

trustee tale

Newsletter for Public Library Trustees

Who is the Wisconsin Library User (and Non-User)?

Earlier this year a survey was conducted for the Wisconsin Public Library Consortium measuring attitudes towards and use of public libraries by Wisconsin residents. This survey was a follow-up to a similar one that was conducted in 2003.

For this survey a random sample of 615 Wisconsin residents were contacted by phone and agreed to be surveyed. The geographic and demographic distribution of those surveyed was statistically comparable to the state as a whole. This survey had an error rate of plus or minus 4% which means that the survey can be considered 92% reliable. Half of the respondents identified themselves as library users and half as non-users.

Many of the findings of the 2003 survey were confirmed by this one. In general libraries command wide support among both library users and non-users.

One of the most interesting findings is the high rate of support for libraries, even among persons who don't use the library themselves. 74.3% of all respondents "Strongly agree" that public libraries to be a vital municipal service. 87.3% of all respondents view public libraries as an essential service for children; 69.3% of all respondents view public libraries as an essential service for adults.

This strong support extends to library funding. Over half of all library users and over a quarter of library non-users believe the library deserves more financial support. Over 54.3% of all respondents strongly agreed that they would support a referendum that would increase library funding.

Those who use the library tend to use it regularly. Over a third use the library more than twice a month.

If we had to create a profile of the Wisconsin library user, using the demographic information that this research collected, the Wisconsin library user is more likely to be female, use the Internet daily, and be very comfortable using computers than Wisconsin public library non-users.

Wisconsin library users are also most likely to use a library to find materials for personal enjoyment, and most likely to use the library that is nearest their home.

Links to both the 2003 and 2007 reports can be found at <http://www.wplc.info/reports/welcome.html>



Changes to Public Library System Membership Requirements

Library trustees have been hearing a lot lately about “Act 420”, or at least about the provision allowing libraries to bill adjacent counties for use by their residents. But Act 420 made other changes to library funding and operations including some changes to the system membership requirements.

As you know, to be a member of a library system a public library has to agree to meet certain requirements. Among these are:

- Your library must agree to provide to all residents of the system the same services, on the same terms, that you provide to local residents and to share materials with other libraries.
- Your municipality must provide funding to your library at a level not lower than the average of the previous three years.
- You must employ a library director with the appropriate certification.

Act 420 added several new system membership requirements which take effect in 2008:

- A library director must be present in the library for at least ten hours each week that the library is open, less leave time.
- The library must spend at least \$2,500 annually on library materials. \$2,500 is one quarter of the minimum amount which the DPI recommends libraries spend annually on materials.
- The library must have to be open to the public an average of 20 hours each week *or* at least the number of hours a week the library was open in 2005, whichever is fewer. 20 hours per week is less than the 25 per week recommended by the DPI.

More information on library system membership can be found in Trustee Essential #17. If you or your director have questions on this you should call your system office.

Personnel Management: The Board and the Director

In the area of personnel management, it is very important that the respective duties of the Board of Trustees and the Library Director be understood and adhered to.

Many public libraries have found themselves in serious difficulties because the director would not accept direct responsibility for competent personnel supervision or because individual trustees interfered with library operations. On many policies and projects the trustees and the director will work side by side as members of a planning team. But according to Wisconsin Statutes, it is the director who hires and supervises library staff.



An Appropriate Division of Labor

The **Board** employs a library director who meets the stated requirements and has the needed skills.

The **Director** hires and supervises staff according to policy and utilizes the skills and initiative of the staff members to the library's advantage.

The **Board** adopts personnel policies and a personnel handbook, making sure that they concur with local, state and federal laws that relate to employment practices.

The **Director** provides the board with recommendations and materials to review for developing the policies, and maintains the adopted personnel manual.

The **Board** provides an adequate salary schedule and fringe benefits for all employees.

The **Director** suggests improvements needed in compensation and working conditions.

The **Board** provides funding for in-service training and professional development for both staff members and board members.

The **Director** recommends appropriate opportunities.

The **Board** develops criteria for evaluating the library director's performance and reviews director's effectiveness.

The **Director** provides sample material for the board to review. The director maintains position appraisals and up to date personnel records for all staff members.

The **Director** notifies appropriate authorities of vacancies on the board, recommends qualified candidates, if appropriate, and participates with the board in the orientation of new board members.

(Adapted from The Kansas Public Library Trustee Handbook.)



Attend Library Legislative Day

Mark your calendars now for the Wisconsin Library Association's Library Legislation Day in Madison on Tuesday 22 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/day/index.htm> for more information.

Correction: In the *Legislative Update* article in our Summer issue we stated that SB-1 would allow libraries "to transfer gifts to a related public library or community foundation for use in enhancing library services and programs". We should have stated that gift funds can be transferred to a library or community foundation provided the organization's purpose is to provide support for the public library.

Web Links for Library Trustees:

Wisconsin Library Trustee Resource Page
<http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/trustee.html>

This page from the state's Public Library Development web site includes links for legal resources, policies, board bylaws, library director certification, and much more.

Trustee tips & help from the Kansas Library Trustee Association
<http://skyways.lib.ks.us/KLA/divisions/klta/trusteelibrary.htm>

Board organization, personnel issues, advocacy, marketing, and more.



TRUSTEE SOAPBOX

Do you have a question, comment or topic to suggest for a future TrusteeTale? Send an Email to Mark at: Arend@winnefox.org.

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