



# Trustee Update

## Library News You Can Use

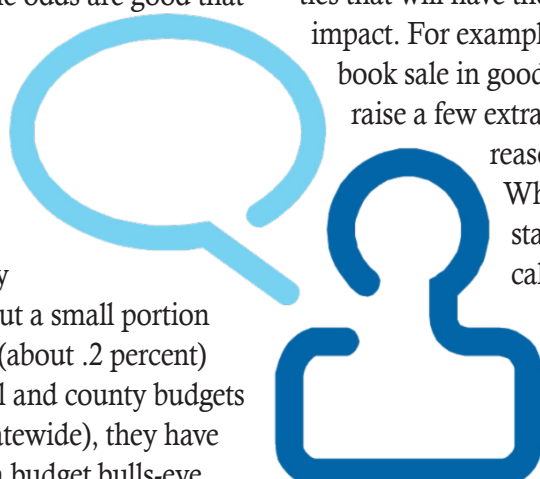
### Speak Up for Libraries *It can't wait for someone else!*

**Editor's Note:** Reading this article may cause extreme discomfort.

Across America, libraries—and library systems—are under siege. Budgets are being cut like never before, and left in the wake are services and resources that are mere shadows of their former selves.

Will this happen in Wisconsin? Only time will tell, but the odds are good that we're going to see more cuts. We all know this makes little sense, because libraries have been busier than ever. Even though library budgets comprise but a small portion of the state budget (about .2 percent) and local municipal and county budgets (about 2 percent statewide), they have been painted with a budget bulls-eye that draws far more attention than the numbers warrant.

In other states, drastic cuts have been tempered somewhat by the involvement of citizen library supporters, but the cuts are still out of balance and harsh, especially when you consider how important library service has become. Libraries have stepped to the forefront for those who need help developing a resume and looking for a job. Public Internet computer use is also up dramatically, owing to the reality that many people either can't afford that service at home, or they need a faster connection to complete online job applications and search for work or education options.



If we learn one lesson from other states, it should be this. We need to be proactive in support of adequate library funding, marshalling all our efforts to send a clear message to funding bodies that libraries are too vital to cut.

We must re-prioritize our efforts and focus every library supporter on activities that will have the greatest long-term impact. For example, conducting a book sale in good economic times to raise a few extra dollars may be a reasonable use of time.

When budgets at the state, county and local levels are being slashed, however, raising a few dollars through a book sale will have little impact on the library's long-term viability in the community. The time spent on those smaller fundraising projects could be better spent on a coordinated campaign to reach out to elected officials to argue for more public funding.

It's time for library supporters to stand up—and speak up—for the public institutions they value. Library trustees are a logical and potentially powerful voice in support of libraries. If each trustee invites one or two additional library supporters to speak up, the positive impact could be tremendous.

We've heard concerns at various meetings that libraries shouldn't take

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### Make email lists work for you

by Cheryl Becker  
Public Library Administration Consultant

Email and email lists have changed my life—mostly for the better.

For example, I used to make photocopies of minutes and agendas for meetings, put them in envelopes, address the envelopes, affix postage, and send them—and somehow I'd always have a page or envelope left over, and I had to go through all of them to find my mistake! But



now, I can send everything to everyone at once with email. I am so thankful for the wonders of email.

When I have a question about a library topic, I can ask a large number of library experts with just one message to an email list (also called "listservs," which is actually the name of a registered trademark for one email list software program). Library directors, staff, and board members can send emails advertising job openings (potentially increasing their applicant pool), offering surplus equipment or materials "free to a good home" (much greener than throwing them away), asking for advice when faced with an unusual library situation, or for so many other reasons.

Yes, I occasionally get an email

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# Speak up now to ensure future of libraries—*from page 1*

groups of supporters to city council or county board meetings because “you’ll only make them mad.” Should they be mad because those who elected them are coming to request adequate funding for a service that benefits everyone equally? Isn’t that how our system is supposed to work?

There is no better sign of support than to bring a large number of people to a public budget meeting. They don’t even have to say anything if it is understood that they are there in support of the library. This show of support cannot be created or maintained by SCLS staff. To be effective, it must come from within the community and be viewed as a local cause.

Municipal and county budgets for 2011 are being developed now, and the State Legislature will soon start work on the 2011-13 biennial budget. Now is the time for everyone who values libraries to speak up and do what is right.

Get started today by signing up for our “Speak Up” list at

## SCLS staff contacts:

For information about using email lists or preparing library budgets, contact Cheryl Becker at (608) 246-7973 or [cbecker@scls.lib.wi.us](mailto:cbecker@scls.lib.wi.us).

If you have questions about library advocacy, contact Mark Ibach at (608) 246-5612 or [mibach@scls.lib.wi.us](mailto:mibach@scls.lib.wi.us). ♦

[www.scls.info/pr/speak\\_up/](http://www.scls.info/pr/speak_up/). You can also encourage your library to make the cards available to patrons every day.

Waiting and watching is a recipe for disaster! ♦

## Email—*from page 1*

that I’m not interested in, or that I think is inappropriate for the list, or several “I am out of the office” responses that go to everyone on the list. Depending on how tolerant I’m feeling that day, I may consider them an unnecessary intrusion, or simply a nuisance—but no matter my attitude, it is a simple matter of clicking on “delete” in my email program. Poof!—they’re gone, and I can get back to my routine. I try to remind myself that their advantages far outweigh their little imperfections.

As trustees, you too sometimes get messages from a list that don’t apply to you at that moment. But sometimes, you might be interested in the furniture a library is making available at little or no cost, or you might realize your library needs a policy on the topic the sender is asking about. So carefully file those messages that are of use to you, and quickly delete the rest. It’s a much better use of the talents of the collective library community than hastily unsubscribing. ♦

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