, and the list at <http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/econimpact.html> can get you started. But to keep it simple, use the Library Use Value Calculator at [www.scls.info/pr/calculator/](http://www.scls.info/pr/calculator/). When taxpayers calculate the value of the library materials and services they use, and compare it to the amount they contributed in taxes, it illustrates what a great bargain the library is. ❖

*South Central Library System Trustee Update—Library News You Can Use*

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
MADISON, WI  
PERMIT NO. 2588

South Central Library System  
5250 E. Terrace Drive, Suite A-2  
Madison, WI 53718-8345

