

## Trustee Essentials

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## Topics

- The basics - top five things every trustee should know
- Your questions



### 1. Know the difference your library makes in your community

- Important because one of your roles is to be an advocate
- A library advocate is someone who understands and communicates the value and importance of library service
- Advocacy includes making sure your community has the best possible library service and that the library has adequate funding.

### *From Awareness to Funding*

- A recent study points out why it's important for us to know the difference the library makes.
- **Available free at**  
<http://www.oclc.org/reports/funding>



### A surprise finding from the study

- Library support is **only slightly** related to using the library.
- Advocating for library support to library users focuses effort and energy on the wrong target group.
- Support is an attitude.
- It all depends on how people perceive the role the library plays in people's lives and communities.

### Study findings - the public

- Most people (74%) say they would support the library at the ballot box, but only 37% are firmly committed to it.



### Study findings – elected officials

- Public officials are supportive of the library but **73%** feel the library has sufficient funding.
- 53% of elected officials think the public librarian works closely with other community leaders to find ways to better the community.

### Why we need to change how we talk about libraries

- People who see the library as a transformational force in people's lives and communities are more likely to support library funding.
- However, most people see the library simply as a source of information.
- They are unaware of the range of "transformational" programs and services that libraries provide.

### Key to increasing funding support

- Change the conversation...
- from talking about services and information to talking about how the library transforms people and communities.
- And thus change the perception of the library.



### Getting to know your library's value

- Discuss the difference the library makes at board meetings
- Have the library director include examples of how the library made a difference in someone's life when reporting to the board
- Listen to or ask people in your community about how the library makes their lives better
- See for yourself - drop in to browse and read; attend a story hour; use a library computer

### 2. Understand how the board's and director's roles differ

- Library director may suggest or draft policies; the board adopts policies.
- The board hires and evaluates the library director; the director hires and evaluates other staff.
- Library director may draft a budget request; the board officially adopts the budget.

### 3. Be familiar with your library ordinance

- Your ordinance is the "law" under which the library exists and is part of the city code.
- Includes the number of board members and how they are appointed
- Powers and duties of the library board including controlling library funds.
- Procedure for paying bills

#### 4. Understand the board's control over library funds

- Most ordinances say that the board has “exclusive control of the expenditure of all funds allocated for library purposes...”
- City council decides on total funding for the library.
- The library board has control over over how it is spent.



#### 5. Respect the city's obligation to account for all public funds

- Iowa Code 384.20 requires the city to keep separate accounts of all public funds collected, received, or expended for any city purpose.
- Although the library board has authority over the library budget, the library must still report all income and expenditures to the city.
- Income includes donations to the library from private sources.

#### Your Turn

- What questions do you have?