



# Trustee Update

## Library News You Can Use

*Education about role of libraries is critical*

## Make advocacy a library trustee priority

Library trustees perform many important functions for a public library, from development of the library budget, review and payment of library bills, supervision of the library director, and creation and review of library policies and the strategic plan.

These typical tasks are familiar to most trustees, and well documented in *Trustee Essentials* from the Department of Public Instruction's Division for Libraries and Technology (DLT). What's intentionally missing from this list—and the focus of this article—is advocacy. Advocacy may in fact be one of the most important functions in which a library trustee can become involved.

The local perception about the importance of the public library to the community is the basic tenet of advocacy, and the one activity that has the greatest potential of positioning the library for long-term success as a community resource and partner. Too often advocacy is viewed as the tool used to secure additional funding for the library, be it regular operating dollars or funding for special projects or capital improvements.

Stable adequate funding is always required, but how we get to that is the question. Instead of approaching advocacy as a means to secure more funding, develop your advocacy messages to educate residents and local elected officials about the important role the library plays in the community. Talk about the people served, the resources and services offered, and the value received for the tax dollars invested. When people see the value of the library and recognize it as a vital community resource, adequate funding will more likely be a natural result.

Trustees should be the face of the library in the community, and should take every opportunity to sing its praises. Effective advocacy is about taking every opportunity to talk about the good things the library is doing, and to counter negative or

misleading information when you hear it. For example, people will often ask, “Why do we need the library when we have the Internet?” Or they may say, “We don't need the library because people can easily purchase books online.” Each library board

should develop a set of talking points to address these types of statements, then counter the misinformation when it presents itself.

This is part of developing an advocacy plan for the library board and library, with definitive goals and methods for measuring success. Again, funding should not be the goal, but rather a by-product of your advocacy efforts. Share information on a regular basis with residents

and elected officials. Use data from your library's annual report ([www.scls.info/data-statistics](http://www.scls.info/data-statistics)) to show use trends, and collect and share stories about how the library helps people.

Make advocacy a priority and it will pay dividends. ❖



## Resources to support library trustee work

Many resources are available to help library trustees as they work to support their public libraries.

Here are a few resources that can get you started:

- ✓ SCLS trustee web page—[www.scls.info/management/trustees](http://www.scls.info/management/trustees)
- ✓ Division for Libraries and Technology (DLT) resources—[dpi.wi.gov/pld/boards-directors](http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/boards-directors)
- ✓ Trustee Essentials—[dpi.wi.gov/pld/boards-directors/trustee-essentials-handbook](http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/boards-directors/trustee-essentials-handbook)
- ✓ Trustee Training Week—[www.wistrusteetraining.com](http://www.wistrusteetraining.com)
- ✓ Short Takes for Trustees—[www.scls.info/shorttakes](http://www.scls.info/shorttakes) ❖

# Trustee Training Week is Aug. 13-17

Library Trustees are instrumental to the success of public libraries, and the annual program Trustee Training Week is a great opportunity for trustees to learn ways to be more effective library leaders and advocates. This year's event will be held Aug. 13-17.

The project is sponsored by the South Central Library System, with financial support from other Wisconsin Public Library Systems. It is also supported by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Public Library Development Team, with funding support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services

Webinars will be held each day from noon to 1 p.m. on topics of particular interest to Wisconsin library trustees.

## 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](mailto:mibach@scls.info). ❖

In addition to this year's program, trustees can also access the recorded webinars from past years at the Trustee Training Week website ([www.wistrusteetraining.com](http://www.wistrusteetraining.com)). Webinar recordings from 2015-17 are available for streaming. ❖

## Read Trustee Essentials

Trustee Essentials is just that—an essential resource for every Wisconsin library trustee. As such, a copy should be in every trustee's meeting folder.

It is available on the Division for Libraries and Technology (DLT) website (<https://dpi.wi.gov/pld/boards-directors/trustee-essentials-handbook>) in pdf to read online, or print.

Each chapter targets a specific area of responsibility, and should be the first reference when questions arise. ❖

## Articles of Interest

- ✓ *The Municipality*—[scls.typepad.com/online\\_update/2018/02/ou1603.html#municipality](http://scls.typepad.com/online_update/2018/02/ou1603.html#municipality)
- ✓ *Wisconsin Counties Magazine*—[scls.typepad.com/online\\_update/2018/03/ou1606.html#counties](http://scls.typepad.com/online_update/2018/03/ou1606.html#counties)
- ✓ *From Awareness to Funding*—[scls.typepad.com/online\\_update/2018/03/ou1606.html#awareness](http://scls.typepad.com/online_update/2018/03/ou1606.html#awareness) ❖

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South Central Library System  
4610 S. Biltmore Ln., Suite 101  
Madison, WI 53718-2153

