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Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #1316
Madison, WI

Communiqué

WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

WISCONSIN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

NUMBER 68 • WINTER 2007

From the Chair: Check Out the Social Security Website

by Ken Hall, WAPL Chair

Though I am well on my way toward achieving Geezerhood – or so I'm told – I am still a ways off from being able to collect Social Security. That said, I am familiar enough with the bureaucracy involved that when I got a call from our local SSA office wanting us to partner with them to get the word out to seniors in our community about the ease of doing business online, I jumped at the offer.

This is a great partnership. This is another reason for the library to persuade seniors to take our computer classes, not that they need another reason. It is another great way for folks to make use of our public Internet computers other than playing Ruhnescape. The overworked folks down at the SSA get to shorten their lines. Last, but not least, the public can save time and travel.

In case you are unaware of online services from the SSA, here's the skinny straight from the home office. If you would like copies of the following brochure for your public just contact your local SSA office.

SAVE YOURSELF A TRIP BY VISITING WWW.SOCIALSECURITY.GOV

Today, with just a click of your computer's mouse button, you can bypass highway traffic and office waiting lines and conduct business with Social Security.

Social Security's Internet site, www.socialsecurity.gov, is among the most popular of government websites. The reason for the popularity is simple: each year more people find that they like the speed and convenience of applying for benefits at *Social Security Online*.

Here are some of the things you can do if you visit us online at www.socialsecurity.gov.

Apply for benefits. You can apply for Social Security retirement, spouse's or disability benefits right over the

Internet. If you are applying for disability benefits you'll also need to complete the disability report, which also is available online. Need to take a break or look for some records to answer the questions? That's just fine with us. You can leave and then come back to complete your application or report. After you have applied, you can check back online for the status of your application as well.

See if you qualify for Social Security. You can use our online Benefit Eligibility Screening Tool, or BEST, to see which kind of benefits you might be eligible to apply for. Just answer a series of questions and find out whether you are eligible for retirement, disability or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. You can even find out whether you might be eligible for Medicare benefits. All of this can be done by completing one simple questionnaire, and it only takes about 5-10 minutes.

Request a Statement. Every year we send a *Social Security Statement* to all workers age 25 or older. It arrives about three months before your birthday. Your *Statement* includes a detailed report of your earnings over the years as well as an estimate of benefits you would receive upon retirement or disability, and an estimate of how much your family would be eligible for in survivors' benefits if you die. Can't wait for your regularly scheduled *Statement*? Go online! Request a *Statement* online and we'll mail it to you within 2-4 weeks.

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Web Page Enhancements

The Support Staff Section's web site is growing, so go have a look at <http://www.wla.lib.wi.us/ssx>. Recently added is a section that will house **SupportLines**, the Support Staff Section newsletter. The September 2007 issue is currently available, but subsequent issues will be added as they are published.

Another addition sure to please support staff employees is the resources link that provides easy access to web sites and discussion groups of interest to support staff. Support staff with suggestions for sites they would like to see included should email Teresa Grimm at tgrimm@wctc.edu. Our future plans include adding resources of interest based on work activities such as serials and circulation. Exciting things are happening as we grow a web site to meet the needs of support staff, so take a look and let us hear what you think.

by Teresa Grimm, WLA SSS Secretary



Library Legislation Day Reminder

I am so very thankful for the wealth of networking opportunities we have as Directors and staff of Wisconsin libraries. The sharing of ideas, the answers given by experienced librarians, the benefits of the newly established Mentor programs, outstanding reference and technology services available through our library systems, outstanding seminars offered at conferences and workshops, BadgerLink, our shared systems and a strong Interlibrary Loan – all of these are our crown jewels! These resources enable us to excel at our jobs and allow us the capabilities of offering excellent service to our patrons.

Another avenue of networking is with our State Senators and State Representatives. This contact with your legislators is so important for the future of all our libraries. And the perfect opportunity for you to convey your Library Board's concerns and goals is by attending Library Legislative Day on Tuesday January 22, 2008. Discussing state legislative policies and future agenda items via personal contact is so very beneficial for all the constituents in Wisconsin. I know personally our library has benefited by the merging of faces to names. So I encourage all of you to spread the word to Directors, staff, Trustees and patrons to travel to Madison for a day of political advocacy. For more information log on to the WLA home page for a registration form or email wla@scls.lib.wi.us

I am looking forward to seeing new faces on January 22, 2008, in Madison!

by Mary Dunn, Tomahawk Public Library

Future WAPL Conference

April 30-May 2, 2008
Stevens Point
(Holiday Inn)

Communiqué

A quarterly newsletter of the Wisconsin Association of Public Libraries, a unit of the Wisconsin Library Association. Bulk rate postage paid at Madison, WI. Nonprofit organization permit #1316.

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Deadline	Issue
Feb 15, 2008	Spring 2008
May 15, 2008	Summer 2008
Aug 15, 2008	Fall 2008
Nov 15, 2008	Winter 2008

Postmaster/Postmistress:

Send change of address to:
Communiqué
5250 East Terrace Drive, Suite A1
Madison, WI 53718-8345
Phone 608-245-3640
Fax 608-245-3646

Send submission to editor:

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The Source for Great Job Descriptions!

Periodically we see requests posted to WISPUBLIB or the system email lists for up-to-date job descriptions or classifications. If only they'd known that a comprehensive and easy-to-use collection is available for their use, thanks to WAPL's Personnel and Professional Concerns Committee (P2C2).

The fourth edition of the *Position Classifications for Wisconsin Public Libraries* has more than 100 pages jam-packed with detailed job descriptions for various sizes of libraries, along with lists of duties, knowledge and abilities, physical demands of the positions, mental requirements (and let me tell you, you'd be crazy not to have this valuable resource at your fingertips), environmental/working conditions, equipment used, and expected education and experience.

The fourth edition added additional language relating to computers and technology, new features of building systems such as security, HVAC, fire control, descriptions for positions that were not included in the previous editions (such as computer technician, public relations coordinator, trainer, volunteer coordinator), additional language on confidentiality of library patron information, and clearer language on supervisory responsibilities. It also includes sample form documents such as letter of employment, personnel action form, and examples of position classifications for represented and non-represented positions.

What would you expect to pay for such a valuable work? Priceless? You'd think so. \$50? Well, that might seem like a great value. But wait, that's not all...if you order now, you'll also receive a CD packed with PDF documents of all the sections of the document. That's right-print and electronic formats all in one, easy-to-use package!

And, if you act now, since you can only order this valuable tool through the existing WLA publication order form, you'll get the price of the third edition. That's right-for a limited time only, while supplies last, you can get the *Position Classifications*, Fourth Edition for only \$15 as a WLA member (\$25 for non-members in Wisconsin)!

You can find the order form here: <http://www.wla.lib.wi.us/forms/pubform.pdf>
But act now so you can take advantage of this valuable offer while supplies last!

by John DeBacher, P2C2 Committee

From the Chair cont.

Forecast Your Financial Future. Social Security's Benefits Planner is a convenient way to help plan your retirement or determine what benefits you or your family may qualify for in the unfortunate event of disability or death. Simply enter your estimated income for the years ahead to get an idea of what your benefit payments could be.

Get a Medicare Card Replaced. If your Medicare card has been lost, stolen or damaged and a new one is needed, it can be replaced by visiting our website. This eliminates the need to call or visit an office.

Find the Social Security office closest to you. There's so much you can do online, but sometimes you may want to talk with a Social Security representative face-to-face. If that's the case, your first step is to visit our online field office locator. Just type in your ZIP code and find the Social Security office closest to you.

Get a password. If you already get Social Security benefits, there's so much more you can do online if you have a password. With a password, you can check the information and benefit amounts in your Social Security records and change your address, telephone number or direct deposit account information without leaving the comfort of your home.

This is just a sample of the many services now available online from Social Security. So whatever your business with Social Security may be, check out our website and visit "Online Claims and Services" at www.socialsecurity.gov. Information is available online 24 hours a day. Online services are available each weekday from 5 a.m. until 1 a.m. And on weekends website visitors can conduct business on Saturday from 5 a.m. until 11 p.m., and on Sunday from 8 a.m. until 11:30 p.m. Find out why Social Security's website is so popular by checking out just how much you can do online at www.socialsecurity.gov/onlineservices/.

Reprinted with permission from Social Security Administration

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

“But I, being poor, have only my dreams. I have spread my dreams under your feet; tread softly, because you tread on my dreams.”
— William Butler Yeats

Tucked away in my mental snapshot album is the image of a young girl curled up in a library beanbag chair. She's totally absorbed in her reading while waiting to be picked up after school on a fall afternoon. The freeze frame is from the late 1980's, which means this particular child is probably now raising her own children.

The girl appears to be small for her age. She may be as old as ten but it's difficult to tell. One hand absentmindedly twists a hank of her short blond hair as she reads. A pair of worn canvas tennies, removed for greater comfort, sits neatly next to a stack of books at her side. Her clothes are not the latest styles; the plaid blouse and pink sweater that are a little too small, the blue corduroy pants that are a little too big and faded green socks have seen some mending, but they're clean. Somebody cares about this child's well-being.

That caring adult introduced her to the public library where she could join the company of the richest children on earth and the greatest characters from human imagination. She travels anywhere and can be anyone she likes at the flip of a page. An entire world's worth of knowledge is at her command. She has a library card.

Childhood is full of opportunity, yet it does not present itself equally to all children.

The biggest obstacle to opportunity is poverty. We know that girls and boys tend to do well when their families succeed economically. Despite hard work, however, too many Wisconsin families do not have access to secure jobs that pay enough to rise out of poverty. They do not have sufficient access to key supports like affordable housing and healthcare. All families deserve a chance at the American dream – work that pays a living wage, safe and healthy communities in which to raise their children, and access to affordable, high-quality health and childcare.

Librarians wouldn't dream of checking citizens' income at the door any more than demanding to know their blood type or what they had for breakfast. Regardless of economic status or geographic location, public libraries foster family literacy even as they provide equal access to essential information and the means to savings in myriad ways so important to families. They provide supportive environments where parents can become the first teachers of their children. Libraries bridge the digital divide for

anyone without the resources to own a computer and associated costs of maintaining connectivity.

All of which is why I was happy to spend a vacation day as volunteer guide and taxi driver to Vicky Selkove, Mobilization Strategies Manager from the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF), when she visited Oneida County on Monday, November 5, to talk about Vision 2020.

Vision 2020 is a collaborative project of WCCF, the Wisconsin Head Start Association and the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) aimed at ending child poverty in the state by the year 2020. Their aim is to establish a network of local Vision 2020 Councils throughout the state.

Vicky began the day at 6:30 a.m., with a two and a half minute live interview on the morning show at Rhinelander's television station. We dropped by local independent public radio station WXPB, and our city's two newspapers before joining 22 other women representing organizations and agencies concerned with children and families in poverty for a networking lunch. She came prepared with children in poverty data snapshots for Oneida and five neighboring counties.

Then we drove to Minocqua for an afternoon interview at the *Lakeland Times*. To access the lengthy article that appeared in that newspaper on November 9, go to <http://www.lakelandtimes.com/Search.asp> and search “Vicky Selkove.”

The general public was invited to join Vicky that evening at the Rhinelander Holiday Inn Express for a presentation and community discussion on child poverty sponsored by the Northwoods Regional Solutions Network of Wisconsin Women Equals Prosperity. One of the most poignant comments came from a gentleman who introduced himself as the only child psychiatrist north of Highway 29.

Vicky Selkove is an accomplished and compelling speaker who gives an impressive, focused interview. Following her around for a day was like attending a graduate course in public relations! She would very much appreciate being taken under the wing of other public librarians willing to provide a meeting place to hold a public information forum, as well as able to open the doors to local media interviews. Please consider bringing the Vision 2020 Campaign to your community to help raise awareness, spark discussion, provide advocacy training or share information about poverty in your area.

A visit to the Vision 2020 website at www.vision2020wi.org provides more details about the initiative, including the

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Reading Between the Lines cont.

opportunity to sign a “pledge card” in support of the program. The web site also features a report card that examines the factors affecting Wisconsin children in poverty and draws the following conclusion:

“Wisconsin's state motto – “Forward” – suggests a place where all families have the opportunity to prosper. Unfortunately, many families in our state face substantial barriers to economic progress. In fact, for an increasing and alarming number of Wisconsin's working families, an “honest day's work” does not yield an “honest day's pay.” In 2005, more than 1,777,000 Wisconsin children lived in families whose income did not cover their basic needs. That's a group of children larger than the populations of Appleton and Green Bay combined. We can do a much better job of meeting the demands of the changing economic climate and providing brighter futures for our kids.”

It is important that no child be deprived of their dreams or the opportunity for success.

by Kris Adams Wendt, Director, Rhinelander District Library

The Importance of Trustee Orientations

Two years ago, I agreed to serve on the board of the Chequamegon Humane Association. I am not sure why I was asked to serve on the board, but it isn't because I know much about animal shelters, animal care or animal behavior. My primary qualifications are a love of dogs, my work at one or two shelter fundraisers, and my friendship with a board member.

Upon being invited to serve on the board, I was given a copy of the shelter's long-range plan and I observed a board meeting before I made my decision on whether or not to serve. In retrospect, because I was given so little information and I asked few questions, I found myself working with an organization about which I had scant knowledge. As a result, I did not understand much about discussions taking place at board meetings and I was unable to contribute to them; indeed, because I asked so many questions, I usually made the meetings longer than they needed to be.

As I struggle to learn enough about my work as a member of the shelter board, I have developed a better understanding of the challenges new library trustees must face as they begin their work

on behalf of the library. Most trustees come into their new role blind, lacking the training and expertise necessary to do their jobs well. Their qualifications are often quite similar in nature to those I had for serving on an animal shelter board – a love of the library and a history of supporting it, but limited knowledge of how the organization actually works. It is essential, then, that each new trustee receives a comprehensive orientation session immediately after being appointed to the library board.

The orientation should be jointly conducted by the library board president and the library director. It should include a discussion of the role of the powers and duties of public library boards in Wisconsin, an overview of challenges and opportunities the library is currently facing and a tour of the library. There should also be time for the new trustee to ask questions.

At the orientation, the new trustee should receive a trustee manual that includes not only a copy of *Trustee Essentials*, but also a copy of the library budget, the library's long-range plan, a directory of library trustees, a copy of Chapter 43 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*, a copy of the library's policy manual and any other documents relevant to the library and to the work of the new trustee. (Each trustee should have such a manual and the director should take care to update sections as the information changes.)

Trustee orientation sessions benefit the new trustee, the library board, and the library. The new trustee is more comfortable at meetings and better prepared to participate in the discussion. The library board is able to maintain momentum because the challenges facing the library have already been explained. The library benefits because the board is able to act as a group and decisions are made based upon a shared body of knowledge.

What will be the elements of your library's new trustee orientation program?

by Jim Trojanowski, Director, Northern Waters Library System

