

WAPL BOARD 2009

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WLA Board Liasion	James Trojanowski Northern Waters Library Service 3200 E. Lakeshore Dr. • Ashland, WI 54806	bus 715-682-2365 • fax 715-685-2704 jtrojanowski@nwls.lib.wi.us
1st Year Director	Carla Powers Rice Lake Public Library 2 East Marshall St. • Rice Lake, WI 54868	bus 715-234-4861 • fax 715-234-5026 carlapowers@ifls.lib.wi.us
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3rd Year Director	Mary E. Dunn Tomahawk Public Library 300 W. Lincoln Ave. • Tomahawk, WI 54487	bus 715-453-2455 • fax 715-453-1630 dunn@wvls.lib.wi.us

Wisconsin Library Association
5250 East Terrace Drive
Suite A-1
Madison, WI 53718-8345

<http://www.wla.lib.wi.us/wapl>

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From the Chair

As I wrap up my year as WAPL chair, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone on the board for their work behind the scenes (and in front, too) to ensure that the unit runs smoothly and that there is continuity from year to year. I'd like to especially thank our outgoing board members, Ken Hall (past chair) and Desiree Bongers (director-at-large). Your patience, wisdom and humor will be missed.

And now I get to welcome our new board members, chair-elect Cheryl Becker and director-at-large Carla Powers. Cheryl is the public library administration consultant at the South Central Library System in Madison and Carla is the director of the Rice Lake Public Library.

The board is already working on the spring conference "Saving our Stories," which will be held at the Glacier Canyon Lodge at the Wilderness Resort in Wisconsin Dells, May 6-8, 2009. In addition to a wide variety of great programs, a dessert reception with treats from the Cheese Factory is being planned! The Glacier Canyon Lodge is a new convention area of the resort. It's a fabulous facility for our conference!

—by Rhonda Puntney, WAPL Chair

Are You Preparing The Next Generation of Library Leaders?

A great deal is at stake in the library profession today. While one generation of library leaders is getting ready to retire, the next generation may or may not be ready to take the torch. Passing the torch is a collective effort, and everyone must play a hand in making sure those who aspire to lead are well-prepared. Those getting ready for or considering retirement should ask, "Am I doing my part to ready future library leaders?"

A Thriving Demographic: Attributes for the Next Generation

Proactive library directors create leadership development opportunities for all staff. Directors can take pride in the fact that when they create an inviting environment for staff to further their development inside and outside the library's walls, tomorrow's leaders emerge. While there are many attributes that effective leaders possess, three key traits transpire: emotional intelligence, creative problem-solving and artful influence.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence dates back to Darwin, most notably his early work on the importance of emotional expression for survival and adaptation. Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive and assess the emotional makeup of one's self and other people. Successful leaders exhibit self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and dynamic social skills. They are sensitive to the culture and needs of people.

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Using the Report of the Economic Contribution of WI Public Libraries at Budget Time

Every September, the Saukville Village Board conducts a budget tour of all the Village departments and meets with each department head. The Village Board came to the library as their first stop of the day and we went over my department description and 2009 budget request that were approved earlier by the Library Board. During the time I was with the Village Board, I was able to point out certain items of interest to them from the performance measurements table that I created showing progress from 2003 through 2007. The Board members were astounded by the large increase in circulation and interlibrary loans. I also showed them a table I created using the State-recommended level of service targets and I compared this to where we are as of our 2007 annual report. We also go over other budget items including how we use the money we receive from the three counties for service to non-librarians non-residents.

Every budget year, I point out to board members how much service we provide to non-residents. Nearly half our circulation is to non-residents and more than a third to non-librarians non-residents. I also point out how the library is a great boon for the downtown area because we bring in people from outlying areas who may then patronize a local business. This year, I provided a copy of *The Economic Contribution of Wisconsin Public Libraries to the Economy of Wisconsin* at the meeting and the Village president was very intrigued by it. I pointed out that for every taxpayer dollar invested in a public library, \$4.60 goes back into the community. The Village president and Village administrator urged me to send a copy to our state Senator Glenn Grothman, who had told them earlier if they can't cope with the state-imposed levy limit they "should close their public library." This is from the same senator who recently sent me a "thank you" card for the work we did in our summer reading program and for spreading the joy of reading! I'm glad to say both the Village President and Administrator disagree with his earlier statement. As of this writing, a copy of the report is in the mail along with a photocopy of a recent article from a local newspaper about the increased usage at libraries in Ozaukee County. I hope he reads it!

Think of ways of how you can use the report at your library. Share copies with your library board, or, better yet, present it to your municipal board members. The current economy looks bad, yet our library business is booming and this is a great opportunity to show people in power the benefits we have to offer to not only our communities but to our downtown areas. If you don't have a copy of the report, contact your library system coordinator or go to <http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/pdf/wilibraryimpact.pdf>.

—by Linda Pierschalla, Library Director, Oscar Grady Public Library

WAPL Conference

May 6-8, 2009
Wilderness Resort,
Wisconsin Dells

Communiqué

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Cheryl Becker
South Central Library System
5250 E. Terrace Dr., Suite A2
Madison, WI 53718
Phone 608-246-7973 • Fax 608-246-7958
cbecker@scsls.lib.wi.us

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Observations on a Library Expansion

One of the joys of my work as a library system director is following the progress as a community builds a new library or expands its existing library. During nearly twelve years as a library director, I was never involved in a building project, so I've lived vicariously through other directors as they tell me about the ups and downs, the sudden turns, the often painfully slow progress, and the sometimes frightening speed of the rollercoaster ride that is a library building project. Last year, the Vaughn Public Library board began to explore the possibility of an expansion of the library in Ashland. The library has been located in the same facility since it opened in 1888, and the board has wondered whether the facility meets the needs of 21st century library patrons.

I was director of the Vaughn Public Library from 1993-2004; I still live in Ashland, and I use the library. I understand the strengths and weaknesses of the library building and the needs of the community in a way that I do not understand them in the other communities served by the Northern Waters Library Service. I regularly read coverage of the proposed expansion in the local newspaper, and Ashland residents often ask my opinion about the needs of the library. As a result, I am following the project in a way that I am unable to follow library building projects in other communities. I have also learned a lesson that applies to any community considering a similar project.

Recently, the library board and two facilitators provided library patrons a five-hour opportunity to comment on the proposed project. While I was unable to attend the session, I did read about it in the newspaper. Based upon the coverage, there appears to be quite a bit of interest in the project, and patrons seem to want additional meeting space, quiet study areas, more computers and additional parking.

I found it dismaying, however, to read that some community members are ready to select a site for an expanded library. Two popular choices are: to remain in the current building or to move to the Soo Line Depot. Neither choice is particularly surprising. The Vaughn building is attractive, historic and centrally located on Main Street. The library currently occupies the first two stories of the three-story building, and some in the community believe the most economical choice is simply to expand the library to the third floor and to the basement.

The Depot is also historic. It has recently been renovated after it was gutted by fire eight years ago, and the community is anxious to see it occupied again. It looks out on a park, and it offers plenty of off-street parking, something the current library lacks.

Proponents of both locations are, I believe, putting sentiment and economics ahead of library services. How can anyone determine whether either location, whether any location, is appropriate without knowing what Ashland wants its library to be? Do the proposed sites permit the ample meeting space some requested at the comment session? Are they capable of meeting the electrical demands for additional computers? If Ashland residents determine that a drive-up service window is an important feature of a new library, can one be offered in the Depot or the Vaughn building? Are there other service demands yet to surface that will dictate what the community needs from its expanded library?

The library board, the city council and the community are considering a decision we will have to live with for a long time. The library has been in the Vaughn building for 120 years, and any new location is likely to serve the library for at least 20 years and, perhaps, 50 years or more. To make a long-term decision based upon sentiment or short-term economic thinking is extremely short-sighted.

What I believe Ashland needs to do, what I believe any community considering development of a new library or expansion of an existing library needs to do, is to plan for the future. What role should the library have within the community? What unmet needs in the community should the library meet? What services does the community expect the library to provide? Until it answers these fundamental questions and others like them, I believe Ashland is ill-prepared to decide where to house an expanded library.

—James Trojanowski, Director, Northern Waters Library Service

A Shining Star in a Small Library

In July we all receive those lovely email reminders from WLA asking us to consider a colleague or “notable” person for a service award. And, of course, it was at that moment that I was inspired to nominate our Children’s Librarian, Annette Miller, for the Frances De Usabel Outreach Services Award. This award is presented annually to a “library or librarian who has provided exemplary library outreach services to underserved populations” and Annette has “reached out” and influenced many children in our community with her numerous Outreach programs.

When our school district initiated their 4-year-old Kindergarten programs, Annette and I discussed how this would affect our morning story times and how we could still provide story times and a library connection to our young readers. It was Annette’s idea to start an “Outreach” program visiting the Head Start (Tomahawk Elementary School) Classroom, two Day Care Centers in Tomahawk (Redeemer Learning Center and Tomahawk Child Care), the pre-school classroom and the 4K and Kindergarten classrooms at St. Mary’s School in Tomahawk. During her visits, she performs a story time, encourages the children to bring their families to the library and promotes our other programs at the library. She also has been invited by the Tomahawk Elementary School Kindergarten classes to perform story times for their classes, which she has done with great enthusiasm!

This is in addition to her regular story time at the library on Tuesday afternoons, her special evening slumber tales, the “Read the book/critique the Movie” for pre-teens and the story time she performs every Thursday morning for the Family Resource Center children and families in our Library Community Room. Annette has also been an integral part of programming for our local Home School Co-op Association. In addition to providing story-time programs, reference/research information and bibliographies to the Home School Co-op, she also helped initiate a Book Club for their advanced readers. This programming was done as an “outreach” service at their Home School locations.

Because of all these wonderful partnerships, Annette was asked to be a conference speaker at the Early Childhood Education Conference hosted by St. Mary’s Catholic School, which was open to all early education teachers in our northern districts. Annette’s program session was titled: *Library Integration; sharing successful ways to integrate the resources available in a Pubic Library System with your classrooms.* Annette was a conference speaker in 2006 and in 2007. Annette’s enthusiasm has influenced many young readers and their families to visit our library, which is evident in the high number of participants in the children’s summer library reading programs.

So, I encourage all of you to congratulate her on this great achievement. We are so very proud!

— by Mary E. Dunn, Tomahawk Public Library, 3rd Year WAPL Board Director



Characteristics of Good Library Trustees

I am often asked by directors and board presidents with vacancies on the board of trustees what they should look for in new trustees. A common assumption is that good trustees must be library patrons, a belief that limits the pool of candidates to a much narrower segment of the community. While it is helpful to have library users on the board, those who do not use the library may have skills that can help the library grow. Non-users may also help the library develop programs that meet needs of other non-users, thereby helping to increase patronage. Following are just a few characteristics of good trustees.

Knowledge of the community: Trustees are responsible for working with the director to plan library services, a task that requires an understanding of community needs. Trustees who know their community are active in community groups and activities, and they are able to call on other community members who have talents that will benefit the library.

Political savvy: Libraries are established and funded by cities, villages, towns and counties. The state legislature and the governor pass laws that affect libraries and public library systems are state-funded. It is important to have library trustees who are politically well-connected and able to build support for library services with local and state officials.

Vision: Good trustees always want the library to be better than it already is even when the library is already doing an excellent job. These trustees recognize that change is essential to a healthy organization and they do not accept the status quo.

Belief in the importance of the library: This characteristic is, I believe, more important in trustees than whether or not they use the library. Even those who do not use the library can believe that a strong library is a cornerstone of a thriving community. Many non-users of the library have family members – parents, children or spouses – who are regular library patrons. Trustees who combine a strong belief in the importance of the library with other characteristics on this list can be extraordinarily powerful advocates for the library even though they do not use the library.

Works well with others: A strong library board includes trustees with a variety of viewpoints who can recognize that all trustees, regardless of their opinion on a given topic, share a common goal – the best possible library service for their community. These trustees are able to compromise, and they know that once the board makes a decision it belongs to the entire board, even to those who disagree with it. Trustees who act independently of the board undermine it and serve themselves, not the library.

Specialization: Library boards often find it helpful to have trustees with special knowledge. Many boards try to keep an attorney who can offer advice on those rare occasions when knowledge of the law is helpful as a trustee. Boards exploring a building project may find it helpful to have an architect or contractor who can help understand the project (these board members should never be involved in carrying out the project since this may be a conflict of interest). A library in a community with an aging population may find it helpful to have a trustee familiar with the needs of senior citizens. Good boards are not homogenous; instead, they reflect the diversity of the community the library serves.

Commitment: Good trustees are usually active in a variety of community groups, and they will miss meetings from time-to-time because of schedule conflicts. A trustee who misses too many meetings, however, cannot serve the library well. Library board bylaws should set attendance requirements for trustees, and these should be enforced except in rare circumstances where a trustee may have excused absences for a limited period of time. Trustees should also attend special activities of the library, system workshops and other library-related events whenever possible.

There are, of course, many other desirable attributes in library trustees. This list is meant to help library trustees and directors think about who in the community may be a good choice to serve on the board in the future. It may also be a helpful tool for current trustees to evaluate their roles on the board and the skills they have to offer.

—James Trojanowski, Director, Northern Waters Library Service

Interview Questions to Consider

Recently, this library went through the process of hiring a new Head of Circulation Services. In preparation, I asked my staff to suggest questions we might ask. Pat Laughlin, Director of the Hales Corners Public Library, also kindly provided me with some suggested questions.

While I know very well that each library and library situation is unique, I thought I would provide all of you with our resultant list (of twenty questions!) for your consideration and use, if you so wish.

HEAD OF CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT—INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

Name: _____ Interview date/time: _____

Reviewers: In the space provided for each question, please enter your thoughts regarding the interviewee's response. Response evaluation tips for reviewers are in italics.

1. Please introduce yourself, tell us a bit about your work history, and describe for us how it would be applicable to this position.
 - stays focused
 - describes key responsibilities
 - ties work experience to this position
2. A key responsibility of this position will be supervising over two dozen full and part-time employees: hiring, training, scheduling and disciplining. What experience have you had in these activities?
 - note experience stated in each area
3. Please describe your familiarity with computers in general and the Milwaukee County Federated Library System's computer system (Innovative Interfaces) in particular.
4. Every workplace has problems of one sort or another: grumpy patrons, cumbersome procedures, staff shortages, someone who doesn't do their assignment correctly. How do you handle these types of problems?
5. How do you see this position fitting in with your career plans?
 - a good fit with stated long-term goals?
6. A circulation staff person approaches you and states that she has heard comments that other staff members are unhappy with a co-worker's job performance. How do you handle this situation?
 - understanding of complaint/disciplinary process?
7. How would you handle a patron who insists that you do something that is against library policy?
 - keep question open-ended to see what example(s) interviewee uses
8. If you find yourself supervising a difficult employee—say someone who is rude to patrons or other staff—what would you do?
9. What are some ways to maintain good inter-departmental relationships in the library?
10. What is the library's role in serving patrons? How would you, as a supervisor, support the role of the library in the community?
 - includes all patrons in response?
 - supportive of all programs?
11. How do you handle pressure on the job - when a lot of things are going on at once?
 - addressing multiple responsibilities

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Interview Questions *cont.*

12. In many ways, the front desk staff serves as the library's "face" within the community. How will you select and train new personnel and maintain a friendly, helpful circulation staff?
13. What do you see as the most important duty of a supervisor?
14. What can you do for us that someone else can't?
15. What new ideas and innovations will you bring to this position?
16. What appeals most to you about this position? Least?
17. How would you define the working relationship between yourself in this position and the staff librarians?
18. Please tell us a bit about your hobbies and non-work interests.
19. When would you be able to start?
20. Do you have any questions or final comments for us?

Thank you very much for your time and interest. We are hoping to reach a final decision within the next week.

— by Dick Nelson, Director, North Shore Library

Are You Preparing the Next Generation...*cont.*

As professionals in the library field, emotional intelligence becomes a priority by hiring people with different personality types: extroverts, introverts, adapters, challengers, reactors and endurers. Often, new hires display similar traits as the director, but how often is the hire someone on the opposite end of the spectrum; those who challenge authority in good ways, or those who have proven their resilience in times of great adversity?

Creative Problem Solving

Today it is crucial that we shape the next generation of library leaders to solve problems creatively. With unspecified patron needs, experimentation is necessary. Changes will only increase in the future; the focus on flexibility will emerge. This includes fostering a culture of innovation, creating new offerings quickly and welcoming an atmosphere of spontaneous thought. This involves preserving the most valuable of all library assets—its ideas and stories. Jamie LaRue, the keynote speaker at the COLAND Library Summit earlier this spring, noted that the future of 21st century librarianship involves "saving our stories." Telling our stories is a must. The duty of lively storytelling lies within the next generation of library leaders.

Artful Influence

Artful influence is the key element to remaining relevant in your organization. In order for the next generation of library leaders to develop this skill, they must be socially aware, knowing the players in their community and in their organizations. And, more than just knowing these players, establishing clear lines of communication is crucial to the relationship. Clear communication aids in thriving collaborative efforts, effectively articulating what is needed and eliminating duplicate efforts. By having influence, the next generation of library leaders will be able to motivate others into action.

How You Make the Difference

The day is here and the time has come to pass the torch to the next generation of librarians. Already many have arrived. The key to passing the torch involves changing attitudes. Do not be afraid in approaching new librarians when you see them. Introduce yourself. Appoint emerging leaders to new committees. Encourage them to run for leadership positions (and then make sure you elect them.) Hire them even if inexperienced. Promote them sooner rather than later. Offer feedback to improve their efforts. Remember, you make the difference in preparing the next generation of library leaders.

—by Jess Bruckner, Kilbourn Public Library, Wisconsin Dells