



The Library Trustee as Advocate

by Kevin Tomlinson

By the end of your first board meeting, you probably started to realize that library trustees wear many hats. In order to ensure the best possible library service to the community, you do many jobs, like planning the library's budget, leading the library's building program, and hiring the director. And, in your spare time, you continue to advocate for libraries, whether your style is in-your-face (the library cheerleader) or behind-the-scenes (a word here, a note there).

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The trustee and public relations

The public library is one of the most important institutions in any community. Any library trustee knows that. The question is, "Does everyone else know that?"

The current economic situation means that cuts have to be made somewhere. Advocating for public libraries at the local level is a proven and effective partial measure against library cuts and closings. Local libraries receive funding from tax revenues, and funding decisions are not always based on what is best for the community. In addition, not all decisions affecting the library are made locally. For these reasons, library advocates need to lobby not only at the local level, but at the state and national levels as well.

How do I know what the community wants or needs?

You get a lot of this information from the library director and from discussions at board meetings. But it is just as important to spend time

out and about:

- Listen to what people are saying.
- Attend meetings.
- Speak to groups and take every opportunity to explain the library and its services.
- Mix with as many segments of the community as you can.
- Be open to new ideas for delivering library services and discuss these ideas with the board and staff.
- Read.
- Ask questions.

Being a library trustee means that you bear the great responsibility of representing the voice of the people at library board meetings. But—and here's the really fun part—being a library trustee means you have the great opportunity of representing the library to the community. So be prepared. Be knowledgeable about your library and its mission. If you have questions, ask the director of your library. Make use of the Idaho Commission for Libraries. Encourage your director to make use of us, too. That's what we're here for.

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**Idaho Commission
for Libraries**

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Mission:

The Idaho Commission for Libraries assists libraries to build the capacity to better serve their clientele.

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and Sara Staub

State Librarian

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Commission Contacts:

- Danna Angevine, state publications, cataloging, and acquisitions librarian
- Dian Scott, office services supervisor
- Erica Compton, reading programs coordinator
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- Glynda Pflieger, school library consultant
- Jan Wall, northern Idaho library consultant
- Kevin Tomlinson, southwest/south central Idaho library consultant
- Marjorie Hooper, associate state librarian
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- Roger Dubois, administrative services manager
- Shirley Biladeau, continuing education consultant
- Sonja Hudson, grants/contracts officer
- Staci Shaw, reading programs coordinator
- Stephanie Bailey-White, reading programs coordinator
- Sue Walker, Talking Book Service consultant
- Teresa Lipus, public information specialist

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Can we advocate in a more organized way?

Absolutely. The board of library trustees can plan a public relations role for itself and for each individual trustee, if that is what works best for your organization.

- Do you have a plan for allowing the community to express its interest and needs in library services? Do you need such a plan?
- Have you identified what groups your public relations efforts should be reaching?
- What will the library trustees do to relate to the public?
- Can you state your goal(s)?
- Do you have a timeline for achieving your goal(s)?
- Does your library have a special program that the board would like to support? How do you plan to accomplish this?
- Have you identified a community wish that you would like to translate into library service? How will you make it happen?

Policy

The board of library trustees, as one of its main functions, makes policy. Have you as a group considered expressing your commitment to active public relations as a library policy?

What can I do to advocate?

- Speak to local groups about library needs and issues.
- Talk to friends about the library, its role in the community, and its needs.
- Write letters to the editor of the local newspaper and to local and state representatives.

- Speak at local governmental and library board budget hearings.
- Contribute to a library publication and have the publication sent to local and state representatives.

There are many online resources for those interested in learning who their representatives at the local and state levels are. These include:

- The American Library Association Issues and Advocacy page:
www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/
- The League of Women Voters:
www.lwv.org
- Project Vote Smart:
<http://votesmart.org>

State and National Associations

In 1979, the Friends of Libraries U.S.A. (FOLUSA) was created to formalize the loose national network of Friends groups, increasing their potential to promote libraries. FOLUSA joined with the American Library Trustee Association (ALTA) in 2008 to form a new American Library Association (ALA) division—the Association for Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends, and Foundations (ALTAFF).

ALTAFF provides many resources for groups seeking to advocate for their libraries in new ways. *The Voice* is the newsletter of ALTAFF (ISSN 1949-8780). A subscription is included with your membership in ALTAFF. Archived copies are available online at ALTAFF's website. For more information about ALTAFF, visit www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/altaff/.



ICfL welcomes new SW/south central field consultant

Since arriving at the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) in late May to assume field consultant responsibilities for southwest and south central public libraries, Kevin Tomlinson has been visiting libraries, meeting people, and participating in meetings—taking in as much as he can about the Idaho library community. Tomlinson, who earned his Master of Library Science (MLS) degree from Indiana

University, brings a wide range of library experience, from the Library of Michigan (Michigan's state library) to public library systems in Michigan and Arizona. At the Library of Michigan he served on the legislative team, while his public library positions included department head, branch head, and deputy director—giving him varied perspectives on library matters.



The Commission is delighted to have southwest/south central library consultant Kevin Tomlinson on board

BTOP “online @ your library” update

The Commission’s “online @ your library” Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) is expanding broadband and public access computing in 56 of Idaho’s least connected public libraries and expanding online resources statewide for all Idaho residents.

BTOP celebrations

Many BTOP libraries are celebrating their expanded public access computing with events that include open houses, demonstrations, prizes, and online activities. Libraries invite community members to check out the increased broadband, computer access, and online resources available at the library. To help raise awareness about the crucial role that libraries play in the economic well-being of their communities, they also invite elected officials and other decision-makers to the launches.

Online resources

If you aren’t yet familiar with all that LearningExpress Library has to offer, try it out from the LiLI Portal at www.lili.org or take a

LearningExpress Guided Tour at www.learningexpressllc.com/support/webinars/home.cfm. Coming this fall is the *Maximize Your Job Search-Online Workshop*. Available now at <http://idahoptv.pbslearningmedia.org> is *Scout, Classroom Edition*, an online video encyclopedia. *Scout, Library Edition* will be available in early 2012.

End-user training

Several computer-savvy high school and college students spent their summer working as digital literacy coaches in BTOP libraries throughout the state, helping patrons learn how to use computers, navigate the Internet, and access online resources. They are paid with Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds through the Idaho Department of Labor, matched with funds from the BTOP grant through ICfL.

Comments from the Gates Foundation

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded ICfL a grant of \$615,100 as matching funds for

our BTOP grant. We were pleased to receive the following comments from our Gates Foundation program officer in response to our recent interim report:

“After reviewing your NTIA [National Telecommunications and Information Administration] and foundation reports, I continue to be impressed with the work of the Idaho Commission for Libraries. The achievements you have made in procuring broadband upgrades and E-Rate participation are impressive. So are the numbers. \$290K in E-Rate support for 43 libraries with plans for even more in the next E-Rate cycle; upgrades from an average of 1.5Mbps to 11Mbps; a diverse set of carrier contracts; 477 computers ordered and 287 installed in libraries; digital literacy training through the Idaho Youth Corps; and partnerships with the Department of Labor, Adult Basic Education, WGBH, PBS and Idaho Public TV. I had a meeting on Friday with the Senior Counsel to the Chairman at the FCC and I read from your report as an example of the progress work that is ongoing at libraries.”

Internet filtering legislation resources

Beginning October 1, 2012, all public libraries in Idaho receiving public money and governed by the provisions of Chapter 26 or Chapter 27 of Title 33 of Idaho Code will need to comply with Idaho Code 33-2741 regarding Internet Use Policies.

The Idaho Commission for Libraries has assembled a set of policy and procedure resources to help public libraries prepare for the implementation of this new law.

At <http://libraries.idaho.gov/InternetUsePolicies> you'll find the following and more to help your library comply with Idaho Code by October 1, 2012:

- A sample policy template for Idaho libraries
- A sample policy template for Idaho libraries receiving federal funding
- An Internet use compliance checklist
- Laws and rules regarding Internet use in public libraries

- Resources for comparing technology protection measures (filters)
- Links to other resources for developing policies and procedures

The web page at <http://libraries.idaho.gov/InternetUsePolicies> is a work-in-progress that we update with more resources in the coming weeks.

Please contact your library consultant with any questions.

New database resources available through LiLI-D

New resources are available through the Libraries Linking Idaho Databases (LiLI-D). With the addition of a readers advisory service and a highly regarded encyclopedia, the following LiLI Database resources are available as of July 1, 2011 through the LiLI Portal at www.lili.org and Idaho's publicly funded libraries:

- NoveList and NoveList K-8
- Auto Repair Reference Center
- World Book Encyclopedia
- Heritage Quest (genealogy research)

- Gale Virtual Reference Library e-reference books
- EBSCOhost databases, which include academic, health, business, and professional development resources

LiLI-D provides access to top quality articles, magazines, professional journals, newspapers, reference books and more, and access is free to all Idaho residents. Students can find homework help and sources for academic research, consumers can access

health and financial information, small businesses can review market research reports, and entrepreneurs can take advantage of startup resources.

Check out the Libraries Linking Idaho Databases at www.lili.org.

Webinar and face-to-face trainings for library staff are being offered this fall. View the schedule at <http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/lili-d-training-2011>.

ILA Annual Conference, October 5–7, 2011

Get ready to "Fast Forward, Rewind, Pause, and Unwind" at this year's Idaho Library Association Annual Conference, which will be held in Boise, October 5–7, 2011. This year's conference includes 30 workshops and your choice of three FREE pre-conferences!

Taking place at the Boise Centre,

the Conference will feature a variety of presentations as well as Boise's welcoming downtown area. New this year is the All Conference Read featuring Anthony Doerr's *Memory Wall*.

Find full descriptions of the programs and presenters, hotel and downtown parking

information, special events, costs, and registration information at www.idaholibraries.org/conferences/2011.

To get the best conference deal, become an ILA member (follow the Membership link on the conference webpage).



E-Rate funding in Idaho libraries

So far this year, Idaho libraries have collected \$80,961.40 in E-Rate reimbursements for 2010–2011 (July 1, 2010–June 30, 2011), which is approximately half of what is committed.

The deadline for claiming your reimbursement is October 28. But don't leave it until the last minute, since your service provider has to verify it, and they can be swamped at the last minute. And it's not

too soon to begin the process for 2012–2013!

So far in 2011–2012 E-Rate funding (July 1, 2011–June 30, 2012), 59 city and district public libraries have received funding commitments. Most schools or libraries have more than one funding request. There is a separate funding request for each vendor and, depending on the service (e.g., telecommunications

or Internet), a library may have two or more funding requests for the same vendor. There are 170 funding requests from Idaho libraries and funds have been committed for 152 at this time, for a total of \$430,301.70.

Contact library consultant Jan Wall at jan.wall@libraries.idaho.gov with your E-Rate questions.

Charging for public access records

Current Idaho Public Records Law states that if someone requests a copy of a public record, such as library policy or board meeting minutes, the first 100 pages and the first two hours of staff time to make those copies must be provided free of charge. After the first 100 pages, libraries may charge their normal rate for photocopies. Electronic copies are

always an option, if the meeting notes are in that format.

The law changed this year. For more information, see:

- **HO 328:** <http://legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2011/H0328.pdf>.
- The relevant code section is **9-338:** <http://legislature.idaho.gov/idstat>Title9/T9CH3SECT9-338.htm>.

This section of code deals only with public records. Most libraries have policy in place of what they charge for "regular" and/or reference materials copies, and this is acceptable.

Please contact your library consultant with any questions.

Public library statistics

The Idaho Commission for Libraries annually releases *Idaho Public Library Statistics*, a compilation of statistical data from all Idaho public libraries.

Statistical data submitted by Idaho's public libraries are useful to local, regional, state, and federal decision makers who have responsibility for ensuring that these vital publicly funded institutions remain able to provide the best programs and services for all the people of Idaho. These library statistics are helpful

when librarians want to:

- Compare their own library activity from year to year.
- Compare information from libraries of similar size.
- Obtain statistics to support budget requests.
- Analyze the needs of their community.

The public library data tables for FY10 are available at:
<http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/2010-fy-public-library-statistics>. Included are the

following tables:

- Table 1 – Public Libraries by County
- Table 2 – Public Libraries by Population
- Table 3 – Mini Public Library Directory

In early September 2011, printed versions of the *2010 Public Library Statistics* were mailed to public library directors who requested them by responding to our survey sent via email in August.

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Continuing Education resources for trustees by Shirley Biladeau



The Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations (ALTAFF) now offers

a series of online courses to help trustees gain insight into their roles on behalf of their libraries. The courses are online and self-paced, so individuals can access them 24/7 at their convenience. The pricing is either by group or à la carte, so attendees can pick and choose what courses are important to them. Check these courses out at www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/altaff/training/webinars.cfm.

The Public Library Association
offers *Turning The Page –
Building Your Library Community*

advocacy training. (See www.sustaininglibraries.org/faqs.html.) There are two ways to access this training: One is through an on-site conference and the other is a facilitated online, six-week training. The training is designed to equip participants with the skills, confidence, and resources they need to create community partnerships, build alliances with local and regional decision makers, and ultimately increase funding for their libraries. It is a facilitated, interactive course with minimal homework. The group meets online, once a week. And the best part is—the training is free. If you are seeking ways to enhance your library's community connections, this will be a great opportunity for you.

WebJunction Idaho also offers information through a variety of resources. One is the Friends and Trustees' resource page. Another is the archive of last fall's webinar, *The Rural Library Trustee*, found at www.webjunction.org/rural-webinars/-/articles/content/104775250. Finally, *Become An Effective Trustee* is an online, self-paced course available to any Idaho library trustee. To access this course, go to <http://id.webjunction.org>, register, and affiliate with Idaho. Then go to the courses tab, select, and start learning.

Questions? Contact Shirley Biladeau at 208-639-4149 or shirley.biladeau@libraries.idaho.gov.