

trustee tale



Newsletter for Public Library Trustees

The Campaign for Wisconsin Libraries

by Rick Krumwiede

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In January 2006 the Wisconsin Library Association Foundation (WLAF) will kick off a multi-media publicity campaign to promote a wider understanding of the value and importance of all types of Wisconsin libraries. The **Campaign for Wisconsin Libraries** is designed to communicate the positive impact that libraries have on the State's economy, the importance of libraries to education and lifelong learning, and the contribution that libraries make to the quality of life in Wisconsin. By centralizing promotional activities at the state level, the Campaign will benefit all Wisconsin libraries, including those with limited resources.

As public library trustees you can help make this Campaign a success.

We need you to be aware of the Campaign, talk about it with your library director and staff, and promote it in your communities.

Word of mouth publicity has always been crucial to the support and success of the public library, and

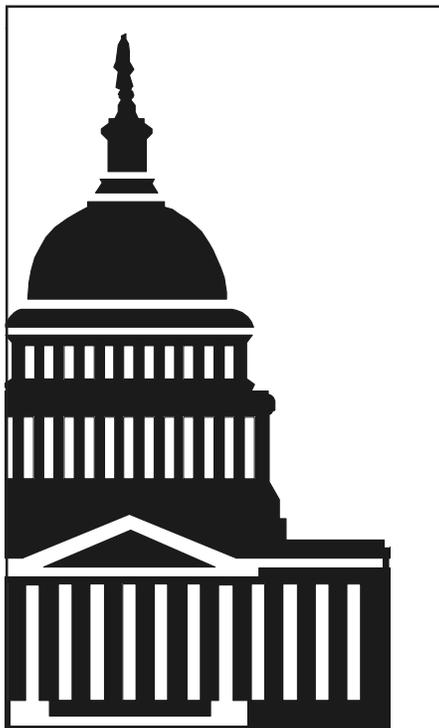
we're counting on you to help gather grassroots support for libraries among your friends and neighbors.

Trustees understand that libraries are valuable assets to their communities. Trustees realize that libraries are essential in a democratic society because they provide the information necessary for an informed citizenry. They understand that libraries help children discover the joy of reading, encourage family literacy and foster lifelong learning. And, of course, trustees know that public libraries provide a wealth of informational and recreational resources to everyone in the community. Those of us associated with public libraries know how worthy they are of the tax dollars invested in them.

Much of the public knows it. People are using public libraries more than ever. For most Wisconsin libraries, business is booming. According to a recent DPI press release, circulation grew nearly 4% in 2004, and interlibrary loan increased by 17%. User visits to public libraries statewide increased to almost 32 million. Wisconsin residents certainly take advantage of the library services available to them. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, Wisconsin public libraries rank in the top ten nationally in Interlibrary Loan (1st), Circulation (8th), and Visits (9th) per capita.

SUPPORT
Wisconsin Libraries
Keep Us All In A Better State™

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Stand Up for Libraries

Attend Library Legislative Day

Mark your calendars now for the Wisconsin Library Association's Library Legislation Day in Madison on Tuesday 31 January 2006. This is a great opportunity for library supporters to talk with their State Legislators about the importance of library support. There are several bills in making their way through the legislative process that will have a major impact on library service and legislators need to hear what you think.

Ask your library director or go to <http://www.wla.lib.wi.us/legis/index.htm> for more information.

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While the value of public libraries may seem self-evident to library supporters, that's not necessarily the case with the general public or with local government decision makers. DPI reports that public libraries continue to increase the level of services they provide "with little or no growth in library income and staffing levels," and nationally our public library funding has slipped to 19th. Clearly, funding is not keeping pace with the demand for services, and unfortunately, Wisconsin's school, academic, and special libraries find themselves in a similar situation.

Many of our citizens and lawmakers assume that libraries will always be there just because they always have been there. They associate public libraries with the word "free," and don't stop to think about the rising costs of providing more and more services for "free." Changing that perception means telling them what the contemporary library has to offer and asking for appropriate financial support.

In January, the Campaign for Wisconsin Libraries will distribute print, radio, and web public service announcements designed to get the word out. Those announcements will be the start of an ongoing Campaign designed to secure the future of Wisconsin's libraries. WLAF has made a commitment to raise a minimum of \$100,000 each year to fund this Campaign. None of those funds will be used for lobbying or political advocacy. Organizations, corporations, foundations, friends of libraries groups, libraries, and individuals will be encouraged to support the Campaign with a tax-deductible gift.

The return on your investment will be priceless, a gift from you to you and to future generations.

Footnote: For more information, call the WLAF office at 608-245-3640 and in the new year watch for the Campaign web site at WisconsinLibraries.org.

Happy Retirement Greta!

Greta Thompson, Assistant Director of the Outagamie Waupaca Library System and co-editor of the Trustee Tales newsletter will be retiring at the end of 2005. It's been a pleasure to work with her for the past 3½ years and I will miss collaborating with her on this and other projects. We all wish her a happy retirement.

—Mark Arend



Selecting New Trustees

There can be a lot of turnover on library boards. People move away, decide to retire from the board, or have life circumstances change so they're unable to continue serving as a trustee. When this happens, every good board president and library director have lists of possible new trustees to submit to the municipal authority that appoints library trustees. How do you decide who to put on that list? What qualities do you look for in a prospective trustee?

First, it helps if the person has an interest in the library. Someone who's already committed to good library service will make a better, more effective trustee than someone who isn't. And it's easier for a new trustee who is already familiar with the library to bring themselves "up to speed" on library issues.

Second, because the library serves all members of the community equitably, a library board representing a cross section of the community is vital. Your trustees should represent the range of social, demographic, and occupational groups found in your community.

The third point is related to the second. Consider what professional skills and knowledge might be useful on your board. A board composed of members with varying backgrounds and perspectives can contribute to the success of the library. Lawyers, businesspeople, parents, elected officials, and others all have knowledge and experience that can contribute to effective library board decision-making.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, your candidate should be willing and able to speak out in support of the library. Your trustees need to be willing to meet with elected officials to advocate for the library.

They should be ready to put in a good word for the library in casual conversation around the community. And they should be able to ask community leaders for support when necessary.

Effective library trustees are as important as an effective director and staff in ensuring quality library service in a community.

For more information check out [Trustee Essentials 1 & 18](#)



Trustee Qualifications

- ♦ serious commitment to being a library trustee
- ♦ serious commitment to the provision of library services within your community
- ♦ ability to attend regularly scheduled board meetings and be an active member of the library board
- ♦ willingness to become familiar with Wisconsin library law, standards for libraries, and principles and practices for ensuring that the library provides broad and equitable access to the knowledge, information, and diversity of ideas needed by community residents
- ♦ commitment to freedom of expression and inquiry for all people

From Trustee Essential 1: the Trustee Job Description



Stand Up For Libraries

Library Legislative Day
January 31, 2006
Inn On The Park
Madison, Wisconsin

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

TRUSTEE SOAPBOX

*Do you have a question,
comment or topic to
suggest for a future
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