

# trustee tale

## Newsletter for Public Library Trustees

### Wisconsin Celebrates 30 Years of Public Library Systems

Ken Hall, Assistant Director – Winnefox Library System

The year is 1971. Patrick Lucey is governor. Computers are massive machines filling whole rooms. Few of us have ever seen one. The library card catalog is just that, a huge wooden catalog with dozens of drawers. You can “dial in” by phoning a librarian who will walk to the catalog and look for a book for you. The latest and greatest technological developments in library resource sharing are the photocopier and the public library system.

Back in '71, libraries were self contained, seemingly self-sufficient entities. Unfortunately, if you needed information not contained in the books on your local library shelves, you were just out of luck. If you lived in a community with the resources to fund a large library, you might be information rich. If you lived in a small community lacking the funds necessary to stock a large library, you were probably information poor.



The answer to the problem was, and still is, library systems. Systems were created by the legislature primarily as networks of

Former Fond du Lac Public Library Director and current WLS Trustee, Gene McLane

independent libraries connected to a large resource library in order to share resources and develop information equality between large and small communities. As one director put it, “I can’t imagine library life before or without a system. It’s like being an orphan versus having a

***“I can’t imagine library life before or without a system. It’s like being an orphan versus having a supportive family.”***

supportive family. As a director of a small library, it would be impossible to stay on top of all the library world news and developments all by myself. The system keeps me, and others, posted on the new and different and best in a way I could never do alone. It’s definitely a situation where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.”

Library systems were responsible for greatly expanding and facilitating interlibrary loan, the process of sharing books and other materials between libraries. Systems helped introduce new types of materials into libraries from 16mm films to DVDs; from records to 8-track tapes to electronic books. From the beginning, systems have helped libraries keep local costs low by providing the needed mechanisms for sharing resources.

Early system services included shared acquisitions and cataloging, delivery, interloan and marketing support, as well as



WLS 25th Anniversary Cake!

educational opportunities for library staff and professional consulting. As these services matured and improved, others were added such as shared electronic catalogs and web page development to keep libraries on the cutting edge of information technology.

According to another director, “System membership provides a wealth of services beginning with technical support. If our library had to hire out or have a person in house to handle all the troubleshooting resulting from the automation system to the Internet stations, the cost would be astronomical.”

With the complexity of the modern library and information technology, systems continue to provide consulting to libraries large and small by employing specialists who are able to serve many libraries at once.

(continued on page 1)

Winnie the Fox and WLS Marketing Coordinator, Carla Basiliere greet guests at the WLS anniversary celebration.



## Outagamie Waupaca Library System and Winnefox Library System Turn 25

Though the enabling legislation for library systems was passed in 1971, it took a few years for local governments and local libraries to create systems. Outagamie Waupaca Library System and Winnefox Library System began operations in 1976 and 1977 respectively.



### IN THIS ISSUE

- *30 Years of Library Systems*
- *OWLS & WLS Turn 25*
- *The Planning Process: Part II*
- *Hiring a Director*

## The Planning Process In Brief for a Small Library : Part II

Greta Thompson, Assistant Director – Outagamie Waupaca Library System

*In the last issue of Trustee Tale, I discussed two planning tasks: developing a mission statement and developing goals. This time I'll look at developing objectives and activities, and then recommend some planning resources.*

### Developing Activities

Now that you know why you have a library and you know what you want to do, how do you do it? What are you doing now to achieve your goals? What do you need to do? What might you want to do next year or the year after?

Each goal has several activities associated with it which describe work needed to reach the goal. Some of the activities may be new or exploratory such as, "To explore the desirability of opening on Sunday afternoon" or "To study the feasibility of carpeting the children's area." Others may be routine but too important not to state such as, "To purchase each year at least one copy of any book that appears on the New York Times' best seller list." You might want to consider phasing out a current activity over the next year or two or assessing whether it is useful enough to continue doing.

### Objectives

Activities can be turned into objectives, statements like those above that describe activities or plans for achieving each goal. The difference is that they should be specific

enough that at the end of the year (or other specified period of time) you can measure progress toward your goals by determining which objectives were achieved. You can say yes, we did this or no, we did not.

Sometimes the "proof" that you did something will be a report. Using the carpeting example, a report establishing the fact that the budget won't allow for carpeting the children's area now but recommending that money be set aside each year for five years until it can be carpeted, serves as a new objective.

Objectives need not cover every activity that occurs at the library. "To open and close the library in a timely way" is too detailed to serve as an objective in a library plan, though it may be a very appropriate statement in a staff job description.

The major elements of a plan include a mission statement, goals, objectives and activities. A mission statement is a brief statement or description of why we exist. Goals are general statements of what we want to do and objectives are measurable statements that help us achieve our goals. Finally, activities are actions undertaken to help us reach our objectives.

A plan is a working document, something you consult to see what to do, to evaluate what you've done and determine what you still need to do. Plans change as you go along for you may find better or more relevant goals and objectives. Some things get done and disappear from the plan only to return ten years later. Objectives change more often than goals and goals more often than the library's mission but even that can change.

*(continued on page 3)*

(continued from page 2)

No one has ever written the perfect plan, one that will last forever. What you want to do is invest a reasonable amount of time and effort into writing a plan and then continue to refine and update it in light of changing circumstances and priorities. If you do this, every revision will make your plan stronger and more useful.

### Resources:

Imperatives for Planning in the *Wisconsin Public Library Standards*

<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dlcl/pld/chapter1.html>

An excellent, brief overview of the planning process that incorporates the use of the *Standards* both to assess where the library is now and to establish goals and objectives.

OWLS Links for Librarians: Planning

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

A collection of links to planning resources ranging from the general to the specific.

OWLS Links for Librarians: Trustees

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

The Trustee Manuals from various states included on this site have sections on planning, specifically written for trustees.

Himmel, Ethel and Wilson, Bill. *Planning for Results*. Chicago, ALA: 1998. The most current planning guide from the American Library Association. A more complex, time-consuming process, primarily for larger libraries, but well worth browsing.

McClure, Charles, et al. *Planning and Role Setting for Public Libraries: A Manual of Procedures*. Chicago, ALA: 1987.

The source of the eight roles, e.g., popular materials center and community activities center, that have helped so many public libraries focus their efforts.

## Developing an Effective Library: Step One, Recruiting the Right Director

Ken Hall, Assistant Director – Winnefox Library System

What is it that you want for your library? High circulation? Well-attended story hours? Excellent electronic resources? To be successful, you need funding, a competent and contented staff, a good facility, and a relevant program of service. A good library director is the foundation on which all of these other elements stand.

It is the library director's responsibility to manage the budget and take the lead in presenting the library's case to funding officials, hire, train, and supervise staff and provide the vision necessary to respond to community needs with a relevant program of service.

The director is the face of the library to community groups, municipal officials and the public at large. His or her personality shapes the way the community perceives the library. A friendly outgoing individual will make for a friendly, welcoming library.

It is important for the library board to hire a person who has the desire and aptitude to be a leader. The board relies on the director to direct both daily operations and long range planning.

How can the board be assured of selecting the right individual for a director? There are several qualities to look for when hiring.

- Is the applicant outgoing and a good communicator? Can the applicant demonstrate an ability to talk with the public and articulate community needs?
- Is the applicant willing to take responsibility?
- Is the applicant able to formulate a plan of action based on broad goals, or must the applicant have every duty outlined in detail?
- Is the applicant creative and willing to take risks in applying new ideas?

It isn't that difficult to separate the leaders from the followers. An applicant who doesn't communicate well in an interview will have difficulty communicating with the public. When asked why they want to be library directors, too many applicants respond simply, "because I have loved books all my life and the library atmosphere appeals to me." This answer should send up red flags. A good response to the question may be, "because I love reading and I want to develop services that bring the joy and benefits of reading to others. I want to work with the public and add something to my community."

(continued on page 4)



### Library Legislative Day January 29, 2002 Inn On The Park Madison, Wisconsin

Join other library trustees, staff and friends in telling local legislators about the importance of libraries.

If you are interested, please contact your library director or your library system.

Winnefox Library System: (920) 236-5220  
Outagamie Waupaca Library System: (920) 832-6190

**Hiring a Director** (continued from page 3)

A library board may go ten or even twenty years without having to recruit a director. If you are faced with this task, don't be afraid to call on your library system for help. Your system can help with writing ads, reviewing job descriptions, posting job announcements in the right places, and even provide a professional, unbiased representative to sit in on interviews. In communities where everyone knows everyone, having an outside "expert" help with interviews is often a good way to bypass friendships and hire the most qualified.

Above all else, pay the director what they are worth. Don't keep the compensation of the director low in order to keep your book budget up. An unqualified director will never be able to raise a book budget. A qualified, fairly compensated director can.

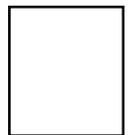
**Systems Turn 30** (continued from page 1)

As the director of a medium size library put it, "Although the system staff has always been available for professional advice, lately I have been very aware that the quantity and diversity of professional skills and experience available to us from the system staff is greater than ever. The availability of top-notch professional knowledge and experience has become the most significant "over and above" assistance that the system provides. The availability of system staff permits even the smallest library staff to think about and deal with technical, planning, and professional issues."



There are some things we take for granted. It's hard to imagine a public library today without a public library system. As libraries continue to adapt to changing community needs, public library systems will continue to provide the leadership needed to bring reading and information to all citizens of Wisconsin. Because of the ways in which public library systems pool resources and share expertise across political boundaries, you could say that they are the poster children for the recent Kettl Commission recommendations on making local governments more efficient and cost effective. Talk to the director of your local library and ask how system membership benefits your library.

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