

Ask Them What They Want

Part 1: Surveying Your Community

By Mark Arend, Assistant Director
Winnefox Library System

Libraries use surveys for many different purposes. They can be very useful but if not done right they can be a lot of work for not that much information, or even misleading information.

Before starting, it is important to remember that surveys do not predict the future. Too often a survey will be read as predicting what people will do. This isn't the case; a survey is a snapshot of respondents' attitudes or intentions at the time of answering.

Begin by asking why you are conducting this survey. Are you developing a strategic plan and want to know what services your community considers important? Are you beginning a building project and trying to find out what spaces you will need in the new building? Are you trying to find out if a fundraising campaign will be supported?

You can expect about a 5% return rate: for every twenty surveys sent out you will probably get one back. You should make special effort to get responses from a wide range of community residents: users and non-users, all ages and economic and social classes.

To ensure a good return rate your survey should be easy to get, easy to fill out, and easy to return. It should be available in different ways: online, at meetings of other organizations, at schools, at polling places, perhaps included with a city or village mailing.

It should be short: taking no more than 5 or 10 minutes to complete.



To boost the response rate you may want to consider offering incentives to those responding, such as being entered into a drawing for one or more gift cards. They don't have to cost a lot of money; \$25 is sufficient.

Make the survey period about 2 – 3 weeks. Less than that won't give time to get enough useful responses back. Longer and you'll risk losing any "buzz" you've created to promote it. Avoid busy times on peoples' schedules, such as major holidays or back-to-school.

If you use an online survey product, such as Survey Monkey, consider using volunteers to enter in surveys that come back on paper. This will help when you analyze your data.

Finally, use the survey to empower action. You're conducting the survey for a purpose. You are looking at the services you offer and proposing new services, which usually means you have to stop doing something. You're embarking on a building project or fundraising campaign. These can be tough, controversial decisions. If done right the survey can guide your decision-making and help support the decisions you make.

In the next issue I'll give advice on survey questions.

Introducing Carla Hayden, Librarian of Congress

By Gerri Moeller, Director
Outagamie Waupaca Library System

On September 12, 2016, Carla Hayden was sworn in as the 14th Librarian of Congress. She is the first woman and the first African-American to hold that office in the 213-year history of the Library of Congress. She succeeded James Billington, an academic and author who held the office since 1987. The Librarian of Congress has extensive responsibilities in the areas of copyright and fair use, and faces a number of challenges, including the need to modernize the Library, increase access through digitization and deal with massive overcrowding of materials.

Dr. Hayden has received national attention for her outspoken comments on the Patriot Act, citing the need to protect library users' privacy, and for her commitment to keeping Baltimore's libraries open during the 2015 protests at the death of Freddie Gray.

Many librarians are optimistic about this appointment. She is the first trained librarian to lead the Library

since 1974. During her nomination, the American Library Association, along with over 140 library groups, schools and academic libraries enthusiastically supported her appointment, saying:

...Dr. Hayden deeply understands what a library at its best is and can be for every community of users – young and old, corporate and individual, rich and poor, "connected" or not – in our diverse and complicated country. That's why, noting that "she has dedicated her career to making libraries vital to the fabric of our national life," the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities called Dr. Hayden "an inspired choice" for Librarian of Congress.

Dr. Hayden brings a wealth of experience to the position. She received her master's and doctorate degrees in Library Science from the University of Chicago, and worked in several positions in the Museum of Science and Industry and the Chicago Library, and taught Library Science at the University of Pittsburgh. In 1993, she became director of the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. She was honored as the National Librarian of the Year in 1995, and served as president of the American Library Association from 2003 to 2004.

It's Time to Build Those Relationships

By Mark Arend, Assistant Director
Winnefox Library System

"Many people think politics is all money. In reality relationships and constituent activity are the true drivers of legislative change. Fortunately, relationship building is what libraries do best – at Legislative Day and all year 'round."

--Steven Conway, Government Relations Advisor WLA

One way to build those relationships is by attending the Wisconsin Library Association's Library Legislative Day. Each year in February library trustees, friends, and staff get together in Madison to meet with legislators and aids. It's a great way to learn about the legislative process and make those so-important personal contacts. It's also relatively easy and stress-free for the first-time attendee because you'll be going in a group and can usually let someone more experienced lead the discussion.

Legislative Day 2017 will be Tuesday, February 21, 2017 at the Madison Concourse Hotel, just off the Square. Information will be posted soon on the WLA site: <http://wla.wisconsinlibraries.org/legislative/legislative-day>

Hiring a library director: Attracting candidates

By Gerri Moeller, Director
Outagamie Waupaca Library System

I've been thinking about hiring lately, and have a few thoughts on the recruitment process. It's easy to forget that hiring is a two-way street. While the library board is evaluating the potential director, the candidate will also be evaluating the board, the community, the library, and the staff. With that in mind, here are a few suggestions that may help attract the best candidates:

Write an attractive job posting

If the job posting isn't appealing, some candidates won't even apply. Make sure the job posting isn't just a list of tasks or a job description. Instead, it should explain why someone would want to move to your community to take this position. Enlist the writers on the board or the library staff to compose an attractive job posting.

Start by focusing on the community. Does your community offer a wealth of outdoor recreation? Perhaps the schools are nationally recognized, or you have a well-attended quirky festival. Put these in the listing! Even candidates from nearby communities may not know what makes your community great.

Next, focus on your library. What makes it stand out? Has your library just won a state or national award, been awarded a literacy grant, or does it have an extremely well attended story time? Does the library do a great job of providing continuing education to staff members? Is there an active Friends group or Foundation? Focus on the things that make your library unique.

Lastly, include the salary range. It's tempting to skip this, but including the salary range saves both your time and the time of the candidate. It's discouraging to go through the process to find that the top candidate simply cannot take the job for the salary that the library can offer. Consider posting the starting salary, the typical starting range, or the entire salary range. By doing this you're likely to only get candidates for

whom that salary range is desirable.

Be as flexible as you can

A popular management blog recommends always starting with a Skype interview. It's appealing to candidates and interviewers because of the flexibility. Even candidates who live nearby may find it easier to take half an hour for a Skype interview, rather than taking time off their current job, putting on their interview duds, then driving across town and back for a short interview. Conducting a first interview via Skype also makes it easier to treat local and remote candidates the same. That short first interview can give everyone a good idea if the job and candidate are a good fit, without a significant time investment for the candidate or the interviewers.

If possible, have multiple options for interview dates and times. Candidates are busy too, and appreciate it when the interviewing team is flexible and communicates well throughout the process. Candidates may be interviewing for multiple jobs, and all of these factors go into their decision about what job to accept.

Explain what makes the job, the community and the library attractive

Part of the job of the interviewing team is to sell the job and the community to the candidate. Why should the candidate be interested in this position? What are the professional opportunities and challenges available to the candidate? What support mechanisms are in place to help the candidate succeed? Spend some time in the interview talking about the community, the library and the staff, and make sure there is ample opportunity for the candidate to ask questions.

If the candidate is coming from a distance, consider enlisting a local realtor to show them around town. Don't forget the candidate's spouse or partner. If they are also coming, offer to have someone talk to them about the community and employment prospects.

By putting a little thought and planning into the advertising and interviewing process, you're more likely to get a great director who is a good fit for the library and the community.

FAQ

We're beginning the search process for a new library director. The law says that the director has to be certified. Does this mean that we can't hire someone who isn't already certified as a library director?

No. Section 43.15(4)(c)6 of Wisconsin Statutes does indeed say that you must employ a "head librarian" (director) who holds certification from the Department of Public Instruction, however a new director does not need to hold that certification at time of hire. They must, however, be eligible for certification and they must apply for certification within three months of becoming a library director.

Have questions?

Contact us and we'll try to help.

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