



Trustee Update

Library News You Can Use

Governor signs bill to assist return of library materials

Members of the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) expressed appreciation as Senate Bill 466 was signed into law by Governor Scott Walker on Monday, February 29, 2016.

The bipartisan legislation coauthored by Senator Sheila Harsdorf (R-River Falls) and Representative Nancy VanderMeer (R-Tomah) is about retrieving unreturned public library materials and collecting replacement costs.

“This isn’t about nickel and dime fines for items that are returned late,” stated WLA Executive Director Plumer Lovelace. “This is a serious issue. More than three million dollars’ worth of taxpayer-owned library materials are simply not being returned to our public libraries each year, despite months of repeated notices and calls from library staff. State-wide, libraries are losing about 5 percent of their annual materi-



als purchasing budget.”

The legislation clarifies how two different Wisconsin statutes work together; one is about library patron privacy (s.43.30) and the other about theft of library materials (s. 943.61). Some libraries already contracted with collection agencies or followed municipal ordinances that allowed law enforcement assistance. Other libraries had been advised by municipal attorneys that they could not.

Libraries take patron privacy seriously, as well as their responsibility for items purchased with tax dollars. The new law balances privacy with fiscal responsibility by authorizing public libraries to disclose a limited amount of information to third

parties in order to retrieve missing library items.

The legislation allows libraries to share the patron name,

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SCLS Reads—Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries

Also known as The Aspen Report, *Rising to the Challenge: Re-envisioning Public Libraries* was published in the fall of 2014 and interest has been building since. The South Central Library System (SCLS) consultants read the report last summer as part of a team book discussion, and that prompted a more detailed review of the information..

From November through March we hosted a system-wide book discussion on *Rising to the Challenge*, which culminated with a half-day workshop at the March All Directors Meeting at DeForest Area Public Library.

We used the report as the basis for a discussion about service priorities as

SCLS begins work on its 2017 budget. “Rising to the Challenge” has a community focus, and encourages libraries to explore community needs and what role the library may play in helping to address them.

Our aim for the afternoon session was to spend time with the four strategies for success as defined in the Aspen Report:

- ✓ Aligning Library Services in Support of Community Goals
- ✓ Providing Access to Content in all formats
- ✓ Ensuring long-term sustainability for Public Libraries
- ✓ Cultivating Leadership

We divided into small groups and tried to identify possibilities and examples of ways that these strategies for success can be achieved. The goal was to end the day with themes for SCLS service priorities for the coming year. We didn’t create the service priorities, but we have compiled the input provided and from it System staff will draft service priorities Statements that will be shared with libraries during the next several months.

If you’d like to read “Rising to the Challenge” (it’s only 60 pages), the book is available for free as a PDF download at www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/pubs/AspenLibrariesReport.pdf. ♦

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amount owed, number and type of materials, but not the titles or subject matter, with collection agencies specializing in a soft but effective approach to library accounts.

The legislation also allows a library to choose to share the same limited patron information with local law enforcement for accounts with unreturned materials totaling over \$50 in value. The most common scenario is mailing a letter to the pa-

tron on police letterhead.

It is expected that local libraries choosing to use some variant of law enforcement assistance will craft agreements that take both the library board policies and municipal or county law enforcement policies into account when implementing a procedure that best fits their communities. This is permissive language and in no way imposes requirements on libraries. ❖

Mark your calendar for Trustee Training Week

The third annual Trustee Training Week is scheduled for August 22-26, and webinars will be held from noon to 1 p.m. each day that week.

SCLS staff contacts:

For more information about Wisconsin library law, trustee responsibilities, or library administration, or if you have questions about library advocacy, marketing, or printing *Trustee Essentials*, please contact Mark Ibach, SCLS Consulting Services Coordinator, at (608) 246-5612 or mibach@scls.info. ❖

While the full schedule is still being confirmed, speakers include Pat Wagner from Siera Learn, Karen Rose from Library Strategies, Cindy Fesemyer from Columbus Public Library, and Catherine Hakala-Ausperk.

Topics range from planning a capital campaign to community planning to ensuring director success.

The final webinar will be a panel of library or system board members and directors addressing common board questions. Watch for updates at www.wistrusteetraining.com.

Webinars from the 2015 series are still available for viewing at the website listed above. ❖



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