



# Trustee Update

Library News You Can Use

## State budget passed—decreases in system funding

In the May issue we told you of several library-related items in the state budget proposal. Since then, as the budget bill worked its way through the legislative process, some changes have occurred.

In the final version, funding for public library systems, rather than experiencing a slight increase as proposed, will decrease in both years of the biennium.

For the South Central Library System (SCLS), this means a decrease in state funding of \$85,000 in 2010.

BadgerLink (online resources for Wisconsin residents), special library contracts that help extend the services of local libraries (Wisconsin Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Milwaukee Public Li-

brary, Wisconsin Library Services, and Cooperative Children's Book Center), and the NFB-NEWSLINE (newspapers accessible by telephone for blind and physically handicapped) all received slight budget increases.

Levy limits for counties and municipalities will remain in this next biennium, but the limit will increase from 2% to 3% (or the percent increase in net new construction, whichever is higher). Another change is that local governments can calculate their limit based on the prior year's allowable, as opposed to actual, tax levy. Payments to public libraries by counties remain exempt from these levy limits. As before, local governments may exceed these limits through passage of a referendum. ♦

## Local municipalities feel ongoing budget strain

News stories about the economy, whether on the national, state or local front, continue to be grim. Many public libraries are hearing that their 2010 budgets will have no increase, or a very small increase, while others are anticipating budget cuts. We all know this comes at a time when libraries are busier than ever, as citizens turn to libraries to borrow items they used to buy or subscribe to, and to use computers and library resources to help them find and apply for jobs.

It is important that library directors and boards remember that the library board has exclusive control of the library budget (Wis. Stat. 43.58(1)), and that there is some protection for library budgets in Wisconsin Statutes. Wis. Stat. 43.15(4)(c)5 requires that the library's governing body maintain library funding no lower than the average of the previous three years. Failure to do so can result in penalties, including reduction of library system services, up to and including expulsion from the system.

Nevertheless, despite public libraries' financial situations, the cost of library materials, health insurance, and other expenses continue to rise, which can hamper a library's ability to continue offering the same services, and in some cases may even jeopardize its survival. Now, more than ever, libraries and library boards find themselves needing to defend and explain their budget needs. This is called advocacy, which is something all libraries should be pursuing on a formal basis (see the Advocacy Toolkit article on page 2 for more information). ♦



## Register now for System Celebration

System Celebration 2009 will be held Sept. 24, at Windsor Golf Club.

There will be a social hour featuring entertainment from the Sun Prairie Area High School Jazz Ensemble from 6-7 p.m., dinner from 7-8 p.m., and awards from 8-8:30 p.m.

This menu features choice of Chicken Marsala, Top Sirloin, or Pasta Primavera (vegetarian). The meal includes a baked potato, green beans almondine, garden salad, and dessert.

To register, return your printed invitation card or visit [www.scls.info/about/systemceleb/](http://www.scls.info/about/systemceleb/). The registration deadline is Sept. 3. ♦

*Critical during economic downturn*

# Online Advocacy Toolkit helps guide library efforts

Libraries are only one of many public municipal departments competing for a finite pool of tax dollars. And in an economic downturn like that of the past year, it becomes even more of a challenge for libraries to get their share of available tax dollars.

Advocacy efforts to expand support for the library should be a central part of every library's annual planning process, but it is hard to imagine a time when these sorts of activities would be more important than right now.

Finding the tools you need is essential, and a new SCLS Online Advocacy Toolkit—available on the SCLS website at

[www.scls.info/pr/advocacy/](http://www.scls.info/pr/advocacy/)—provides many resources to support you in your library advocacy efforts.

Explore the information, and take what is most useful to you. Sections include “Advocacy Defined,” “Making Your Case,” “Developing an Advocacy Plan,” and more.

Contrary to what you might think, advocacy is not an insurmountable task. It begins very simply, with collecting the positive stories library users share. Statistical data may tell the story of the library's needs, but it is the “tug at the heart” stories that send the message home, and that will be remembered.

The toolkit is a work in progress, so we'd love to hear about what works for you, what doesn't, and what is missing.

Another SCLS resource that supports your advocacy efforts is the “Speak Up for Libraries” advocacy database. Learn more, or sign up, at [www.scls.info/pr/speak\\_up/](http://www.scls.info/pr/speak_up/). ❖



## SCLS staff contacts:

If you have questions about the state budget 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 the state budget, or marketing and advocacy efforts, contact Mark Ibach at (608) 246-5612 or [mibach@scls.lib.wi.us](mailto:mibach@scls.lib.wi.us). ❖

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