

New Poll Shows Americans Value Libraries

A recent study by the America Library Association shows that libraries and librarians – as well as the services they offer – are clearly valuable to Americans. In a survey of 1,000 adults nationwide they found that:

- o Seven out of 10 respondents report being extremely or very satisfied with their public libraries – up 10 points from 2002.
- o 85% agree that their public libraries deserve more funding – including 58 percent who strongly agree.
- o More than half believe \$41 or more per person should be spent on library support every year. On average, about \$25 per person in local tax support is spent for public libraries.
- o 92% of survey respondents believe libraries will still be needed in the future – even with all of the information available on the Internet.
- o More than one-third put the benefits of libraries at the top of the public services list as compared to schools, roads and parks – up 6 points from 2002.

This favorable view is reflected in the growing use of libraries. Use of library services has grown in almost every category – from taking out books (up 14 points) to consulting with librarians (up 7 points) to taking out CDs, videos and computer software (up 13 points) to attending cultural programs like speakers or movie showings (up 8 points).



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The Campaign for America's Libraries

Nearly all respondents agree that because public libraries provide free access to materials and resources, they play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed.

“Because libraries offer free access to all they bring opportunity to all and are a vital part of a civil society,” said ALA President Michael Gorman. “Investment in libraries is an investment in education and lifelong learning.”

Sixty-one percent of library users report using the computer in some way – including checking the online catalog, connecting to the Internet and writing a paper or preparing a resume – when they visited the library.

“Public libraries are essential components of vibrant and educated communities,” Gorman said. “There are more than 16,000 public libraries in this country. I encourage everyone to check out his or her local library in person or online. Your library card is the smartest card in your wallet.”

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Nearly two-thirds of Americans have library cards and report that taking out books and using computers/Internet are the top services they use in public libraries.

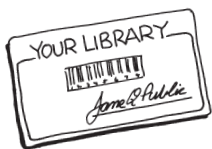
The most frequent library users are women, younger adults (ages 25 to 44), college-educated adults and parents of younger children. Adults in the Midwest and West are more likely to have visited their public library than their counterparts in the South and Northeast.

The results of this survey mirror those of a similar survey in Wisconsin in 2003. Even those who were not regular library users thought that public libraries were an important community resource.

For more information on this study, please visit www.ala.org/ala/ors/reports/2006KRCReport.pdf.

The most current Wisconsin public library users/nonuser survey was done in 2003 and is at <http://www.wplc.info/current/survey2003/>.

It's the card
that pays us
all back.



Every tax dollar we spend for library services pays us back an average of four dollars in economic benefits to our communities. But while Wisconsin libraries rank in the top ten nationally for circulation and visits, we've slipped to 19th in funding. Book over to WisconsinLibraries.org to learn how you can help. Because supporting Wisconsin Libraries keeps us all in a better state.

SUPPORT
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Avoiding the Pitfalls in Hiring a New Director

When done correctly, the search for a new director can invigorate and energize a library. When needed, this can be an opportunity for rapid change. During the hiring process the library board has an opportunity to take a fresh look at services and to reflect on the library's future direction. The process can be arduous and full of pitfalls that should be avoided. This list of "do nots" should be discussed and considered.

- o Hiring to the weaknesses or strengths of the former director – Evaluate each candidate on his/her own merit. Each person has strengths and weaknesses and finding a comfortable balance of skills and attitudes is essential.
- o Rushing to resolution – Recognizing the importance of having a director in place, a board may hastily make a hiring decision and not reflect on the qualities and vision they need in a new director.
- o Taking the easy way out – Reviewing applicants for a library directorship is a lot of work and takes time. Boards should not take the easy way out and promote an internal candidate without going through the complete search process. Internal candidates should be evaluated as thoroughly as external candidates.
- o Assuming that all assistant directors are qualified to be directors – There is a vast difference between being an assistant director under a competent library director and being the library director. Evaluate each candidate for the range and depth of experience but also consider personality, work ethic, and commitment.
- o Being penny-wise and pound foolish – This is not the time to be frugal. Taking time, using a consultant, and offering a good compensation package will help attract the best candidates available.
- o Assuming all candidates are 100% candid – Sometimes candidates inflate their abilities and achievements. A thorough reference and background check should be conducted. Attention should be paid to both what is said and not said during reference checks.
- o Putting too much emphasis on technical abilities – A library director should be more than a good librarian. Great library directors are visionary leaders that communicate well with the board, staff, and community leaders.

Taken from A Library Board's Practical Guide to Finding the Right Library Director <http://www.owlsweb.info/L4L/trustees/GuideToFindingTheRightLibraryDirector.pdf>
Reprint courtesy of the Public Library Association/American Library Association.

Twelve Golden Rules for Board Members

A library director recently gave me a copy of these 'rules', dated 1957. Except for some changes in grammar they are as valid now as they were 50 years ago.

- 1. A trustee must have an interest in the library.** Does he believe enough in the educational, informational, and recreational role of the library to fight for the library as the churchman fights for his church, the schoolman for his educational program, and the doctor for his patient? It is a duty of the trustee to do so.
- 2. A trustee must have time to give to the library.** Continuity of policy is almost impossible if certain board members are absent two out of three meetings. No citizen should accept appointment as a library trustee if he does not intend to come regularly to meetings. Likewise, a trustee who finds new interests interfering with his attendance should resign.
- 3. A trustee must consider his position, not as a matter of prestige but as an opportunity for courageous and forward-looking determination to push the library ahead.** An ideal trustee is a good businessman or woman, interested in education. He has few prejudices. He is a person of good judgment, sound character, common sense, and public spirit. A trustee should be chosen with his personal qualities in mind and not because of the church he attends, the section of town in which he lives, his political party, etc.
- 4. A trustee must know the law under which his library is organized.** See [Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter 43](#).

- 5. A trustee serves without compensation.**
- 6. A trustee carries his full share of responsibility as a board member** so that a few members do not have to do all the work, taking all blame or praise.



- 7. A trustee does not revoice his opposition or criticism, either publicly or privately, after a policy or rule is adopted by majority vote of the board.**
- 8. A trustee is very careful to keep confidential information confidential** and does not give out information regarding future board action or plans until such action is taken.

- 9. A trustee treats the staff members and the librarian in a completely impersonal fashion.** Under no circumstances does a trustee listen to grievances of staff members or treat individual problems on his own. The librarian is in charge of the staff and has administrative control up to the point that a grievance is presented to the library board as a whole.

- 10. A trustee should know the tax rate of his municipality,** the real value of all property in his municipality, the assessed value of all property in his municipality, and the amount given to the library.

- 11. A trustee must know the needs of the library and community, be aware of new trends and procedures in the library field.** The best and perhaps only way to do this is to read professional library publications, meet with trustees of other communities, visit other libraries, and attend the annual conferences and meetings of trustees and librarians.

- 12. A trustee knows that all powers are always vested in the library board and none at all in the library board member.** The individual has no power to act for the library in any way, unless authorized by the board itself; it is always the board as a unit that holds the responsibility and the powers.

If knowledge
is power, libraries
are power plants.



Wisconsin libraries spark the imagination and empower our citizens to make smart choices to better their lives. So it should come as no surprise that every tax dollar we invest in library services pays us back an average of four dollars in economic benefits to our communities. Yet at a time when our libraries rank in the top ten nationally for circulation and visits, we've slipped to 19th in funding. Book over to WisconsinLibraries.org to learn how you can help. Because it's time to power up our support.

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Arend@winnefox.org.

Editor/Author: Mark Arend
Graphic Artist: Renee Miller

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