



WISCONSIN
LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION

Positioning the Library for a Post-Pandemic Sustainable Future

A panel discussion with WLA's Library Development & Legislation's
County & Municipal Funding subcommittee

June 5, 2020

What to expect

- Archived recording will be found on WLA website
- We will focus on general issues; avoid identifying particular municipalities or counties
- For simplicity, we use “municipal” to include counties, when their libraries are consolidated.
- To respect others’ time, if you have issues that require more specific advice, or are unique, please contact your system director, who may invite members of this panel into a group problem-solving conversation

What does LD&L do?

The **Library Development and Legislation Committee (LD&L)** is responsible for recommending legislative policies and agendas to the WLA Board of Directors. LD&L is the official voice for WLA on matters of legislative policy.

- Plans and organizes annual Library Legislative Day
- Recommends an annual legislative agenda and positions on specific issues to the WLA Board
- Facilitates meetings between library stakeholders and state and local officials to help accomplish library-related legislative goals
- Hosts programs at the WLA conferences

Panelists

- **Connie Meyer**, LD&L Co-chair and retired (2020) Director of Bridges Library System
- **Kathy Klager**, LD&L Co-chair and retired (2019) Director of Pauline Haass Public Library, in Sussex
- **Kris Adams Wendt**, LD&L member and (semi-retired) Public Library Consultant, Wisconsin Valley Library Service
- **Mark Arend**, LD&L member and retired (2019) Assistant Director of Winnefox Library System
- **Peter Loeffel**, LD&L member and Director of Wauwatosa Public Library
- **Mark Ibach**, LD&L past member and Consulting Services Coordinator for South Central Library System
- **Steve Conway**, Government Relations Coordinator for WLA; CEO Conway Consulting Group

What we've learned

- Play the long game
- Understand before being understood
- Unintended consequences abound
- We're stronger together
- Library stories are key; data is best used to support them
- Keep it short & simple

...but wait, there's more!

What we've learned (continued)

- Being adaptable is advantageous
- Stay optimistic & positive
- Your library board is key
- Think creatively and share ideas
- Never assume bad intentions
- People like to be thanked
- Relationships are crucial

Let's talk about: the value of relationships

This is where an image of a
handshake would have been in
earlier times.

Relationships

- Think and act long term to build trust
- Consistency is key
- Provide solutions not problems
- Work outside of your comfort zones (and libraries) to extend relationship opportunities

Let's talk about: the importance of understanding

Relationships built on trust and mutual understanding are essential to influence. The ability to influence is an essential leadership skill that becomes easier when you....

- Understand the other person's primary concerns
- Address those before bringing up your own
- Ask yourself what you can offer that they value or need
- Use language that reflects their interests

Let's talk about: stories and data

- Data alone can give insight but doesn't motivate
- Science shows our brains process vivid imagery in a story as a visual and motor experience--it's almost as though it happened to us
- Engage with stories tailored to your audience's interests, follow with data illustrating the issue's scope or the good that can be done

Remember: Keep it simple & short

Complex isn't memorable

Long is confusing and irritating

Introducing unnecessary information can lead to ...

Let's talk about: unintended consequences

- There are many differences in how libraries are governed and funded in Wisconsin, so what benefits some may harm others
- Digging into statutes can be like opening Pandora's box
- Avoid citing statutes altogether

Remember: we're stronger together

When we work in concert on big issues, we have a better chance of success

If funding is insufficient, taking from other libraries isn't the best answer; instead let's grow the pie.

Let's talk about: *playing the long game*

There may be short-term pain

Focus on long-term gains

Seek new opportunities (more on that later)

Remember: people like to be thanked

Don't play the victim

Realize this is hard for everyone

Even if your budget gets cut, say Thank You

“Thank you for the time and effort you put into making this decision.”

“Thank you for considering the library board's reasoning.”

“Thank you for considering our residents' library needs.”

Areas of Your Concerns

- Reductions in municipal appropriations
 - Reductions in county payments--both in-county and adjacent counties
 - Reductions in federal or system grants
- and...*

Areas of Your Concerns (continued)

- How the library is viewed and will be treated in comparison to other departments, and how to advocate
- How to implement budget cuts
- Reduction in state aid to systems

Concern: Municipal Appropriations

How can I keep my municipality from cutting the library budget?

How can I make my municipality see the value of the library?

What if I've been told the library budget will be cut more than other departments?

Relationships are crucial

Never assume bad intentions

Think creatively

Understand before being understood

Unintended consequences abound

Be adaptable

Your library board is key

We're stronger together

Share ideas

Data is best used to amplify stories

Play the long game

Keep it simple & short

People like to be thanked

Stay optimistic

Revenue impacts on Wisconsin municipalities

Discuss with Municipal Finance Director and Library Board:

- Property Taxes
- Delinquent Property Tax Payments
- Reduced growth (diminished new construction)
- Charges for Services
- Fines, Forfeitures, Licenses, and Permits
- Room and Resort Taxes
- Utility Fees and other Proprietary Funds
- State Aids
- Interest Earnings on available cash and investments

Relationships are crucial

Never assume bad intentions

Think creatively

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Play the long game

Keep it simple & short

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Stay optimistic

Concern: In-county Reimbursement (Act 150)

How will 2020 circulation affect the library's county reimbursements?

What if we don't meet standards criteria such as number of open hours/year?

What if my county says it doesn't have enough money to reimburse us?

*We're stronger together
Play the long game*

These questions are really asking:

“How can library directors work through their county library planning and budgeting process to take the unusual pandemic year into consideration as counties craft the distribution of available 2021 and 2022 dollars to in-county libraries?”

Concern: Cross-County Payments (Act 420)

How will 2020 circulation affect the library's cross-county reimbursements?

How will e-circulations and extended due dates figure into cross-county payments?

What if counties say they don't have enough money to reimburse us?

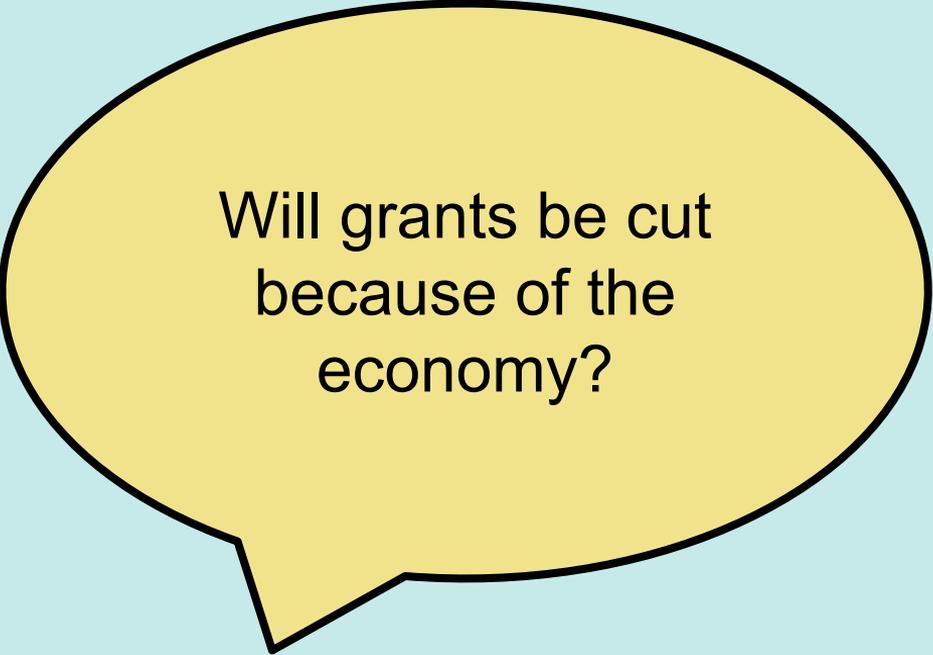
Relationships are crucial - Unintended Consequences Abound
We're stronger together

We have some time. 2020 circulation is used in 2021 to invoice counties for payment in 2022.

LD&L has a good relationship with the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) and will be pursuing discussions with WCA and its membership, as well as the library community.

Priority will be given to avoiding unintended consequences.

Concern: Reductions in Federal & System Grants



Will grants be cut
because of the
economy?

Sherry Machones, WLA Federal Relations Coordinator and ALA Chapter Councilor:

- LSTA funds that have been earmarked for grants like the CARES Act and have been allotted in the budget for regular IMLS funding should remain for this year.
- No guarantee of future special grants
- IMLS funding is always in jeopardy
- It remains crucial for librarians to build & sustain relationships with the legislators that represent them in Washington.
- Legislators need to know throughout the year about what your library is doing for the communities they represent. Stories resonate.

Concern: Demonstrating the Value of the Library

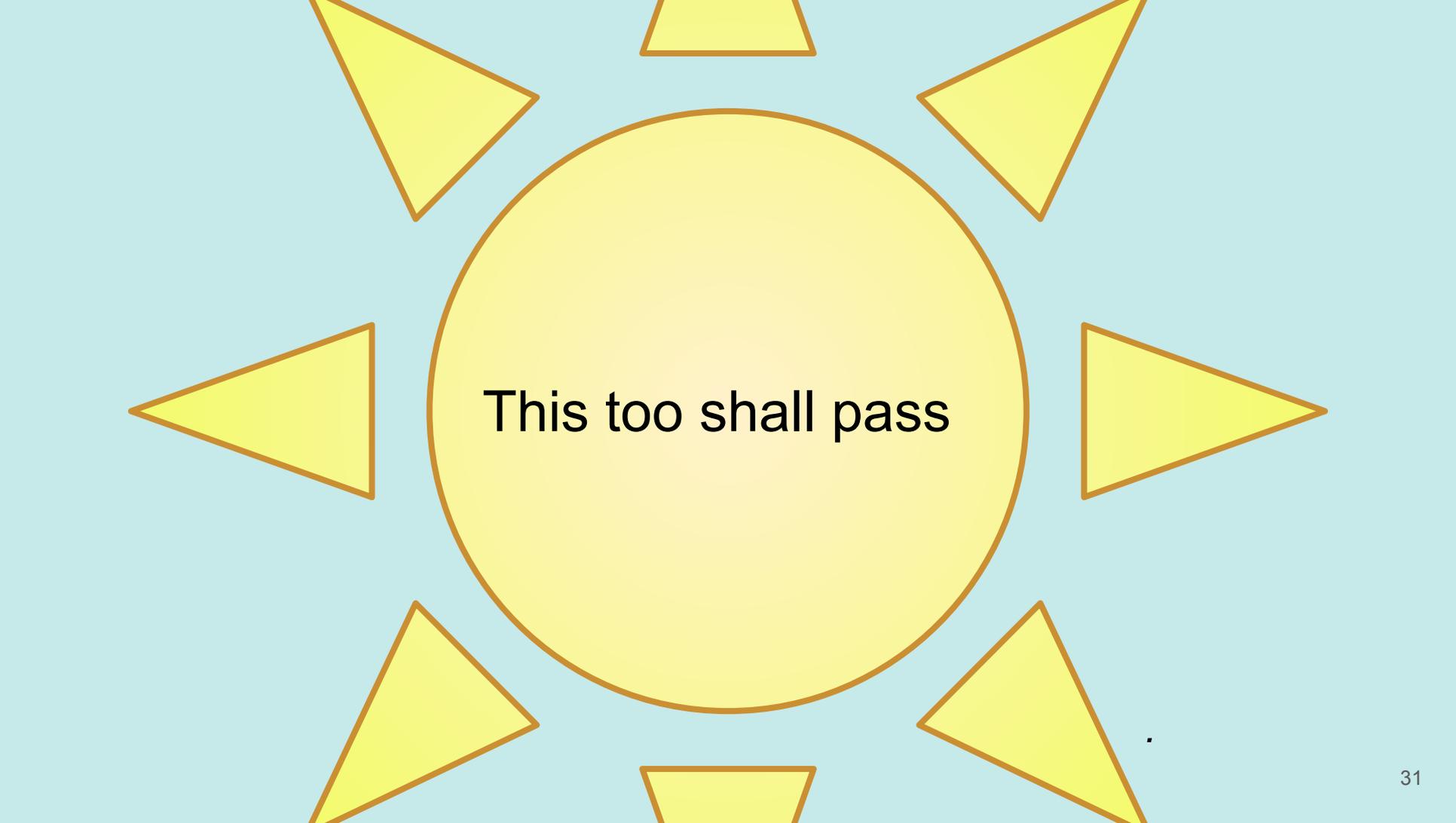
- Public libraries have stepped up as “second responders” for their communities in difficult times
- Libraries have pivoted & improvised to open digital communications and new collaborations to keep people productive, safe, informed and connected to one another
- Libraries are part of the solution as community members adapt to the “new normal” and look for educational support, as well as accurate information on health, tax and unemployment issues

Concern: Implementing Budget Cuts

- Work as a team with your staff to identify & prioritize core services and address your community's most pressing needs
- Develop several scenarios for library board discussion to achieve consensus on the library's best request to the funding body.
- Engage library trustees in presenting, explaining, & supporting their approved budget request.

Budget Cuts (continued)

- If public service hours will be reduced or staff hours/positions cut, outline what steps were taken to first trim costs in other areas
- Communicate clearly, often, honestly, and positively with all stakeholders
- Be aware that cutting a *budget* and cutting *expenditures* are not the same.



This too shall pass

Seize this Opportunity for Positive Change

What can you do now that was difficult or impossible to do before?

- Look afresh at services before reinstating them
- Pause/end services or programs that with poor cost/benefit ratios or little value
- Revise job descriptions
- Restructure your volunteer program
- Build reserves for future economic challenges
- Change something about the way you personally work

Seize this Opportunity for (more) Positive Change

- Identify skills that staff members have developed (or revealed) that can be used for new/improved library services
- Create an ongoing advocacy plan; include your Friends group if possible
- Explore how to build on the goodwill generated by virtual and curbside services provided when library buildings were closed to create stronger relationships
- Look for new partners in organizations which have been innovative
- What else would you like to change?

Questions?

Please use the Q&A function to submit questions.

Reminder: If you have issues that are unique, or require extensive explanations, please contact your system director, who may invite members of this panel into a group problem-solving conversation outside of this webinar.

System directors will be sent contact information. *Thank you!*

“Look for the helpers.”

- Fred Rogers

Thank you!