

# trustee tale

## Newsletter for Public Library Trustees

### Legislative Roundup

by Mark Arend, Assistant Director  
Winnefox Library System

The 2011 – 2012 Legislative session ended in mid-March with passage of one bill directly affecting libraries and several others introduced that did not pass.

#### AB 224 - Library Gift Transfer Bill

This bill authorizes library boards to transfer gifts and bequests to a community foundation. The money must be used for a library-related. The bill will provide more flexibility to schools and libraries in the management and investment of such funds. This has been signed into law. A separate article in this issue explains provisions of this law in detail.

#### SB 375/AB 473 WiscNet Deadline Extension Bill

WiscNet is a non-profit, membership-based association of public and private organizations that provides low cost access to communication technologies for education, research, and public service entities such as schools, libraries and hospitals. In the biennial state budget passed last year the Legislature required that an audit be conducted of WiscNet no later than January 1, 2013, just six months before WiscNet is statutorily required to expire on July 1, 2013.

These bills would have postponed the WiscNet expiration date by one year, to July 1, 2014. Despite apparent bi-partisan support these bills were not brought to vote in either house of the Legislature.

#### AB 543/SB 531- Library Tax exemption bill

These bills would have provided an alternate way for municipalities to exempt from the county library tax. They were generally regarded as introduced to benefit one particular library and were not viewed favorably by the library community. Similar bills have been introduced in previous sessions. The bill passed in the Assembly but was not scheduled for a vote in the Senate.

The Governor may call the Legislature into special session before the new Legislature takes office in January. Even if a special session is called, however, the Legislature is unlikely to take up the two bills that have not passed or to introduce other legislation affecting libraries.



## Quantitative Standards Calculator Updated

By Rick Krumwiede, Director  
Outagamie Waupaca Library System

The Fifth Edition of the *Wisconsin Public Library Standards* (<http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/standard.html>) was released in 2010 and is the latest edition released by the Department of Public Instruction. These standards are based on the premise that all Wisconsin residents deserve at least a basic level of library service.

For any library, a locally developed long-range plan is considered to be the key to providing effective library service. The standards are intended to provide a starting point that can be used to direct long-range planning efforts. They define the basic level of service that should be available in any community, and they can be used as a tool for evaluating the appropriateness of current services or for setting goals and objectives.

*The Standards* include both checklists and quantitative measures, and libraries need to consider both in order to utilize the standards most effectively. Quantitative standards have been assembled from annual report data submitted by Wisconsin public libraries. Many of these standards are minimum per capita measures, but some standards apply regardless of community size. Recommended quantitative standards have been established in nine areas that address staffing, collections, public computers, hours, and materials expenditures.

Service targets for the recommended standards have been established to reflect four levels of effort: basic, moderate, enhanced, and excellent. Service targets have also been established in relation to the population that a library serves. When a library knows its municipal and service populations, it can apply the quantitative standards to evaluate how it is doing and determine target service levels.

A number of years ago I developed an Excel spreadsheet that automatically calculates the quantitative standards levels for a library once the library name, municipal population, and library service population are entered into the spreadsheet. I recently updated this calculator to give it a more modern look and feel.

Whether your library is engaging in a comprehensive planning process or you're just curious about how your library compares to state standards, please feel free to use the standards calculator. You can download it from OWLS (<http://www.owlweb.info/L4L/wistds.asp#4>). Instructions for using the calculator will appear when it is opened.



## Library Board Options for Investment of Gifts and Bequests

By Mark Arend, Assistant Director  
Winnefox Library System

Wisconsin law gives a library board a wide range of authority to “supervise the administration of the library”. One of these powers deals with library funds. Funds received from your municipality, county, or other tax-derived sources must be held by your municipality to be disbursed as the library board directs.

In the case of gifts, donations, and bequests however, the library board may maintain *custody* of the funds as well as *control* of them. A new law signed by Gov. Walker in March gives library boards an additional option for handling these funds.

Prior to this change in law libraries had four choices for handling gifts, donations, and bequests. They could be deposited with:

1. the treasurer of the municipality to hold on the library’s behalf
2. a public depository as defined under Chapter 34 of Statutes. Generally this would be a bank, savings & loan, or the Wisconsin Local Government Investment Pool (LGIP).
3. a 501c3 organization that has as its purpose supporting the library. Examples might be your Friends of the Library or a Library Foundation.
4. the board’s financial secretary for investment. If this option is chosen the financial secretary must be elected annually by the board and must be bonded. Statutes give options for how the financial secretary may invest the funds.

Act 163 allows the library board to transfer the gift or bequest to a community foundation. This is something that many libraries have wanted.

This law attaches several stipulations to this transfer, which also apply to transfers of funds to other organizations such as Friends. First, there must be a written agreement between the library board and the Friends or community foundation that funds will only be disbursed on the written authorization of the board and that the board will retain control over the manner in which the money is used. The law also requires that use of the funds must be consistent with the intent of the donor of the gift or bequest.

## FAQ

***I just found out that our library needs to replace one of its computers. The board hasn’t included a computer in this year’s budget, but we have money available in a capital improvements fund. Being short a computer makes it really difficult for patrons, and the next board meeting isn’t for nearly a month. Do we have any options other than waiting for the next meeting to have the board approve purchasing a new computer?***

As you know, library boards have to approve all expenditures. For budgeted expenditures, the staff is empowered to make purchases, and the board audits and approves them later. Generally, the library board must approve any unbudgeted expenditures before purchases are made.

Because board approval is required before a computer may be ordered, the library has only two options. The board can approve a purchase at its next regular meeting, or the board can hold a special meeting to approve the purchase.

In situations like this, you may be tempted to poll other board members to see if they’re okay with making a purchase that would be approved at the next meeting, so that a computer can be ordered right away. However, according to the Office of the Attorney General, this practice violates state open meetings laws.

In the future, it would be best to have a computer replacement plan/policy in place so that money is budgeted and computers are replaced on a regular basis. This policy might also provide guidelines for emergency computer replacements.

## 2012 WAPL CONFERENCE

*Mark your calendars for the 2012  
Wisconsin Association of Public  
Libraries annual conference:*

**May 9-12, 2012**  
**Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention  
Center - Stevens Point**

Information on the Wisconsin Library Association website:  
[www.wla.lib.wi.us/conferences/](http://www.wla.lib.wi.us/conferences/)



## *Have questions?*

*Contact*

**Rick at OWLS**  
**[rick@mail.owls.lib.wi.us](mailto:rick@mail.owls.lib.wi.us)**

**920-832-6190**

*or*

**Mark at Winnefox**  
**[arend@winnefox.org](mailto:arend@winnefox.org)**

**920-236-5222**

*and we'll try to help.*

Editors: Rick Krumwiede & Mark Arend  
Graphic Artist: Renee Miller

or email [arend@winnefox.org](mailto:arend@winnefox.org)

WLS: Mark Arend, 920-236-5222

or [rick@mail.owls.lib.wi.us](mailto:rick@mail.owls.lib.wi.us)

OWLS: Rick Krumwiede, 920-832-6190

for future articles, send them to:

If you have questions, comments or suggestions

home system.

Waupaca Library System (WLS). Distribution to your board is funded by your

trustee tale is written and distributed by Outagamie

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**Winnefox Library System**  
**106 Washington Avenue**  
**Oshkosh, WI 54901-4985**