

# trustee tale

## Newsletter for Public Library Trustees

### Stand up for Libraries

On a snowy February 4th over 160 librarians, Trustees, and Friends converged on Madison for the Wisconsin Library Association's annual Library Legislative Day, the one day of the year that our Legislators get a loud and clear message about the importance of libraries. This year's theme was ***Stand up for Libraries*** and it was an apt choice.

The state budget imbalance threatens library service at the same time that libraries are seeing record use of their facilities. Librarians have long suspected, and recent research confirms, that when the economy takes a downturn library use goes up. People use library resources to look for jobs or to upgrade their skills, and families with less discretionary income visit the library instead of buying books or videos.

Fortunately, things are not as bleak as they could be. Governor Doyle, while honoring his pledge to cut state spending and bring the budget into balance without raising taxes, has not proposed any further cuts to library services. At the time of writing, the Governor's budget proposal is before the Legislature.



Now is the time for Trustees to speak out and ***Stand up for Libraries!*** Contact your Legislators to remind them of the importance of libraries in your communities.

*Photos: Governor Doyle and Lt. Governor Lawton greet and address attendees to Library Legislative Day in Madison.*



### Helping Your Director Help You

is the topic of a trustee workshop that OWLS will hold on Tuesday, April 29 from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Weyauwega Public Library.

Rick Krumwiede, OWLS Director, and Greta Thompson, OWLS Assistant Director, will be the presenters.

Trustees from both Winnefox and OWLS are welcome to attend. Please contact Terri Richards at OWLS to register either by phone (920/832-6190) or by email [trichard@mail.owls.lib.wi.us](mailto:trichard@mail.owls.lib.wi.us)

Soup and sandwiches will be provided.

## Effective, Useful, and Legal Meeting Minutes

One of the board secretary's jobs is taking minutes of board and committee meetings (sometimes this is done by the library director). Regardless of who does it, it is a vitally important job. As a public document, library board minutes must be a complete and accurate record of the actions of the board. Minutes are also an important part of the library's "institutional memory", reminding us of past discussions and decisions.

Minutes must be kept for all meetings of the board, including closed sessions, and for meetings of committees of the board.

So, what should your minutes contain? At a minimum, meeting minutes must indicate board members and visitors present, all motions that were made, and the result of any votes taken. If someone arrives late or leaves early that should be reflected in the minutes. If a vote is not unanimous, the minutes should record how each member voted.

Beyond the required minimum, it's up to the Board to decide how detailed they want their minutes to be. Sometimes the minutes summarize discussion on a topic. This can be useful when the board is working on a long-term project.

This is all quite a job, and luckily technology can help. Some boards record their meeting as an aid to the recording secretary in writing up the

official minutes. These recordings may be destroyed 90 days after the written minutes have been approved.

Sometimes a board needs to correct or amend minutes of past meetings if a mistake is discovered after they've been approved. This can be done by majority vote at any regular meeting. The correction is indicated in the minutes of the meeting at which the action is taken. The record book will then have two sets of minutes for that meeting: the original set and the corrected one.

Once you have the minutes, what do you do with them? Copies are generally sent to all board members and often to members of your municipal governing body. Regardless of how many copies are made and distributed, Wisconsin law requires that an official copy be kept in a location where they are readily available to members of the public (keeping them in the library office will satisfy this requirement). Although the law allows that some official records may be destroyed after a certain time, minutes of meetings must be kept permanently.

### URLs

Effective Meetings and Taking Minutes

<http://www.owls.lib.wi.us/info/links/meetings.htm>

Trustee Essentials: The Library Board and the Public Records Law

<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/pld/te15.html>

The Governor's Budget and Libraries

[http://www.oshkoshpubliclibrary.org/pages/state\\_budget/wistatebudget.html](http://www.oshkoshpubliclibrary.org/pages/state_budget/wistatebudget.html)

<http://www.wla.lib.wi.us/legis/legis.html>

Library use in economic recessions

<http://www.ala.org/news/v8n5/studies.html>



## Seeing Ourselves in the Municipal Mirror

*[Bernie Bellin, System Administrator at Lakeshores Library System, attended a session at last fall's WLA conference on Seeing Ourselves in the Municipal Mirror. Later he wrote an article for Lakeshores' newsletter on some of the ideas that Jean Jacobson, Racine County Executive, shared in that session. What follows is an adaptation of Bernie's article, shared with his permission.]*

Jean Jacobson, Racine County Executive, shared ten ideas on how you can easily keep your library in front of elected officials. Her suggestions were to:

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### ***Connect elected officials to the library.***

Anything you do, you should invite an elected official or officials to be introduced.

### ***Let elected officials speak at the events you host at the library.***

What elected official does not welcome the chance to speak in front of a group? Allow them to introduce the speaker you have for your program.

### ***Get email addresses of elected officials.***

When you have that address, send them information in small doses. They don't have time to read long pages of information. Keep them short and often.

### ***Ask elected officials to host their meetings in the library.***

These could be local or regional meetings. They are always looking for a place to have a meeting with their constituents. Let others know that they will be meeting in your library.

### ***Invite people to host town meetings on local issues.***

Ask a bakery to provide refreshments or some other retailer to be a part of the meeting. Everyone loves to eat; provide people with the opportunity.

### ***Develop an elected officials' newsletter.***

Don't send elected officials the same newsletter you send to Friends of the Library or that you distribute to library patrons. Change the focus to emphasize what is going on at the library and how elected officials help make that happen.

### ***Let elected officials know how many people use your library.***

Compare your numbers to other local events—high school football, soccer team, basketball games; whatever is popular in your community. Remind your elected officials that people who use the library also vote (sometimes at the library!).

### ***Get as many of your constituents involved in this process as possible.***

The more individuals helping to carry your message to elected officials, the better your coverage will be. No elected official wants to keep running into constituents at the grocery store knowing that they aren't able to share positive information with that person.

### ***Ask to do a presentation at a government meeting***

(County, Village, Town Board or City Council) and make it short and interesting. Officials like to know what you've done for their constituents — mention upcoming reading programs, summer events, etc.

### ***Keep an eye out for local projects and let elected officials and others know how you can be a resource for that project.***

The library may have reference or resource materials that would be of help. For example, if you learn that a group wants to build a new playground, you could point out books and internet sites that are helpful in the planning process, or sites that may offer grants for this kind of project, etc. You could also offer the library as a place to hold the group's meetings.

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Even if you implement only some of these ideas, you are likely to increase your visibility to the elected officials in your community and promote a positive view of the library's contribution and value.



Carla Basiliere, Winnefox's Marketing Coordinator, has left the library world to take a job at Aurora Health Care. Among all the other things she's done during her relatively short time at Winnefox, she's helped us put together *Trustee Tale*. She saw to it that we kept to a schedule, more or less, and that we spent some time planning topics and issues, and that our commas and apostrophes plopped into their proper place. And she did this with a sense of humor and a contagious smile. We'll miss her. But we certainly want to wish her well in her new position.

## TRUSTEE SOAPBOX

*Do you have a question, comment or topic to suggest for a future TrusteeTale? Send an Email to:*

*[Arend@mail.winnefox.org](mailto:Arend@mail.winnefox.org)*

*You may also phone your questions to Greta at 920-832-6194.*

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